

Parenting Connection

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“What Works” in Programs Serving Incarcerated Fathers

With rising rates of fathers incarcerated and numbers of children suffering repercussions from having a parent in prison, there has been an increased interest in developing programs that specifically address the needs of fathers in the criminal justice system.

To determine which programs and practices are most effective in promoting responsible fatherhood among fathers involved in the criminal justice system, researchers Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Ph.D., Mary Burkhauser, M.A., Sara Ericson, B.S., & Allison Metz, Ph.D. embarked on a rigorous evaluation of recent research on programs for incarcerated fathers.

Of the 20 programs considered in this review, only four programs met the rigorous evaluation criteria necessary to yield high quality research results.

“Model” programs for fathers involved in the criminal justice system were defined as those that:

- Had been experimentally evaluated (randomized controlled trial study)
- Had been evaluated by an independent, external evaluator with publicly available evaluation results
- Had a sample size for evaluation that exceeded 30 in both the treatment and control group
- Retained at least 60% of the original sample for the evaluation
- Had at least one outcome that was positively changed by 10%
- Had at least one outcome with a substantial effect size that was statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

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“Model” programs for fathers involved in the criminal justice system fulfilling these criteria were:

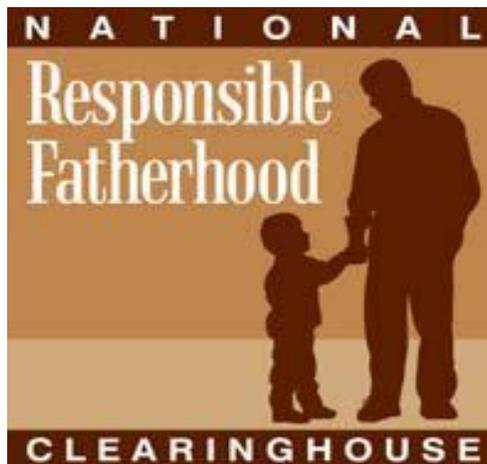
- Center for Employment Opportunities Program (New York)
- Filial Therapy Training with Incarcerated Fathers (New York)
- Parental Training for Incarcerated Fathers (Oklahoma)
- Systematic Training for Effective Parenting for Incarcerated Fathers (across the US)

The four “model” programs shared these eight common features:

1. Provided staff training or hired staff with experience working with incarcerated populations
2. Used theoretically driven program models
3. Allowed a sufficient time to complete important core activities adequately (at least 8 weeks)
4. Taught both incarcerated and re-entering fathers important skills and gave them opportunities to practice using them
5. Provided incentives to engage fathers and families
6. Engaged fathers either one-on-one or in small group settings
7. Addressed the unique needs of both incarcerated and re-entering fathers
8. Provided diversity in the delivery of program services to incarcerated fathers

The researchers note that the features of the “model” programs are suggestions based upon existing research. They cannot say which combinations of these features will work in programs serving fathers involved in the criminal justice system.

The complete brief, *“What Works” in Programs Serving Fathers Involved in the Criminal Justice System? Lessons from Evidenced-Based Evaluations*, is available from the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse at www.fatherhood.gov. There you will also find more detailed descriptions of all 20 programs considered, as well as those four programs that have been shown to be “model” programs.



Update on Wisconsin State Reading Association Video on Reading to Children

The Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA) Families and Children Committee plans to debut their video on the importance of parents reading to children at their August 2010 meeting. The video addresses brain development theory, language development, vocabulary building, and readiness for school. The preliminary version of the video was terrific. It is approximately twelve minutes long and aimed at parents. The WSRA will be offering these videos for sale soon. The price will be very reasonable.



Program Helps Parents in Prison

Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution has a school and many programs aimed at helping inmates ready themselves to re-enter society. Perhaps one of the least known programs to the general public is the Family Support Parenting Program.

The institution opened in 1997 and the Family Support/Parenting Program began in 1998 explained Parenting Program teacher Christine Ingham.

“We are trying to help these gentlemen to realize their responsibility to their children,” said Ingham. “They don’t necessarily have to be in the home, but they need to some way be involved in their child’s life.”

Ingham said that she currently teaches two parenting classes, which meet five days per week for approximately 12 weeks. There are a total of 32 inmates in the parenting program, 16 in each class. Each class meets for about 45-55 minutes per session.

Ingham said that the program is run in accordance with Department of Corrections guidelines and is a part of the overall Re-entry Program that was established in 2008 in order to hopefully make each inmate’s re-entry into society more successful through educational training, job skills training, parenting education and many other areas.

“Many of these inmates come from families with no male influence,” said Ingham. “We want to build stronger relationships between child and dad.”

Ingham’s course teaches the inmates about the numerous aspects of parenting. To help her in this task, there is a network of volunteers who go into the institution on a regular basis to help the inmates.

Crawford County Extension Family Living Agent Jane Schaff is one of these volunteers. Schaff talks to the inmates about proper child care. “She is just outstanding in working with these men,” said Ingham.

People from Options in Reproductive Care of LaCrosse also talk to the inmates about such topics as birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, and good communications within the family.

Randi Harris of Catholic Charities discusses domestic abuse issues with the inmates, many of whom grew up in abusive situations.

Deb Mason of the Prairie du Chien Family Resource Center talks about several topics including sudden infant death, shaken baby syndrome and the free services that are available.

Miguel Morga of the Crawford County Child Support Agency teaches the inmates all about child support and helps each individual with their specific child support issues. He also explains the need for child support and tries to dispel the notion that child support is something that the “woman” is doing in order to “get them” and make them miserable.

“He’s really a pleasure to work with and is a very informative man,” said Ingham about Morga.

County Nurse Gloria Wall visits the men to teach them about the importance of immunizations and where they are available for free in each county. “She is very generous with her time,” said Ingham.

Other topics include prenatal care, how to parent from prison, how to stay involved in the child’s life, their role as a parent and their rights and responsibilities as a parent. (continue on next page)



“Many of these men don’t know what it is to have a dad, let alone be a dad,” said Ingham. “Parenting is a never-ending job.”

Ingham said that she has received good comments from inmates within the institution who have taken her course. They’ve told her that they enjoyed the class and that their family situations have improved significantly in the form of increased visits, letters and phone calls.

“I think that when they show true sincerity in their efforts to be better dads, they get a better response,” said Ingham.

Because no communications is allowed there is no way for Ingham to get feedback about an inmate’s progress as a parent once he is released back into society. There is always hope however, that the parenting program is making a difference.

“If we can make a difference in one person’s life and in one child’s life, then I guess that is the reward,” she said.

by: Ted Pennekap, Prairie du Chien Courier Press
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It Is Time to Update the Guide to Successful Parenting Programs

One of the services provided by the Correctional Education Association’s Parenting Special Interest Group is the publishing of the *Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections*. It was last updated in June 2008.

Since June 2008, programs have been added or dropped and staff has changed. It is time to update the *Guide*. We would like your help in doing this update.

In the next week, you will be emailed the June 2008 edition of the *Guide*. If you don’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.

If your institution’s information is current, please send me an email stating that no changes need to be made so we can check you off our list.

Please have the updates completed by June 1. Changes be made electronically or on a hardcopy printout. We hope to have the updated *Guide to Successful Parenting Programs in Corrections* distributed in July 2010.

Hardcopy changes may be mailed to:
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Electronic changes may be emailed to:
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Pennsylvania Prison Society In-Prison Parenting Classes

Founded in 1787, the Pennsylvania Prison Society is an organization that advocates on behalf of prisoners, formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. The Prison Society offers a variety of services, including re-entry programs for former prisoners, virtual visitation for family members and S.K.I.P. (Support for Kids with Incarcerated Parents).

The Prison Society has placed a special focus on the development of programs to address the specific needs of incarcerated individuals and their families. Research has shown that maintaining family relationships and parenting programs that teach individuals how to cope with incarceration result in dramatically lower recidivism rates. To encourage positive family relations and give incarcerated parents the opportunity to discuss and learn about the needs of their children, the Prison Society has established a cognitive-therapy based program that fosters parenting skills and a commitment to positive family values.

The Prison Society has provided parenting classes in state and county prisons, facilitates support groups for children of incarcerated men and women and operates a family resource center in a state prison. The twelve-session parenting program uses an interactive curriculum that focuses on the following objectives:

- to increase parents' knowledge about what constitutes child abuse and neglect
- to increase parents' ability to handle their feelings and manage their anger
- to increase parents' understanding of various stages of child development
- to increase parents' understanding of positive parenting; to increase parents' ability to interact in responsive and nurturing ways
- to increase parents' awareness of community resources for themselves and their families

The program addresses each objective through role-play exercises, outside readings, interactive activities, discussion and hands-on skill development.

For several years the Prison Society has been providing a six-week version of the parenting curriculum to mothers and fathers incarcerated in the Philadelphia Prison System. Results have shown an increased understanding of the issues facing their children, and a better awareness of appropriate parenting strategies.

The Prison Society brings a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding incarceration and its impact on incarceration to its parenting classes. In fact, our experience and knowledge base is so strong that we are often called upon to provide "train the trainer" sessions to staff from other non-profits who work with prisoners and former offenders. We at the Prison Society are proud to have been providing important services to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the city of Philadelphia, for hundreds of years.

For further information about our parenting, or other programs, please contact Betty-Ann Izenman, Program Director, at baizenman@prisonsociety.org or 215-564-6005 x114.

by: Betty-Ann Izenman, Program Director
Pennsylvania Prison Society



Father/Mother Read Program Tips

While searching for resources to use with our Father's Reading Program, I came across an article in *Reader's Digest: Household Hints & Handy Tips, 1991*. The tips are pertinent to questions and concerns our fathers had when reading to their children.

Question from fathers: I read to my children during a visit but they run and dance away from me after only a page. What should I do?

Reader's Digest suggestion: Give the child paper and drawing materials and allow him/her to draw while you read.

Question from fathers: You say writing is a big part of reading. I do not read or write so well, how do I teach writing to my child.

Reader's Digest suggestion: Leave an old typewriter out permanently for your family to type on. Even the child who hasn't learn to read and write can create "words," and the one who can will pour his or her imaginings freely and happily. (Today's technology makes an even easier task using an old computer although those manual typewriters with the piled up letter keys help kids understanding of how things work).

Reader's Digest suggestion: Take dictation from a child who can't write yet, or write out a story the child tells you. Label any pictures she draws with her own description of them.

Reader's Digest suggestion: Above all, when you read your child's writing, enjoy the creativity and don't focus on errors.



CCIP Clearinghouse Article Postponed

In an article on the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (CCIP) that appeared in the March/April issue of this newsletter, the CCIP Clearinghouse project was mentioned. The CCIP Clearinghouse project offers a collection of over 3500 documentary and audiovisual items that can be purchased online or by mail.

The article stated that a list of items available through the CCIP Clearinghouse will be published in the May/June issue of this newsletter.

The CCIP Clearinghouse is on hiatus beginning April 1, 2010 while new items are acquired for the collection and a new catalog is prepared for publication. The Clearinghouse will reopen on October 1, 2010.

Because of the hiatus, we will delay the publishing of the article listing of items available through the CCIP Clearinghouse until the September/October issue of the *Parenting Connection* newsletter.

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



Uncovering the Truth about FASD

On any given day in the United States, 10,657 babies are born:

- 1 of these babies is HIV positive
- 2 of these babies are born with Spina Bifida
- 3 of these babies are born with Muscular Dystrophy
- 10 of these babies are born with Downs Syndrome
- 20 of these babies are born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- 100 of these babies are born with Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders

These are some of the alarming facts used by Meghan Louis to stress the importance of addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in Parenting classes.

Meghan Louis is with the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Her workshop, *Adapt Your Approach: Change the Outcome*, at the Region III & IV CEA Conference in Bloomington, MN on April 8-9, 2010, explained basic brain functioning in relation to FASD damage. Participants learned how sensory integration challenges resulting from prenatal alcohol use by the mother are linked to the child's subsequent problematic behaviors.

FASD is a lifetime disability with brain injury that never goes away. It is the leading known preventable cause of mental retardation.

In her workshop, Meghan busted myths about alcohol use during pregnancy, emphasizing that no amount of alcohol can be considered safe. She detailed how alcohol use during pregnancy can affect each of the child's brain domains:

- Cognition
- Attention
- Achievement
- Executive Function
- Memory
- Motor
- Sensory and Soft Neurological Signs
- Language
- Social Communication
- Adaptation

More information on FASD may be found online from:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention --- <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas>
- FASD Unit at the University of Washington School of Medicine --- <http://depts.washington.edu/fadu>
- Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome --- www.mofas.org/what-we-do/diagnosis/resource-directory.aspx

Or you may contact the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome at info@mofas.org or 651-917-2370.

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



EDITORIAL

Spring is here. Birds are singing, grass is growing, and the worms are again squirming on the road into our institution. My Father Read students learned how to use their environment to enrich the books they will read to their children. Each time we meet, I supply them with sheets that show ways to interact with their children. As I became more creative with my presentations the inmate/students let me know that they would like more projects that they can do with their children. We made large letters from the beginning of their children's names, then wrote positive affirmations to the children and decorated the letters.

I would really enjoy hearing what you do to help the students work with their children. My colleagues have started to bring me little articles that they find in different publications. The students really liked the one about using cream, salt, ice and plastic bags to make ice cream.

With this issue of the *Parenting Connection*, my term as Editor is up. I will miss sharing my time with you. Have a wonderful summer.

Mary

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