

Parenting Connection

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Wee Ones Nursery Helps Create "Critical Bond"

Up to the 1950s, prison based nursery programs for children born in custody were common in correctional facilities across the country, according to the 2009 report by the Women's Prison Association, *Mothers, Infants and Imprisonment: A National Look at Prison Nurseries and Community-Based Alternatives*. By the early 1970s every state, except New York, had closed their nursery programs. Now, with more women being incarcerated than ever before – and a growing recognition of the importance of the family bond to both maternal and child success – several states are taking steps to keep mothers and infants together.

The states that have taken to incorporating prison nurseries within their correctional systems have done so in recognition of the "critical bond" formed between mother and child within the first two years of life. Prison officials in these states believe that the first two years are a crucial time period for the mother and her infant. Most facilities allow the infant to reside with her mother until he/she is 18 months old because research has shown that the child will remember the connection formed with their mother, but will not remember the atmosphere in which it was formed.

The Indiana Department of Corrections implemented its Wee Ones Nursery (W.O.N.) at Indiana Women's Prison in May 2008. Indiana is one of only nine states that currently have a prison nursery.

Wee Ones Nursery

According to the Indiana Department of Corrections website, the number of women in prison is increasing at nearly twice the rate of male offenders (Harrison & Beck, 2003). Fully 70% of women in prison are mothers, leading to estimates of 1.3 million American children with mothers in prison (Mumola, 2000). "The typical incarcerated female is of child rearing age, unmarried, a minority group member, a mother of minor (continued on page 2)

In This Issue

- 1 Wee Ones Nursery Helps Create "Critical Bond"
- 4 NFI's Program for Incarcerated Fathers Works, Says Study by Rutgers University
- 5 15 Important Life and Job Preparation Topics for Parents and Kids
- 6 Brain Blog: Reading a Book While Holding a Child
- 7 Need Help?
- 7 Tell Us About Your Program
- 8 Editor's Musings

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(continued from page 1)

children, undereducated, economically marginal, and has considerable experience with or is dependent on drugs or alcohol” (Sandifer & Kurth, 2000, pg. 365). These mothers, although typically desiring the opportunity to establish or continue to bond with their child, may have limited chances for the frequent and routine contact that promotes the growth of the relationship.

The Wee Ones Nursery is a voluntary program available for pregnant offenders who meet eligibility criteria. The intent of the W.O.N. program is to provide parenting education and to ensure quality time to strengthen the mother-infant bond during the initial months after the infant’s birth. During the past 19 months, 36 offenders have participated in the W.O.N. Mothers and their babies have private rooms in one housing unit. A small cadre of trained nannies from the offender population also live on the housing unit, and assist the mothers in caring for their infants while the mothers attend classes, counseling appointments, or similar obligations. The program also includes ongoing training of the mothers in child development and attachment.

Wee Ones Nursery Criteria

- Offender is pregnant at the time she is delivered into the custody of the Department of Correction
- Offenders earliest possible release date is not more than eighteen months after the projected delivery date
- Offender must have a conduct history free of any Class A findings of guilt for the past 12 months and free of any Class B findings of guilt for the past 6 months
- Offender has never been convicted of a violent crime or any type of child abuse or child endangerment determined by the pediatrician
- Offender and her child must meet established medical and mental health criteria determined by the pediatrician
- Offender has at least an eighth grade reading level; no one else has been granted custody or is sharing parenting privileges of the child
- Offender must be willing to sign a covenant agreeing to abide by all the rules of the W.O.N. program and indicating she will participate fully in the program

Additional Programs Offered to Wee Ones Nursery Participants

Family Healing

The focus of learning is divided among themes of understanding family system patterns and how individuals are a part of them, the importance of family history, and family communication patterns.

Healthy Starts

This group offers education and support to women who are pregnant or mothers of children under age two. Focus is on building self-esteem, healthy relationships, and connecting with community resources.

Clarian Health Network

This group provides one-on-one assistance with mothers and their infants, focusing on child development, feeding issues, safe sleeping practices, appropriate discipline, family supports, and stress management.

Riley Development Center

This group offers regular and ongoing training on child development.

Other States

According to the Women’s Prison Association report, *Mothers, Infants and Imprisonment: A National Look at Prison Nurseries and Community-Based Alternatives*, the other states besides Indiana having prison nurseries are California, Illinois, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, Washington, and West Virginia.

The California Institute for Women at Corona is the only female facility in the state that has a Mother-Child Reunification Program. It opened in 2009. After women spend up to 18 months in the nursery they will be transitioned onto parole or into a community-based program such as the Community Prison Mothers



Program. In addition to the nursery, the facility runs a child-visiting program and mother-father mediation program. All pregnant women are placed in this institution and other women can request to be sentenced or transferred there.

The Illinois DOC opened the Moms & Babies Program at the Decatur Correctional Center in 2007. To qualify for the Moms & Babies Program a woman must have committed a non-violent offense and be within two years of release after giving birth.

In 1994 the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women opened its prison nursery. An infant is allowed to reside with the mother in prison if the mother's release date is before the child turns 18 months. Childbirth and parenting classes are mandatory before and after the birth of the inmate's child. To participate in the nursery the mother must give birth while in state custody and not have a violent criminal record. She also should not have any serious mental health concerns. A screening committee reviews each case before women are placed in the nursery.

Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women in New York is the oldest nursery in operation. It opened in 1901 and remained open throughout the 20th century. A child is permitted to stay at Bedford Hills with its mother until 1 year of age; however, there are possible exceptions if the mother's release date is within the next 6 months. Mothers at Bedford Hills must participate in parental classes taught by qualified inmates. Several aspects of a woman's past are examined before she can participate in the nursery. This includes determining who is going to have custody of the child, if the mother has a history of involvement with the child-welfare system, the length of her sentence, past episodes of incarceration, and the nature of her crime. Women who have committed arson or who have a history of child abuse are not eligible for the nursery. A woman must give birth while in custody to qualify for the program.

The Ohio State Reformatory nursery opened in April 2001. It can hold up to 20 inmates and their infants up to 18 months old. Every mother has a nanny who, like the mother, is an inmate who has taken parental classes and is serving time for a non-violent offense. The nanny is a volunteer inmate who is available at any time to care for a mother's child when the mother has made a prior commitment. To qualify for the Achieving Baby Care Success Program women must give birth while in state custody and can not have a violent criminal record. Women must attend family training courses, adhere to rules and be in good mental and physical condition. Only women who are serving a sentence of 18 months or less at the time of delivery are eligible.

The South Dakota Women's Prison's nursery opened in 1998. Women who give birth while in custody are allowed to participate in the program as long as the mother's crime was non-violent in nature. All expenses related to the baby's care are the responsibility of the mother, including health care expenses. Mothers keep their infants in their cells. Other women at the facility are able to take classes to become babysitters and the mothers are able to choose who they would like to act as their babysitter.

The nursery at Washington Corrections Center for Women opened in 1999. To qualify for the Residential Parenting Program the mother's sentence must be completed within three years of giving birth. The women must also be classified as minimum custody and be convicted of a non-violent offense. After her child is born, the mother may keep her child with her in the nursery until the child is 18 months old. At this point the mother and child move to a pre-release center for the next 18 months. Mothers at the Washington Corrections Center can choose to have a caregiver who looks after the infant while the mother is at work.

West Virginia opened its nursery at the Lakin Correctional Center for Women in 2009. The KIDS (Keeping Infant Development Successful) Unit is available to pregnant women who are within 18 months of release or parole. The nursery is made up of modular homes located outside the prison's perimeter fence. To participate in the nursery the mother must not have been convicted of a sex crime or a crime against a child and must be free of disciplinary write-ups.



NFI's Program for Incarcerated Fathers Works, Says Study by Rutgers University

A new longitudinal evaluation of National Fatherhood Initiative's *InsideOut Dad*™ program for incarcerated fathers, conducted by Rutgers University-Newark's School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA), has found that the program is effective, qualifying it as the first evidence-based program designed specifically for working with inmate fathers.

SPAA's Economic Development Research Group (EDRG), led by Deborah Ward, Ph.D., studied the implementation of the program at three correctional facilities in New Jersey operated by Community Education Centers, Inc. (CEC). The report is entitled "Assessing the Impact of *InsideOut Dad*™ on Newark Community Education Centers' (CEC) Residential Reentry Center Residents." The study and an executive summary can be downloaded at www.fatherhood.org/evaluation.

The study compared the effects of the *InsideOut Dad*™ program on more than 300 incarcerated fathers who participated in the program (intervention group) to incarcerated fathers who did not participate in it (control group).

From the quantitative data collected, the researchers found statistically significant changes in confidence, knowledge, behavior, and attitude variables between the intervention group and the control group.

The researchers also conducted interviews with program facilitators. This qualitative data indicated that several of the practical issues that emerged in previous evaluations of other parenting programs for incarcerated parents did not become a problem, such as staff turnover, poor coordination, interruptions during class, a lack of respect, and comprehension difficulties.

"Despite the expansion of parenting programs in prisons, reviews of the academic literature have found that there are very few in-depth evaluations. Many of the studies that have been conducted have not used rigorous methods or control populations leading to tenuous conclusions about the effectiveness of such programs," said Steven Block, lead researcher on the study and Research Associate at EDRG. "This study, however, addressed those gaps and found powerful evidence that this program works."

Based on the changes in quantitative outcomes, qualitative results from participant interviews, and the program's overall efficacy as shown in this and two other independent evaluations, the researchers recommended that the *InsideOut Dad*™ program be implemented as a standard, evidence-based program at the CEC sites that were part of the evaluation. Additionally, the report recommended that the New Jersey Department of Corrections consider the program for other state facilities.

This study is important as a new body of research is emerging that shows that a key to reducing recidivism is ensuring that inmates have strong family connections.

Roland C. Warren, president of National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) said, "There is a 'father factor' in incarceration – over half of the male inmates in state and federal institutions are fathers, and a majority of them grew up without fathers. Interventions designed specifically to serve the needs of these fathers are key to addressing the intergenerational cycle of imprisonment that plagues too many communities."

NFI launched *InsideOut Dad*™ in 2005 to address these very issues. The program increases inmates' self-worth and gives them valuable fathering and relationship skills. It is being implemented in over 300 correctional facilities across the country, and has been standardized in over 20 states and the city of New York.



15 Important Life and Job Preparation Topics for Parents and Kids

GetCareerWise.com publishes creative career exploration and life skills resources that help parents, teachers and mentors prepare kids for entering the employment world. It was founded by two former Human Resources marketing professionals. The following article was published by Co-Owner Susan Schneider on their site: www.GetCareerWise.com. Feel free to pass these tips on to your students who want to help their children develop strong life and job preparation skills.

Teachers and guidance counselors are not the only ones who can teach kids valuable life and job skills. Any adult can provide valuable mentoring. A good place to start is with the fundamental attributes and attitudes that provide a strong foundation for success in life and in the workplace.

You can equip your kids with relevant, universal skills using your own hard-won wisdom and hands-on life experiences. Kids can learn from your mistakes as well as your successes. They appreciate honesty and can see through insincere or phony attempts to connect with them. Kids respect adults who treat them with respect and dignity. Be honest about what you've learned the hard or easy way and what you would do differently and why.

Let them ask difficult questions. Give the best answer you can or assure them you will find the answer together. Listen. Discover their concerns, anxieties and dreams. Share your own.

The fifteen words below are good conversation starters. You can begin by looking them up in a dictionary, talking about the literal definition and then what they mean in life.

Have fun discussing each word, concept and value. Give examples, tell stories, relate them to people you know or experiences you've had. Ask your kids what these words mean to them.

Think about people you have worked with, or who are in the news, characters in books and movies or songs, historical figures and leaders, family members who represent the good, the bad or the interesting. Be creative!

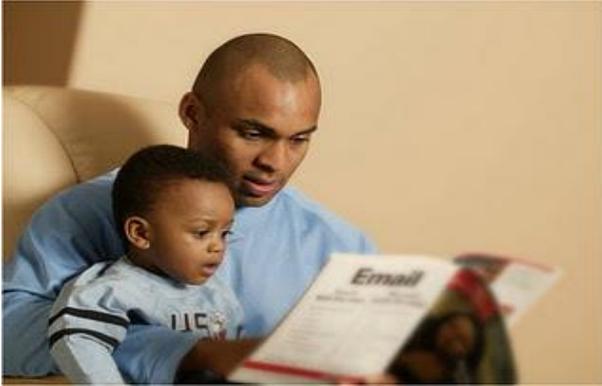
Share with kids who your role models are and why.

Add to the list. What else is important for success and personal fulfillment? What skills, abilities and attributes do you want your kids to have as a foundation for how they live their lives or conduct themselves in the employment world?

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Integrity | 9. Vision |
| 2. Responsibility | 10. Patience |
| 3. Collaboration | 11. Honesty |
| 4. Accountability | 12. Pride |
| 5. Creativity | 13. Humor |
| 6. Punctuality | 14. Humility |
| 7. Flexibility | 15. Perseverance |
| 8. Team Spirit | |

To join CEA go to: www.ceanational.org





Brain Blog: Reading a Book While Holding a Child

On her blog <http://braininsights.blogspot.com>, Deborah McNelis posts information on the importance of brain development in the early years and how easy it is to provide stimulating activities for children. With Deborah's permission, in issues of this newsletter, we are including Brain Blogs from her blog. For the complete information, go to Deborah's blogspot.

For more Information on brain development or easy activities you can do with your child to promote brain development visit www.braininsightsonline.com.

This issue's Brain Blog by Deborah is:

Reading a book while holding a child contributes to brain wiring in many valuable ways. Brain connections are made through visual stimulation, direct interactive language, and from close physical contact with a caring adult.

I am very pleased to share a guest blog on this important topic from Sixty Second Parent.™ This site is offers a wealth of information for parents and I am honored to share their work with you. Enjoy this beneficial post for yourself or share with other parents and grandparents!

Children can learn and benefit greatly from being read to right from the day they are born.

Big ones, little ones, soft ones, plastic ones and musical ones. Children's books come in all sorts of fascinating shapes and sizes. Grab a book and snuggle up on the sofa with your child and share the joy of story telling with them. The benefits of reading out loud to your baby or young child are simply endless!

Benefits

- It encourages children to make connections between the "heard" word and the meaning "behind" the word.
- It gives them a positive foundation to pre-reading skills that aids the process of becoming independent readers in the future.
- One of the most important skills a parent can teach children is how to communicate: how to speak, listen, and read. By reading aloud to your children, you are teaching them all of these skills.
- Reading to young children also expands their vocabulary, improves memory, and allows them to practice listening skills.
- Read to your child from a variety of sources such as books, cereal boxes, magazines, road signs, and greeting cards. By reading from a variety of sources, you are teaching the importance of the written word.
- Try making books from cardboard and pasting pictures from magazines - kids love these.
- Baby books should be sturdy and uncluttered with lots of bright primary colors. Babies also like books with photos of real people - particularly of other babies.



- As your baby grows and becomes more mobile, incorporate movement and actions that go along with the books. For example, when reading "Humpty Dumpty" pretend to fall with your little one at the right time. They will soon come to anticipate this movement and be really excited about it. It's remarkable how quickly they learn these little routines and grow to love them.
- Toddlers rapidly develop a group of favorite books and will want you to read them again and again. This can be a little boring for you, but it's important to your toddler because they find great delight in repetition. It encourages them to learn the meaning of words, which is vital for language development.
- As your child becomes older, he will want books that actually tell a story and have an ending that makes sense to him. Books help to develop the toddler's attention span. They contribute to children forming a rich vocabulary and verbal skills.
- Books also help to develop thinking and the imagination.
- They also contribute to the development of basic reading concepts such as following the words from the left to right side of a page. Place books within easy reach of your child, so they can enjoy looking at them on their own.

So go and grab some books from your local book shop. Or get into the habit of taking your young child to the library to choose his own. This can go a long way to helping your child become a proficient and confident reader later on in life.

Need Help?

Do you have any questions or need some advice on starting or improving your parenting classes, parent/child literacy program, or parent support group for offenders?

We have an email list of almost 200 parenting educators from 29 states who are eager to help. Just send an email to jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com with your question or request and I will forward it to our email list. Then wait a few days and the helping responses will be sent to you.

Tell Us About Your Program

One of the goals of the Parenting Special Interest Group is to provide a vehicle for communication among educators who are teaching or developing parenting programs in correctional facilities. You are invited to share your ideas by contributing an article for a future issue of this newsletter.

Here are some suggestions for articles:

- Share a creative lesson plan that you use in your Parenting class
- Compile a list of books and videos you use in your Parenting class
- Describe how your parent/child book project works
- Share advice on establishing a Fathers or Mothers Fair
- Describe a training workshop that you found useful
- Describe how you involve community organizations in your program
- Describe how you have made your institution more family-friendly

Email your articles to barbara.rasmussen@wisconsin.gov or jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com.

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



Editor's Musings:

The holidays are upon us and there is so much to do that it is easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season—and easy to put off or forget issues more important than the decision about which to serve—whole cranberry or jellied cranberry sauce.

I recently read an article, “Dare to Lead,” which encourages parents to become leaders, a trait that is beyond the providing for, training of, and getting the children ready for the world. Parents who are leaders set an example for their children, earn and give respect, and don't fear failure. They guide by encouragement and support rather than criticism and blame, and attend to the spiritual health of the child.

It takes a lot to be a parent/leader now, but in this confusing, contradictory world we live in, it is a job that has to be done in order for children to make some sense of their environment. Good luck to all of us in getting this message across whether it be to our own families or our parenting classes!

And may all of your holidays be happy ones. By the way, the cranberry sauce dilemma in our family is a given—it has to be the jellied stuff!

Barb Rasmussen

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

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