The Parent’s Pledge

1. I will set a good example for my child.
2. I will show my children I love them every day through words and physical affection.
3. I will listen to my children and let them know I value what they say.
4. I will praise my child’s accomplishments and efforts towards accomplishments.
5. I will have realistic expectations for my children. I will allow them to make their own mistakes and learn from those experiences.
6. I will avoid being too critical or focusing on my child’s shortcomings.
7. I will encourage my child to meet new challenges and have new experiences.
8. I will respect my children as individuals even if I don’t always agree with them.
9. I will enjoy my children and make time to share interests and appreciate one another.
10. I will love my children unconditionally. I will let them know they are lovable, worthwhile and valuable human beings.

I will follow these ten parenting principles to the best of my ability.

Author Unknown

Need another refrigerator item? How about this Parent’s Pledge as a daily reminder of how valuable your children are as well as how impressive a parent’s behavior can be to their children?
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Even though incarcerated fathers are separated from their children, it is very important to encourage a long-distance relationship. Through phone calls and letter writing, fathers can still utilize these ten parenting principles without direct contact with their children. These are simple reminders to convey their unconditional love through tone of voice, expressions of love and affection, and positive words of encouragement. Children respond to “warm fuzzies” whether directly or indirectly.

Fathers are given two copies of this pledge, one to keep and one to send to their children’s provider. They are encouraged to read each line item slowly, often, and aloud while intently focusing on each message. Children will better excel in the absence of their father if he sincerely implements these ten parenting principles.

by: Beverly Wieseler, Teacher
Federal Prison Camp, Yankton, SD

It Is Time to Update the Guide to Successful Parenting Programs

In May 2005, the Correctional Education Association’s Parenting Special Interest Group published its first Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections. Originally it contained only programs from Wisconsin. Since June 2006, programs from Minnesota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington have been added.

As time passed, programs have been added or dropped and staff have changed. It is time to update the Guide. We would like your help in doing this update.

In the past few weeks, you should have received via email the most recent edition of the Guide. If you didn’t receive the Guide, contact jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com and it will be emailed to you.

Please have the staff who teach Parenting classes, coordinate Parent/Child Literacy projects, supervise Parent Support Groups, or coordinate Parent Fairs update your institution’s section of the Guide. If your program isn’t in the Guide, we would be happy to include it. Follow the format of the programs in the Guide when making the outline of your program.

Those doing the updates may make the changes on a hardcopy printout of the Guide, add separate pages, or send the changes electronically.

Please have the updates completed by October 1. We hope to have the updated Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections distributed by January 1, 2008.

Hardcopy changes may be mailed to: Jerry Bednarowski W6443 Old Highway Road Menasha, WI 54952

Electronic changes may be emailed to: jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com
Preventing Your Children from Getting into Trouble

Get Into Their World –
Be a student of your children. Encourage them to have their friends over to your house so you can meet them personally. Volunteer in their school. Ask them about their interests. Listen to some of their favorite music and watch their favorite movies or television shows. All of these activities will provide the basis for more meaningful conversation and will communicate to your children that you respect their individuality.

Spend Quality Time With Them –
The best way to communicate your love is through your actions. When you make your children a priority, you're essentially earning their trust and helping them feel confident that you care for them. This will help keep your children from tuning you out when you're guiding them in certain situations.

Listen to What They're Saying –
It is easy to be thinking about your next response rather than really listening to what your children are telling you. One way to ensure you're really listening is to re-phrase their statement into a question (e.g., "So you feel like your friends are trying to talk you into something you don't think is right?"). This will give them an opportunity to let you know if that's correct or if there's another issue bothering them.

Help Them Come to Conclusions on Their Own –
Instead of jumping right into giving them advice, ask them if they've thought of any possible solutions. This will help them develop skills that will aid them when you're not around.

Understand the Ages and Stages of Your Children –
In some cases, the way you communicate with your children will depend on their age. Being sensitive to what "speaks" love and concern at different ages will help increase your effectiveness. For example, getting down on the floor and playing would resonate better with younger children, while staying up late with them and enjoying their favorite movie would resonate with your older children.

By working to enhance your communication with your kids, you will help them stand up to negative peer pressure and make wise choices that will positively impact the rest of their lives!

from: National Fatherhood Initiative, July 2007
Training Readies Institutions to Implement “Inside Out Dad” Program

Maintaining family ties is important for kids, and can give incarcerated fathers hope and a reason to be successful upon their return to the community. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections continues to expand fatherhood programs and enhance parenting education.

On July 30 - 31, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections hosted the Inside Out Dad Program, a nationally recognized training program that was facilitated by Chris Beard of the National Fatherhood Institute.

The two-day session for treatment staff, educators and other employees, as well for facility volunteers, took place to help implement the fatherhood program within the Wisconsin DOC.

The Inside Out Dad Program is one of the options in the Family Support Module of the Department’s Standardized Pre-Release Curriculum. Inside Out Dad is already being facilitated at some Wisconsin DOC facilities and was recently featured in the March/April 2007 edition of Correctional Educational Association’s Parenting Connection newsletter.

The 12-session program is designed to address very practical critical thinking parenting skills as well as to examine the nurturing emotional response of how the offender interacts in his role as a father.

It’s one of many programs administered by the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) which is a training center funded by a combination of federal and state grants, as well as foundations and individual donations, to provide states and local communities with best practices on fatherhood programming.

"Great program and I look forward to using it with the young men/future fathers. You did very well teaching us too!!" said Vicky Whiting, TSW-Senior, RADC Ethan Allen School for Boys.

by: Mary Kay Kollat
Wisconsin DOC Re-Entry Coordinator
Oregon’s Parenting Inside/Out Program

I was so worried about being a father...I was actually pretty scared. . . The skills and knowledge I got from taking this class gave me that boost of confidence I needed. I think I can do it now.  ---Tony

Tony gained his confidence and skills through a program called Parenting Inside/Out, a comprehensive parent training curriculum that addresses the unique challenges of parenting effectively from prison. The course content, which is based on scientific principles and research-based instructional design, yields practical results for men and women in Oregon correction facilities.

At eleven Oregon facilities, 27 parenting coaches conduct regular classroom sessions which provide opportunities for growth in parenting knowledge and skills with an emphasis on role playing and interactive peer discussion. Participants also focus on three major projects:

- Development of a family mission statement
- Construction of a creative project that is a reflection of the inmate’s family, to be given to the child at PIO graduation
- Creation of a family action plan detailing how the inmate will apply parenting skills upon release

I didn’t even know how to begin to talk to my children’s caregivers and now I have regular and helpful information to share. I have learned to believe I can be a good mom and meet my kids’ needs. --- Denise

This unique curriculum has been field tested in six institutions during the past three years and has undergone numerous revisions to improve information and instructional design, as well as reflect the input from educators and inmates.

The approximately 500-page curriculum developed by the Oregon Social Learning Center and the Children’s Justice Alliance is delivered in 36 sessions lasting, 2.5 hours per session.

Lessons covered include:

- Getting Acquainted - establish class as a learning community
- Setting a Parenting Course for Destination Adulthood - casting a vision for your children’s future
- The Family System - setting personal goals around returning to a leadership position in your family and freeing your children from unhealthy roles
- Effective Speaking Skills - communicating in clear, non-blaming effective ways with children and others
- Effective Listening Skills - implementing active listening when engaged with others in conversation

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Effective Problem Solving Skills - implementing a systemic problem solving model when faced with recurring challenges
Connecting Through Play & Reading - playing and reading aloud using child-centered techniques.
Connecting Through Letters, Calls & Visits - using effective speaking and listening skills along with child-centered play techniques to connect with children on calls, during visits and through letters
Connecting Through Emotion Coaching - practicing validating the emotions of others.
Introduction to Human Development - framing one’s view of parenting in terms of the continuum of development from birth through adulthood; egg baby adoption.
The Child’s Job & the Parent’s Job - parenting in a way that demonstrates understanding and support of the developmental tasks of children; doing one’s parent job in support of every child’s job
Age-Related Parenting Challenges - responding in helpful, healthy ways to typical age-related parenting challenges
Adult Stage of Development - providing helpful nurture and structure to oneself as an adult; baby bear adoption.
Family Meetings, Family Fun, and Family Identity - building family identity through family meetings and family fun
Sibling Relationships - parenting siblings as individuals while avoiding both positive and negative comparisons
Nurturing Your Child’s Temperament - parenting children according to their temperament
Speaking Your Child’s Love & Learning Languages - parenting children according to their love and learning languages
Your Legacy & Your Future - setting parenting goals in light of your legacy and the vision you have for your children
Individual meetings with parenting coach to review genograms and parenting goals. Parents work on graduation projects while awaiting their individual meeting.
Structure Through Family Routines & Organization - providing structure for your children through family routines and child-friendly household organization
Ignoring, Distracting, Redirecting & Rules - using ignoring, distracting and redirecting behavior to guide children’s behavior; setting age-appropriate rules for children that are clear, specific and tell children what to do rather than what not to do
Directions & Encouragement - providing clear, helpful directions and positive encouragement to guide children’s behavior
Natural & Logical Rewards & Consequences - providing appropriate natural and logical rewards and consequences to guide children’s behavior
Time Out w/Back-up Privilege Removal - using time out with back up privilege removal to guide children’s behavior
Practice Dealing w/Behavior Challenges - applying all the above child guidance strategies to real-life parenting challenges
Brain Development - parenting according to your child’s stage of brain development

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- Parenting Adolescents - applying adolescent-appropriate, non-violent parenting strategies to the task of guiding teen behavior
- Advocating for Your Children - advocating for your children with doctors, dentists, school personnel, and others.
- Reintegrating into the Community - prioritizing the tasks of release, reintegration and parenting
- Building Healthy Adult Relationships - practicing healthy adult behaviors in intimate relationships
- Going Home: Your Children and You - re-claiming the role of parent and avoiding overindulgence based in guilt
- Catch-Up - revisit incomplete lessons, concepts or assignments
- Wrap Up and Closure - preparing for graduation, appreciating colleagues, saying goodbye
- Graduation - celebrating our accomplishment with our colleagues and our families in a child-centered special event.

For further information on research relevant to PIO, contact Dr. Mark Eddy, Research Scientist and Licensed Psychologist at the Oregon Social Learning Center, 541-485-2711 or marke@oslc.org or Tracy Schiffmann, Ed.M., Deputy director, Children's Justice Alliance Training Institute, 877-CJA-4994 or tracyschiffmann@comcast.net.

“It is admirable for a man to take his son fishing, but there is a special place in heaven for the father who takes his daughter shopping.” –John Sinor-

“If the new American father feels bewildered and even defeated, let him take comfort from the fact that whatever he does in any fathering situation has a fifty percent chance of being right.” -Bill Cosby-

“My heart is happy, my mind is free, I had a father who talked with me.” -Hilda Bigelow-
Where are you? Why are you there? When are you coming home? Are you okay? These are the four most frequent questions that children ask about their incarcerated parent. A child needs contact with his/her parents from prison or from any distance that may keep them apart. This contact, either physical, emotional and/or spiritual, helps to strengthen the bond between both the child and the parent.

At the Yankton Minimum Unit, in Yankton, South Dakota, we offer the Long Distance Dads Parenting Program. This program enables the fathers of children to enhance and strengthen their relationships with one another. The four objectives we aim toward in class are: Nurturing, Involvement, Consistency and Awareness. By nurturing, loving and becoming involved parents, these fathers can be positive role models to their children and at the same time, increase their communication skills and develop positive, constructive relationships that their children will develop themselves.

Another one of our successful programs is our DVD for Fathers Program. The inmate may purchase a DVD for a very small amount. The father is videotaped sending special, heartfelt messages to their children by simply reading a book, singing a song or story telling. With this video taping, we are encouraging the children to read along with his or her dad. These children will then see their father/parent healthy, looking good, smiling and doing well. This enables the child to feel less discouraged and more excited about the day they are able to be together. Easing the pain in children is the result of being able to help answer the four most concerning questions children often have when a parent goes to prison. Statistics suggest that children who have parents that are more emotionally, spiritually and physically involved in their child’s life, tend to be higher achievers academically and much less likely to use drugs or alcohol or even both. This program helps to keep this bond together by making the child aware that his/her parent is still very much a part of her/his life.

Finally, we have introduced a program that is truly the very most popular. That is the Fatherhood Activity Day. This program allows families of incarcerated men to interact with one another while spending quality time together. Families get involved with hands on projects that include Easter egg hunts and basket weaving and Halloween, Valentines Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas crafts. Santa comes with refurbished bikes from Mike Durfee State Prison. Every child that attends will leave with a bike or trike. During the summer, we go outside in the recreation yard and play catch, hit some baseballs and even have frozen t-shirt relay games. We top it off, by sharing mealtime together. Our focus here is on the institution of the family, promoting effective parenting, family values, behavior and interacting skills, while at the same time, identifying growth patterns amongst families and maintaining an open line of communication between children and their parents.

With the help of the National Fatherhood Initiative Program, we are helping to make responsible fathers better parents, make fathers better citizens, but most importantly, help fathers build a loving parent-to-child relationship that is intended to last a lifetime.

by: Lori Drotzmann, Education Instructor
Yankton Minimum Unit, Yankton, SD
New Resource: Handbook for Incarcerated Parents in Wisconsin

Dealing with the juvenile court system and/or the family court system can be bewildering and frustrating to offenders. The lack of basic information on how these courts work can and does lead to the loss of parental rights, the neglect of the child’s need to maintain the parent-child relationship, and problematic attempts at reunification.

To provide an organized source of information, a *Handbook for Incarcerated Parents in Wisconsin* was created by the Dane County Bar Association (Law for the Public Committee) and funded by the State Bar of Wisconsin.

The purpose of the 74-page handbook is to provide the offender with general information about the various systems that have an impact on the offender’s family and the parenting choices he/she must make while incarcerated.

Included in the handbook are sections on:

- The Effect of Incarceration on Your Rights as a Parent
- Informal Placement of Your Child
- Court Proceedings Involving Children Including Divorce, Paternity, Juvenile Court Actions, Voluntary Termination of Parental Rights, and Guardianship
- Visitation
- Child Support

Also included are a glossary of terms, other resources available to the offender, useful legal forms and sample letters, and relevant statutes.

The *Handbook for Incarcerated Parents in Wisconsin* was reprinted in August 2007. For free copies please contact DOC Library Coordinator Vibeke Lehmann after September 15 at vibeke.lehmann@wisconsin.gov

We Can Make a Difference!

Inmates have continual issues about what to do when they are asked to terminate their parental rights while they are in prison. One inmate who is a student of mine comes to mind. --- His child was in foster care for four years and the foster parents were trying to adopt the child --- asking for his termination of rights. He pleaded with me to get information for him to right the courts, because his mom in Mississippi was retired and wanted the child as well.

I gave him the *Handbook for Incarcerated Parents* and he is now going to court to give custody to his mom who is a retired postal worker - - - We can “Make a Difference” !!!

by: Cheri Wontor, Parenting Teacher  
Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility
Editorial- Mary Knox

The long hot days of summer are gone for 2007 and autumn has arrived. Being a teacher myself, I have always considered September to be the real “New Year”. It is that exciting time of year for new programs with the rush of new ideas. This newsletter offers some great new ideas for programs in your parenting classes.

The edition features an article about the Parenting Inside/Out program conducted in the state of Oregon facilities. If other states have utilized this resource please let me know so we can tell our readers about it in future editions of the Parenting Connection.

I am very excited about the 2008 training date for teaching the Effective Black Parenting Program that we are arranging here in Wisconsin. I will include more details of this in the next newsletter.

The Parenting Pledge is one of those resources that could find the way to our refrigerators (or in my case to my son’s fridge) as well as using for a handout to our students. Every parent needs a reminder occasionally of what our real purpose is as parents, that of coaching not possessing. I hope to hear from you in the future with news of your new programs and the rush of those new ideas.

Mary K.

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