

Parenting Connection

Volume 6, Issue 5

March/April 2010

NCCW Program Creates a Nurturing Bond

The Nebraska Correctional Center for Women's Parenting Program started in 1974 and was one of the first such programs in the United States to be introduced in a women's correctional facility.

It includes parenting classes, overnight on-grounds child visits, extended day visits, and a nursery program. Children between the ages of 1 and 6 may spend up to five nights per month with their mothers in a living unit separated from general population.

Newborns and children up to the age of 16 may have extended on-grounds day visits in the parenting program area. Mothers must meet all eligibility requirements and be misconduct free prior to the visits.

In 1994 the Parenting Program expanded to include an on-grounds nursery for babies born to mothers during their incarceration. Pregnant women must meet strict eligibility requirements in order to participate. The maximum participation time is generally 18 months.

The overall goal of the program is to improve parenting skills and create a positive and nurturing bond between the baby and mother.

To participate in the Parenting Program, women must not have a crime against children or a violent offense and must have taken parenting classes, completed a contract signed by security, work supervisor and agency parenting coordinator, and have good institutional conduct.

In Nebraska, the number of children who are wards of the state has tripled over the past ten years.

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1-2 NCCW Program Creates a Nurturing Bond
- 3 Book Review: Life Interrupted
- 3 Inmates "Virtually" Visit with their Families
- 4 Help Is Just an Email Away
- 5 Region III & IV CEA Conference
- 6-7 CCIP Seeks to Prevent Intergenerational Incarceration
- 8-9 Changing Thinking Results in Better Parenting
- 10 Editorial

The Parenting Connection is a publication of the Parenting Special Interest Group and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Correctional Education Association.

Send articles and comments to:

Mary Pohlman
Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution
P.O. Box 31
Plymouth, WI 53073-0031
Mary.Pohlman@wisconsin.gov

Cheri Wontor – Co-Editor



(continued from page 1)

According to Parenting Program Director Mary Alley, “Some of these children get to see their mothers, first, for supervised visits, one-on-one, and then over time, the visits can become unsupervised. If things go well, the mother can have overnight visits with her children and can get closer to putting her family back together. These mothers only need a job and approved housing before taking their children back after incarceration.

General visiting takes place in a crowded, noisy room, where the child must share his or her mother’s attention with a relative who is angry over the circumstances or the husband or boyfriend she is afraid of losing. The Parenting Program assures that the time is exclusively for mother and child. The mother may plan the day around activities such as baking or playing games and may give the child all the hugs and love she can manage. These visits are often the first time in a long time that some mothers have looked at their children through sober eyes. A mother may realize during her visit just how her incarceration has hit the lives of people she loves the most and may find the motivation to succeed with her children when she feels like a complete failure.

A child can see where her mother is living, that she is safe, that the environment is not what she may have seen on TV. For many children, visiting the Parenting Center creates some of their favorite childhood memories. Many have never seen their mother sober before.

Some children find that the Parenting Center is a safe environment for getting angry about being separated from their mothers. Many finally hear from their mothers that there is hope that things will get better.

Many of the children have seen their mothers arrested and taken away -- a terrifying experience. Staff treats the children gently and with respect. We see some children mellow with each visit.

At any given time there are ten to fifteen pregnant women in our population. Some meet the criteria for living in our Nursery Unit, a secure area. The locked door opens up to bright colors and a warm, homelike atmosphere. Mothers sit and rock their babies, talk quietly, and give each other the support new mothers crave.”

One of the women involved in the NCCW Parenting Program describes what the program has meant to her:

“I have also been blessed to work in the Parenting and Nursery areas, which has been a huge educational experience for me. Beyond all of the practical things I’ve learned, I’ve earned back some of my lost self-esteem by getting to help mothers in the same situation.

The combined effect of these experiences is that I’ve been given a rare gift: the chance to use my prison time to focus on and prepare for my future. Some people take it for granted that this is what happens here, but usually it doesn’t. If it weren’t for this program, I think I would have left here much the same person I was when I came in – detached, distracted, lost, and broken. Being given the opportunity to focus on my children and work through my fears, guilt, and shame made me much more than that. I am a more competent, committed, loving person. My children don’t just have their old mom back. They have a much better mother and human being in their lives. This mother knows that she has been blessed, thanks to this program and to the support, encouragement, and guidance of the people in it.”

The above excerpts were taken from a chapter about the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women’s Parenting Program that Mary Alley contributed to the book, *Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*, by Rickie Solinger, Paula C. Johnson, Martha L. Raimon, Tina Reynolds, and Ruby C Tapia.

For more information about the NCCW Parenting Program, you may contact Mary Alley at mary.alley@nebraska.gov or (402) 362-3317.



Book Review

Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States

Rickie Solinger, Paula C. Johnson, Martha L. Raimon, Tina Reynolds, Ruby C. Tapia

Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States is a gripping collection of writings by and about imprisoned women in the United States. This eye-opening work brings together scores of voices from both inside and outside the prison system including incarcerated and previously incarcerated women and staff who work with them. In vivid, often highly personal essays and stories, they offer an unprecedented view of women's experiences as they try to sustain relations with children and family on the outside, struggle for healthcare, fight to achieve basic rights, remake life after prison and more.

One section of *Interrupted Life* deals with "Being a Mother from Inside." It includes these chapters:

- Get on the Bus: Mobilizing Communities across California to Unite Children with Their Parents in Prison by Suzanne Jabro and Kelly Kester-Smith
- Do I Have to Stand for This? by Kimberly Burke
- Out of Sight, NOT Out of Mind: Important Information for Incarcerated Parents Whose Children Are in Foster Care by Children of Incarcerated Parents Program, NYC Administration for Children's Services
- The Impact of the Adoption and Safe Families Act on Children of Incarcerated Parents by Arlene F. Lee, Philip M. Genty, and Mimi Laver, Child Welfare League of America
- ASFA, TPR, My Life, My Children, My Motherhood by Carole E.
- The Birthing Program in Washington State by Tabitha and Christy Hall
- Pregnancy, Motherhood, and Loss in Prison: A Personal Story by Kebby Warner
- What the Parenting Program at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women Has Meant to Me by Mary Alley, A.D., and C.S.
- The Storybook Project at Bedford Hills by Beth Falk, June Benson, Amorel Beyor, and Alte
- A Trilogy of Journeys by Kathy Boudin

Chapters relating to parenting in other sections of the book include:

- Incarcerated Young Mothers' Bill of Rights: From a Vision to a Policy at San Francisco Juvenile Hall by Sophia Sanchez
- Child of a Convicted Felon by Anonymous
- Mothering after Imprisonment by Margaret Oot Hayes

Inmates 'Virtually' Visit with their Families

Founded in 1787, the Pennsylvania Prison Society is a social justice organization that advocates on behalf of prisoners, formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. Headquartered in Philadelphia, the Prison Society offers direct services and official prison visitation through a network of statewide chapters

The Prison Society provides parenting skills education classes, restorative justice resources, informational services for women, and support to elder prisoners in state and county correctional facilities. Community programming includes support groups for children with incarcerated parents and re-entry programs for ex-offenders. Lectures, forums for public deliberation, and written publications help educate and inform the



public about criminal justice issues. Through video conferencing and affordable transportation to prisons, the Prison Society helps families stay connected during periods of incarceration.

Pennsylvania Prison Society, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, provides inmates at eight state prisons the opportunity to 'virtually' visit with their families through their Family Virtual Visitation program.

This high tech videoconferencing program allows families to visit in "real time" with their loved ones who are incarcerated. Families can schedule a 55-minute visit once a month in the Prison Society's Philadelphia office where there are two family friendly rooms. Visits are \$20.

Family Virtual Visitation's goal is to help inmates incarcerated far from home stay connected to their families. Some family members cannot travel the long distance to prison locations due to their age, the cost of transportation, or disabilities. The virtual visits provide an opportunity for families who might not otherwise have a chance to see their loved ones at all. The Prison Society believes that creating stronger links between families is important for the stability of the inmate's family and his/her successful reentry into the community. Increasing the frequency of family visits helps support family relationships and improves the inmate's ability to adjust to life in prison.

The program began in May 2001 with participation at four pilot sites. Now Virtual Visitation is available at sites in Albion, Cambridge Springs, Coal Township, Dallas, Greene, Mahanoy, Muncy, and Pine Grove.

Inmates, family members, prison staff, and Pennsylvania Prison Society staff have expressed their support and appreciation of this program. Correctional officers have reported that many inmates are better adjusted and seem happier after visits. Visitors express how important and meaningful the program is to the health and welfare of their families.

For more information about the Family Virtual Visitation program, contact Program Coordinator Ebonee Allen at eallen@prisonsociety.org or 215-564-4775 ext. 103.

Help Is Just an Email Away

Parenting Special Interest Group members continue to be the most valuable resource for other Parenting SIG members.

Since its founding, the primary mission of the Correctional Education Association's Parenting Special Interest Group has been to promote communication and sharing among Parenting educators working in correctional settings. The response to a recent email request for help illustrates the eagerness of Parenting educators to generously share their knowledge and information.

Last month, Steve McCarthy sent a request to Parenting SIG National Chair Jerry Bednarowski.

Steve McCarthy is Executive Director of Addictions/Corrections and Prison Ministries for Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin & Upper Michigan, Inc. Lutheran Social Services provides parenting programming at the Eau Claire County Jail in Wisconsin. Steve was looking for research evaluating the efficacy of parenting program models in correctional facilities.

Jerry sent an email to the 180+ people on his Parenting SIG email list. Within a week, thirteen educators from eight states responded to the request with valuable leads to help Steve.



Thanks to all of these individuals who provided information and advice:

- Ken Gosnell – Maryland
- Mary Alley – Nebraska
- Gregory Austen – New Jersey
- Mary Ward – North Carolina
- Bregetta Gutierrez - Oregon
- Tracy Schiffmann – Oregon
- Charles Stuart - Pennsylvania
- Murray Ellison - Virginia
- Sue Kennon – Virginia
- Anne Brennan - Wisconsin
- Pam Petersen - Wisconsin
- Randy Scott - Wisconsin
- Joan Sprain – Wisconsin

If you need a question answered, advice on developing a Parenting program, or help locating resources; contact jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com. He will forward your request to the Parenting Special Interest Group members and wait a few days for help to arrive.

Region III & IV CEA Conference to Include Two Parenting Workshops

One of the ways the Parenting Special Interest Group spreads the word about Parenting programs in corrections is to encourage its members to present workshops at professional conferences.

Among the 35 workshops scheduled for the Region III & IV CEA Conference: Unlocking Potential held at the Ramada Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota on April 8-9, 2010 are two workshops that will be of interest parenting educators in corrections. They are:

Adapt Your Approach; Change the Outcome

This workshop will explain basic brain functioning in relation to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder brain damage. Participants will learn how to link sensory integration challenges with problematic behaviors and gain knowledge about protective factors and treatment options. Discover how to adapt your approach and change the outcome!

Presenter: Meghan Louis, Program Director, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Project in Hennepin County's Human Services and Public Health Department

Nurturing Parents to Be Nurturing Parents

Six years ago, CEA formed a new Parenting Special Interest Group. This workshop will spotlight the SIG's efforts to provide resources for Parenting instructors and promote the establishment of parenting classes, support groups, book projects, and fairs. Examples of these programs in Wisconsin institutions will be described. Questions relating to the establishment of parenting programs at your institution will be encouraged.

Presenters: Jerry Bednarowski, CEA Parenting Special Interest Group Chair and Margaret Done, Teacher Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Center

Conference information and a registration form are posted on the Minnesota CEA website. The website may be found at: <https://forums.doc.state.mn.us/site/mcea/default.aspx>.

Registration for the two-day conference is \$150. One-day registration is \$100. Conference registrations will be accepted until March 26, 2010.

Hotel reservations can be made by contacting the Ramada Mall of America at 800-272-6232. Ask for the CEA Regional Conference Event Rate of \$94/night. Hotel reservations will be accepted at this rate until March 15, 2010.

For more information, contact Sheri Thelemann at 952-496-4415 or sheri.thelemann@state.mn.us



CCIP Seeks to Prevent Intergenerational Incarceration

The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents [CCIP] located in Eagle Rock, California was founded in 1989 by Denise Johnston and Katherine Gabel. with the mission of preventing intergenerational crime and incarceration. The Center pursues its mission through the development of model services for children of criminal offenders and their families, and by producing and disseminating documentation on this population. CCIP has served more than 25,000 families since 1989 and currently provides services in four areas:

Education

The Center began developing educational projects and materials for clients in 1990 with the Prison Parents' Education Project [PPEP] for women being sent to the new Central California Women's Facility at Chowchilla. Since then, CCIP has conducted dozens of educational projects and produced 14 curricula. The curriculum manuals are sold through the CCIP Clearinghouse. Topics include:

- parent education for prisoners
- parent empowerment
- parent education for substance-dependent parents in treatment
- parent education for elementary school children
- family life education
- health education for incarcerated mothers
- women's issues
- the effects of trauma and violence on children
- mentor training
- parent advocacy for prisoners

CCIP's education projects are offered in three formats. Correspondence courses are available to prisoners nationwide. Courses taught by CCIP staff are offered regionally. They also train instructors to teach CCIP curricula; this service is offered nationally.

Family Reunification

The first CCIP client service was the Child Custody Advocacy Services [CHICAS] Project, which provides assistance to prisoners and other criminal offenders with child custody, child placement or related issues. CHICAS is a national project serving incarcerated parents throughout the United States.

Family Reunification services also include the MotherRight and FatherRight Projects, which are designed to foster healthy parenting by promoting healthy sexuality, healthy reproduction and healthy relationships among clients and their families. These projects are offered to parents in prison and in various community settings.

The MIRACLE Project offers comprehensive services, including case management, to pregnant, jailed women and their families for up to five years. MIRACLE enrolls pregnant prisoners in Los Angeles County Jails and the California Institution for Women, a state prison.

Other CCIP Family Reunification projects have provided parent mentoring, family support services, child and caregiver support groups, referrals and placements for families that are failing to supervise their children, and entrepreneurial training for children of prisoners. More than 40 projects have been offered in this component.



Therapeutic Services

The Therapeutic Intervention Project [TIP] offers site-based therapeutic services to children of criminal offenders. Conducted in public schools or similar community sites since 1991, TIP provides comprehensive services to families of criminal offenders, including:

- Children's services: group and individual therapy; developmental skills-building activities; mentoring; and/or social-recreational activities.
- Services to children's caregivers: parent advocacy meetings; parent/caregiver support groups; parent education; and/or case management.
- Services to teachers or other site staff: training and/or support groups.

The Attachments Project was developed in 1995. Attachments serves women offenders living with their infants and young children in residential treatment settings. It provides individual and group therapy, support groups and developmental interventions for mothers; attachment-building and other developmental interventions for children; and staff training on attachment and other developmental issues. In 2001, Attachments was folded into the work of the MIRACLE Project.

The Developmental Education & Enhancement Project [DEEP] provided mentoring for children of prisoners. There are several DEEP models, including intensive, therapeutic mentoring. DEEP is on hiatus in 2010.

Information

This component includes the CCIP Clearinghouse, the CCIP Journal, training and technical assistance activities, and research and advocacy efforts.

The CCIP Clearinghouse project offers a collection of over 3500 documentary and audiovisual items that can be purchased online or by mail through two catalogs. The General Catalog can be viewed online. By mail, through the Catalog for Incarcerated Parents, CCIP offers more than 200 items free of charge to prisoners and their families. A list of items available through the CCIP Clearinghouse will be published in the May/June issue of this newsletter.

The CCIP Journal is the Center's newsletter. The Journal is published irregularly and is available online on the CCIP website and by regular mail.

CCIP has conducted 15 major research projects since 1990, including the landmark "Children of Offenders" and "Children of Criminal Offenders & Foster Care" studies. Reports of these studies are available through the Clearinghouse in the CCIP Research Monograph Series.

Staff

Formerly incarcerated parents have played a central role in the Center's founding and in the development and articulation of the conceptual basis for Center research, service design and practice. In addition, formerly incarcerated persons have always made up the majority of CCIP employees. Nevertheless, CCIP has a diverse staff. At the senior level, CCIP Advisors are a group of nationally recognized academicians and professionals with expertise in a variety of areas related to CCIP research and practice.

Every other year, CCIP offers fellowships for incarcerated parents. In each fellowship cycle, two incarcerated parents are selected to work with CCIP for a period of 12-24 months. CCIP Fellows conduct research, contribute to curricula, write articles and collaborate in other ways with Center staff to advance knowledge about children of prisoners and their families. Fellowships include an offer of guaranteed post-release employment with CCIP.

More information about the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents can be found at www.e-ccip.org .



Changing Thinking Results in Better Parenting

Over the past three decades, many correctional facilities have implemented cognitive-behavioral programs. In these programs, offenders examine the effects of their thoughts on their behaviors and modify problem behaviors by changing the thinking that supports those behaviors. Offenders are encouraged to identify and replace pro-criminal thinking and behaviors with those that are pro-social.

The Correctional Service of Canada has used the principles of cognitive-behavioral programs to help offenders learn to be better parents.

Since 1988, the Correctional Service of Canada has been conducting a series of cognitively based personal development programs in its institutions and community facilities. The Parenting Skills Training Program was designed to deal with the stress that incarceration places on family relationships.

The 16-session (32 hours) program is aimed at male offenders who want to develop and improve the skills needed to relate more effectively with their children and other family members. Based on the cognitive development model, the program strives to improve offenders' cognitive functioning while, at the same time, teaching parenting skills.

The program is not based on any "typical" family structure. It accommodates a wide range of family structures including single-parent homes and step-families.

The Parenting Skills Training Program was implemented in 1991 as part of a federal family violence initiative and is one of six programs that make up the "living skills" programming series. To date, a total of 60 program delivery officers have been trained to deliver the program across all regions of the Correctional Service of Canada.

The program is structured to deal with eight common offender cognitive problems that hurt their ability to relate well with their families:

- impulsiveness
- putting the blame for their actions on other people
- believing their life is beyond their control
- lack of concrete reasoning
- rigidity and intolerance
- shortage of interpersonal problem-solving skills
- egocentricity
- underdeveloped values
- critical reasoning problems

Parenting Skills Training Program targets male offenders who have family problems related to poor communication; inconsistent, inappropriate or ineffective discipline; and the failure to apply problem-solving skills in family interactions or teach such skills to children. Their cognitive shortcomings can also lead to an inability to recognize and teach that actions have consequences.

Offenders with inadequate child development information and poor parenting skills potentially place their children at risk. They may use harsh or inappropriate parenting methods that result in the neglect of a child's basic needs, or in emotional or physical abuse. The program attempts to prevent these behaviors by providing offenders with basic parental knowledge and skills.



Three main areas are stressed in the program: understanding a parent's job within the family, the responsibility that comes with being a parent and the consequences of parental action or inaction.

The Parenting Skills Training Program is not a treatment program. It is not psychotherapy or designed to deal directly with offenders' emotional problems. The program is also not designed for offenders sentenced for child abuse, offenders with extremely volatile family relationships, offenders with family violence problems, or female offenders.

The Parenting Skills Training Program is divided into four major sections: the family, interpersonal skills, caring for your family, and developing skills. Each theme is covered during four two-hour training sessions. Within these sessions, offenders are provided with a knowledge base and are taught basic skills for addressing problems related to the theme.

The program uses a variety of techniques such as group activities, role-playing, improvisation, thinking games, moral dilemmas, problem solving, and case study examinations. All are introduced in the context of learning how to parent, but the objective is to enhance the offenders' creativity and sharpen their generally weak empathic abilities.

A research component within the Parenting Skills Training Program allows for the assessment of pre- to post-programming changes in the knowledge and attitudes of offenders who complete the program. The results of the most recent program analysis are generally encouraging. Although the ultimate effects of the program will not be seen for some time, preliminary results (based on a sample of 68 offenders) indicate that learning did occur and that participants are now more aware of family and child-care issues.

In short, offenders who participated in the program appear to have learned something about parenting and modified their attitudes toward parenting. Hopefully, this will have a positive impact on their parenting style and on their relationships with their children.

The Parenting Skills Training Program is one element in a strategy to better equip offenders to deal more constructively with their family relationships. Caring, consistent and disciplined parenting, and exposure to positive role models are key elements in the prevention of future delinquency. Hopefully, this program can help break the criminal cycle that might otherwise pass from parent to child.

More information about the Parenting Skills Training Program may be found on the Correctional Service of Canada website www.csc-scc.gc.ca

For old issues of the *Parenting Connection* newsletter, go to www.ceawisconsin.org

Check out the Parenting Special Interest Group Discussion Forum at www.ceanational.org



Editorial:

Dolly Parton began a program, *Imagination Library*, in 1996 to put books in the hands of young children. She first ran it in the county in which she lives, then expanded to her whole state.

Now the program is an international program offered in the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This program provides books to needy children beginning at birth with the book, *The Little Engine That Could* (Platt & Munk, 1961), and ending at the end of the child's fifth year with *Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come* by Nancy Carlson (Viking, 1999).

The child receives an absolutely new book once a month from his/her birth to age five. The web address is <http://www.imaginationlibrary.com/>. The program handed out 6.2 million books in 2009.

The Imagination Library partners with local agencies like United Way to provide this service. Imagination Library would be a wonderful program for the families of our inmate parents. I know some communities in Wisconsin participate in the program.

Mary Pohlman

**Parenting Connection
Mary Pohlman
Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution
P.O. Box 31
Plymouth, WI 53073-0031**

