POCA★
PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION of COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE

EXPANDING ACCESS TO COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE

The People's Organization of Community Acupuncture (POCA) is a 501(c)6 nonprofit organization **working to make acupuncture more accessible, affordable, and useful to communities.**

POCA grew out of the community acupuncture movement, which challenged a basic problem with the way acupuncture was commonly delivered in the United States: although acupuncture often works best when people can receive it regularly, the cost of private, one-on-one treatment puts frequent care out of reach for many people.

Community acupuncture offers a different model. Multiple people receive acupuncture at the same time, usually in a comfortable shared treatment space. This allows clinics to charge substantially less while still operating as financially sustainable businesses.

MORE THAN AN ASSOCIATION OF ACUPUNCTURE CLINICS

At the center of POCA's work is a simple idea: **people who receive healthcare, people who provide it, and the communities in which it happens all have a stake in how that care is organized.**

POCA supports this work through education and training, peer support, shared resources, public education, advocacy, and a network of practitioners and community-based programs.

POCA MEMBERS INCLUDE ACUPUNCTURISTS, ACUPUNCTURE STUDENTS, CLINICS, PATIENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AURICULAR ACU-TECHNICIANS (AATS), TRAINERS, AND OTHER SUPPORTERS.

COMMUNITY ACUPUNCTURE

Community acupuncture isn't just acupuncture performed in a room with several people. The model is intentionally designed around access. Community clinics provide consistent hours, make repeat treatments financially feasible, minimize administrative and financial barriers, and build their practices around serving a broad community rather than a small population able to afford private treatment.

The result is a model in which acupuncture can function as an ordinary community resource rather than a specialty service or luxury.

MEMBERS COLLABORATE TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, STRENGTHEN AFFORDABLE CLINICS, CREATE SUSTAINABLE JOBS, EXPAND ACCESS TO CARE, AND ADVOCATE FOR POLICIES THAT PRIORITIZE BOTH SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY.

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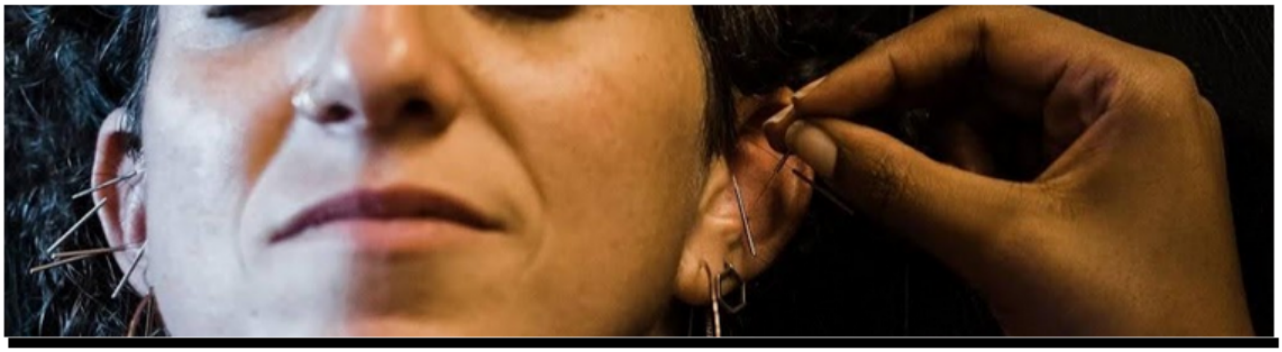

EXTENDING THE MODEL: 5NP AND AATS (AURICULAR ACU-TECHNICIANS)

POCA's Auricular Acu-Technician (AAT) Training Program extends the same philosophy beyond acupuncture clinics.
The program trains non-acupuncturists to provide the 5 Needle Protocol (5NP), a standardized form of ear acupuncture in which up to five specific points on each ear are treated.
5NP is also known as acudetox, five-point ear acupuncture, or the NADA protocol. Its development is closely connected to community-based addiction treatment and public-health organizing, including the work of the Young Lords, the Black Panther Party, Lincoln Detox in the South Bronx, and later the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association.

5NP IN PRACTICE

Today, 5NP is used in a wide variety of settings to support people dealing with substance use and recovery, trauma, toxic stress, anxiety, pain, sleep difficulties, and physical and emotional tension. 5NP has several characteristics that make it particularly useful in community settings.

- It is a **standardized protocol** rather than an individualized acupuncture treatment.
- It can be offered to **groups of people at the same time**.
- It requires very little equipment and is **inexpensive to provide.**
- It **does not require participants to explain or disclose** what they are experiencing in order to receive the treatment.
- It can be **incorporated into programs and services** people already use.

WHO ARE AURICULAR ACU-TECHNICIANS?

An Auricular Acu-Technician is not an acupuncturist. AATs are people specifically trained to provide this limited ear-acupuncture protocol within the scope allowed by their local laws and regulations. They may be peer-support specialists, recovery workers, behavioral-health staff, community health workers, nurses or other healthcare workers, social-service providers, advocates, or other people working directly in their communities.
This distinction is important to the model.
Rather than requiring 5NP treatment be delivered by a licensed acupuncturist, AAT legislation allows appropriately trained people to bring the protocol into settings like recovery programs, behavioral-health organizations, community centers, shelters, harm-reduction programs, disaster-response efforts, and peer-support programs.

POCA'S AAT TRAINING PROGRAM

POCA's AAT program was created to train and support people who want to use 5NP in their existing work and communities.

Training includes the 5NP protocol and point location, safe and clean needle practices, appropriate use of the protocol, treatment setup and group practice, professional boundaries, the history and philosophy of 5NP, and issues related to regulation and scope of practice.

The POCA certification process requires trainees to:

- complete the required didactic training;
- pass the program quiz with a score of at least 80%;
- complete 40 supervised practice treatments;
- complete the program pledge and evaluation; and
- finish the requirements within one year of training.

After those requirements are met, POCA issues a numbered AAT Certificate of Completion. Most states require this certificate to practice 5NP. Because laws governing acupuncture and 5NP differ by jurisdiction, the certificate itself does not create legal authority to practice. AATs and the organizations employing them must comply with the laws of the state or jurisdiction in which they work.

WHY THIS MATTERS

POCA's community acupuncture network and its AAT program are different projects, but they come from the same underlying approach.
Both ask: **What do health resources look like when they are organized around the needs of the people who need to use it?**
For community acupuncture, that means rethinking the economics and physical setting of acupuncture so ordinary people can afford to come regularly.
For 5NP, it means teaching a practical intervention to people already embedded in communities and service organizations.

The goal is not to replace licensed acupuncture, medical care, behavioral healthcare, substance-use treatment, or other services. It is to **increase community capacity** by making a simple supportive tool available in more places, through more trained people, with fewer barriers. That approach reflects POCA's larger mission: **creating sustainable systems that make acupuncture and related forms of care available to more people, while strengthening the communities and workers who provide them.**