

Parenting Connection

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Tips to Share with Parents to Help Them Work with Their Attorney

READ the Law.

Learn the factors. How do the facts in your case apply to the factors in the statute? Outline those on paper for your lawyer. Keep it simple and to the point. Praise the hard work your lawyer is doing for you.

Even if you decide to change lawyers because your lawyer does not understand your issues, don't insult your lawyer on the way to a hearing. Your lawyer will be focused on your insults at the hearing and not on your case.

GET in Counseling to Work on YOUR Issues
Don't make your lawyer listen to you whine. Use your insurance and get a good therapist. Go to parenting classes and take advantage of other resources to be a better parent. Let your lawyer know you are doing that.

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Email <http://www.wisconsinfathers.org>

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OCI Visiting Room Activities Update

In the November/December 2004 issue, we introduced Community Connections' efforts to create a child and family friendly environment in the visiting room at Oakhill Correctional Institution. We are pleased to say that since that issue we have successfully piloted a six-week program in the visiting room.

We piloted the program on Wednesday evenings from 6:00-8:00pm. We chose to pilot the program during the week so that it would be on a smaller scale and easier to manage than on a busier weekend afternoon. The volunteer staff in the visiting room was composed of service-learning students from UW-Madison and from Edgewood College. Additionally, we received support from a Whitewater professor and her class. They toured OCI and also donated amazing supplies for the visiting room program. OCI provided the space including a table and a marker board for the program. We used the marker board to advertise the activities. Community Connections supplied the funds for the start-up costs.

During program hours, there were activity options set out on a table in the visiting room. The children could come to the table to get an activity (if the child was under 12 years old, he/she approached the table with a visiting adult or an older sibling). The volunteers at the table showed the different activity options and helped the children choose a developmentally appropriate activity. The children brought the activity and the necessary supplies back to the visiting table. The activities were designed to promote parental involvement. For example, if the chosen activity was a craft project, it came with a set of instructions so that everyone at the table understood how to complete it. The activities were designed with a themed approach. For example, we had a dinosaur theme and had several dinosaur books available for different reading levels, some basic dinosaur coloring pages for young children, a sheet for school age children that asks them to create and name a dinosaur, and a more complex memory game.

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FLORR PROGRAM AT KMCI

For Love of Reading Relationships (FLORR) is a group held at the Kettle Moraine Correctional Institute (KMCI).

One activity that we use, which may be useful to other parenting groups deals with making good reading choices for children. We've gotten book reviews from the Web, or in some cases, just copied comments from the back of the books from our collection. We then write a very short paragraph describing a particular problem or situation that might come up in a child's life and give an age range. Our fathers then have to match up the child and the appropriate book based on that information. This is good practice for learning to select theme and age appropriate books for children.

As a final review of the key concepts taught during the program, I take the handouts, cut off the headings, mix them up and put them in an envelope. I then cut off the subheadings, mix them up and put them in another envelope. I prepare enough envelopes to accommodate 2-3 small groups.

The students, through collaboration and communication, must glue the headings and then the subheadings under the appropriate headings, onto poster board.

The students enjoy this activity. It strengthens their recall and gives them immediate feedback as to their comprehension of the key concepts taught during the FLORR program.✂

Cheryl Edwards
Jane Boyle
Teachers of FLORR
KMCI



Community Connections worked collaboratively with OCI to ensure the success of the program. We remained flexible and acknowledged the importance of understanding the needs of everyone involved. Community Connections and OCI staff determined that given the program's success, we are going to continue the activities during the summer months. We will run the program on Saturday afternoons starting on June 11th. We are currently looking for any individuals or groups who are interested in becoming involved in this incredible program. We are very appreciative of the support and efforts by all who has participated and are excited to continue this program. Please contact Jeni Bingen, jbingen@wisc.edu or Donna Mahr, ldmahr@facstaff.wisc.edu with any questions, suggestions or resources.



Summer Greetings to All Parenting Instructors

Summer is a busy time for everyone. I really appreciate those of you that took the time to submit something for our newsletter. I'd like to remind everyone that any of you can submit an article of any kind and we'll include it in our bi-monthly newsletter. Tell us what you're doing at your institution, submit an interesting clipping from another source, or give us a website to find some good stuff! Keep up the good work and keep the articles coming. This is your newsletter!

Barb Wulfers, a teacher at SCI, submitted an article about the upcoming Regional CEA Convention to be held at Wisconsin Dells next May. The Correctional Education Association (CEA) is the professional organization that speaks for us regarding education in prisons. We need to have a strong voice as legislators look for places to save money. Please consider joining the CEA. The cost is \$55 a year, tax deductible, and a great way to network with your fellow colleagues. I hope many of you are already making plans to join us at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells next May. Have a great summer and stay safe.

Diane Birch

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Women Prepare to Parent

Teaching parenting as part of the Women's Earned Release Program at Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Center, a women's minimum security facility in southeastern Wisconsin, is both challenging and rewarding. Change is a huge focus in an AODA Treatment Program, and the Parenting Program is no exception. Our students were asked to contact their children and ask them what kind of impact Mom's addiction and absence had on them and their families. There's nothing like an honest kid to "tell it like it is"...

"...Growing up in a house with a mother who was an addict to alcohol and gambling was difficult to say the least. The first time I realized there was a problem, I was eight years old; in fact, it was my birthday. My parents got in a big fight over God knows what ...and ruined my birthday. Then came all the holiday functions when my mom would always have a couple too many and say or do something completely inappropriate. My brother and I would make jokes to cover our pain and embarrassment. Eventually, she stopped going to family functions, and then the dreaded question: How is your Mom doin'? I wanted to scream every time I heard it...I would lie to cover up the truth and shame. Maybe the worst was when I was 12 years old. I told one of my better friends that my mom was an alcoholic. She, in turn, told her mother, who told her she was no longer allowed to come to my house. I felt so betrayed and like such an outcast..."

Having reviewed their life histories, the ripple effects of their addictions as well as their criminal activities, these women became aware of the need to change as people as well as parents. And change they did. Pre- and Post-testing, using the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI), indicated significant attitudinal change in three primary areas: 1) from favoring corporal punishment to valuing alternatives, 2) from low levels of empathy to more appropriate levels of empathy, and 3) from restricting power and independence in children to empowering children with problem solving skills.

As with many Parenting programs in the DOC, we, too, used the Active Parenting series as our primary text, supplemented with Parenting from a Distance. Additionally, the women are given a Parenting Resource Manual, corresponding to the program focus, with numerous resources and retained by the women as they leave the program.

In addition to the text and resource manual, the women are active participants in a variety of group and individual projects, including:

- Writing books for their children to help them cope with Mom's absence
- Completing Parenting Improvement Plans to activate learned parenting skills
- Role-playing potentially problematic parent/child interactions to reinforce new parenting techniques
- Presenting key parenting concepts to solidify appropriate development and limit setting
- Establishing Parenting Job Descriptions to clarify roles and expectations
- Improving relationships with care takers to provide more consistency for their children

In the Parenting Program, as with their AODA Program, these women have pursued the stages of change: 1) Initial DENIAL of their responsibility as parents-past, present, and future; 2) ACCEPTANCE of their role and responsibility in the lives of their children; 3) PREPARATION for successful community and family reintegration; and 4) Establishing relapse prevention and parenting ACTION Plans to prevent relapse and improve parenting potential. As they ready themselves for eminent discharge, the greatest challenge awaits them...5) To MAINTAIN the changes to become productive citizens and effective parents.

Margaret Done & Pat Reese
Teachers, REECC

CEA-W Region III and IV Conference

Correctional Education Association - Wisconsin will be hosting the Region III and IV conference at Chula Vista Theme Resort in Wisconsin Dells. The event will run from May 10 - May 12, 2006

A Special Education pre-conference is being considered on Wednesday. Thursday and Friday will be full of breakout sessions addressing the concerns of correctional educators. We will be celebrating our Teacher of the Year nominees and winner at this conference.

Many excellent opportunities will be available to talk with experts in our field and to socialize with colleagues from correctional facilities inside and outside of Region III. There will be a chance to talk with vendors about any new materials they may have developed.

As the conference planning committees finalize their arrangements, there will be more specific information coming, so keep an eye on this spot!





Parenting 911

Dear Parenting 911,

Cheri from MSDF asked about special materials for teaching parenting to African Americans.

Cheri: I have not found a lot of materials specifically geared toward African Americans, but there are many books that address this issue. Two of them have received rave reviews: *I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Biracial Children in a Race Conscious-World: A Guide for Parents and Teachers* by Marguerite A. Wright, and *Raising Black Children: Two Leading Psychiatrists Confront the Educational, Social, and Emotional Problems Facing Black Children* by James P. Comer and Alvin F. Poussaint. Other titles are *Can Black Mothers Raise Our Sons?* by Lawson Bush and *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males* by Kenneth I. Matton and Geoffrey L. Grief.

If anyone out there knows of any other materials, please address the Dispatcher, so I can spread the word.

The Dispatcher

This month, the Dispatcher has a question. There is a pervasive attitude among many of the parenting students, it seems, that if only they could use their tried-and-true solution of "whupping" the kids, all discipline problems would miraculously disappear. I offer alternatives and suggestions and reasons why that may not be the best approach, but I was wondering how you all out there in parenting classrooms deal with this problem. Please send me some suggestions—and again, I will be happy to pass them on.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please write to the Dispatcher at Barbara.Rasmussen@doc.state.wi.us
Thanks!

Speaker Presents to Fathers' Group at WRC

The Fathers' Group at WRC was fortunate to have an informative speaker at one of the June meetings, Mary Kools, the attorney for and director of the Winnebago Co. child support office.

Ms. Kools gave a lively and informative presentation that left the participants with many things to think and talk about for days after.

She relayed answers to the most common questions the men had and then entertained with stories of situations that are regularly addressed in the office.

The men were especially interested in the paternity questions and how the child support is calculated for all their children from multiple mothers. One could say they're eyes were opened with this new information.

She was very adamant about the office being neutral in all cases. It's only about the money owed and not about who did what to whom. The court is very clear about the money owed and the rest is, as she said numerous times throughout the evening, "Too bad, so sad."

Some cried, some laughed, and others were left wondering what they should do. They all agreed that the evening was well worth missing the first few minutes of the big basketball game.

Mary K. Knox
Teacher, WRC

National SIG Approved

At the International CEA Conference held in Des Moines, a proposal to have the Parenting Special Interest Group become a national organization was approved the CEA Executive Board. A workshop on "Establishing a Parenting Network" was presented by Jerry Bednarowski, DeNeal Ericksen, and Barb Rasmussen to get input from conference participants. Educators from seven states and Wisconsin attended.

As a result, this newsletter will become national in scope, a directory of parenting programs will be created and question and answer listserv will be established. Communication methods and other details need to be worked out, but we hope the include contributions from parenting instructors in other states and distribute this newsletter nation-wide by the end of this year.

More details will be presented in the next issue of this newsletter.



