

# Parenting Connection

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## Booklet Offers Help for Parenting Instructors

Are you planning to start a parenting program and need some ideas? Are you looking for materials to enhance your parenting classes? Do you want to help keep families connected? Are you interested in starting a parent/child book reading project? Are you interested in mentoring programs for children of incarcerated parents? Do you want to help offenders transition back into your families? Do you need expert information on incarcerated parents and their families?

The Parenting Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Correctional Education Association (CEA) and the Correctional Education Association-Wisconsin has created a directory of resources to help correctional educators enhance existing or create new parenting programs in their correctional facilities. *Prison Parenting Programs: Resources for Parenting Instructors in Prisons and Jails* is now available on the [www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org) website or will be emailed to those requesting copies.

Almost 70 resources are described in the booklet. Each listing includes a website or email address where more detailed information may be obtained. The resources are grouped according to the predominant focus of the program. Programs categories include:

- Multi-Faceted Programs
- Parenting Skills Programs
- Family Support and Mentoring Programs
- Parent/Child Book Reading Programs
- Re-Entry Programs
- Handbooks for Incarcerated Parents and their Families
- Books on Incarcerated Parents and their Families
- Videos on Incarcerated Parents and their Families
- Newsletters for Parenting Educators in Correctional Facilities

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

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Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin has partnered with CEA-Wisconsin to print hardcopies of the *Prison Parenting Programs* booklet. CEA-Wisconsin wishes to thank President and CEO of Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin Bob Pedersen, Executive Coordinator Sara Saxby, and Community Circles of Support Regional Leader Anne Strauch for generously arranging for Goodwill Industries to print the *Prison Parenting Programs* booklets.

The hardcopies will be distributed to Wisconsin correctional institutions, community agencies and people who request them. They will also be given those attending workshops that the Parenting Special Interest Group presents. If you like to request a hardcopy of a booklet, email [jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com](mailto:jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com).

The *Prison Parenting Programs* booklet is intended to be a "living document." That means information will continue to be added as relevant programs and resources are identified. The booklet will be updated approximately every two months and will be posted on the [www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org) website.

Anyone wishing to suggest additions to this directory may do so by sending them to [jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com](mailto:jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com). Corrections or updates to the listings in the directory are also welcome.

The Parenting SIG was created in 2004 with the goals of helping incarcerated parents to become more caring, concerned, and informed and minimizing the intergenerational cycle of incarceration. The Parenting SIG seeks to improve communication and cooperation among correctional educators engaged in providing parenting programs in correctional settings and encourage the development of new programming opportunities. Since its onset the Parenting SIG has sought to create a professional network, not only for the instructors of parenting classes, but also for the supervisors of children of incarcerated parents programs, coordinators of parent/child reading projects, and organizers of parents' fairs.

## **Parenting Special Interest Group's initiatives include:**

- Establishing a parenting network – Newsletters, handbooks and other information are distributed to a network of over 700 correctional educators, volunteers and administrators in over 30 states.
- Publishing a newsletter – A bi-monthly *Parenting Connections* newsletter has been published for parenting educators working in correctional settings regularly since November 2004. The newsletters highlight innovative parenting skills programs, parent/child reading projects, family support and mentoring programs, community resources, teaching methods, and special projects.
- Posting information on websites – Articles and newsletters are regularly posted on the [www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org), [www.ceanational.org](http://www.ceanational.org), and [www.fairshake.net](http://www.fairshake.net) websites.
- Presenting workshops at professional conferences – The Parenting SIG has spread the word regarding the importance of providing Parenting programming in corrections by encouraging parenting instructors to conduct dozens of workshops at national, regional, and state correctional and education conferences.
- Publishing handbooks for incarcerated parents and their families – Two handbooks have been published by the Parenting SIG, *Reaching Out: A Handbook for Parents Incarcerated in Wisconsin* and *Reaching In: A Handbook for the Families of Parents Incarcerated in Wisconsin*.
- Serving as an advocate for parenting programs in corrections – Information has been furnished to governmental workgroups, correctional administrations, and community organizations at the national, state and county levels.
- Serving as a resource for parenting instructors – Advice on developing Parenting programs is provided upon request to correctional educators seeking information on teaching or developing parenting programs.



# Helpful Hints for Children with an Incarcerated Parent

In 2007, Creative Family Projects, LLC was founded by Sue Jeweler, a teacher, and Judith Levine Goozh, a speech-language pathologist, both who retired after working over 30 years in Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools.

They sought to identify problems and provide solutions by synthesizing information from organizations, institutions, and corporations into booklets and training modules for the benefit of children, youth, and families. Their efforts address the impact of trauma on children by encouraging and inspiring open and honest dialogue by all stakeholders; addressing children's concerns and feelings; and educating professionals about issues related to children and families. Booklets and presentations act as catalysts for awareness and change.

Creative Family Projects is best known for creating the booklet, *Mommies and Daddies in Jail*. The 16-page booklet clearly and concisely addresses questions and deeply felt concerns of the children who are hidden victims of their parent's crimes and are often afraid and confused by the changes in their own lives.

In addition to the *Mommies and Daddies in Jail* booklets, Sue and Judi, have created the [www.creativefamilyprojects.org](http://www.creativefamilyprojects.org) website. The website provides information for those working with children of incarcerated parents and offers them an opportunity to ask questions.

The following *Helpful Hints for Children with an Incarcerated Parent* is posted on their website:

- Tell the school about what is happening to you and your family – Talk to the counselor, teacher, principal, speech and language pathologist, special education teacher, case manager, or any staff member with whom you are comfortable
- Talk to a staff member about the impact of your situation if your child is acting out or showing signs of unhappiness
- Talk to your family doctor or someone at your clinic or urgent care facility
- Contact agencies or organizations for help
- When you talk to your child
  - Be honest
  - Be calm, model self-control
  - Be patient
  - Be consistent about rules
  - Encourage your child to express anger by using words
  - Use “I Messages”
- When your child talks to you
  - Listen
  - Use a parroting technique.
  - Re-state what the child says
  - Be aware of your body language
    - Make eye contact
    - Be aware of your facial expressions
  - Keep an open-mind
- Find positive outlets for your frustration
- Find healthy outlets for you and your child
- Keep a journal
- Foster a positive relationship between your child and the incarcerated parent
- Help others



# Stories Have the Power to Transport Children . . . of All Ages

The Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF) believes in the transformative impact literacy skills can have on children's likelihood of success in school, work, and life. Since its founding in 1998, CLiF has provided free and inspiring literacy programs and brand-new books to 150,000 low-income, at-risk, and rural children up to age 12 in almost 85% of the communities in New Hampshire and Vermont.

CLiF's fun, interactive literacy programs benefit children from many backgrounds, all of whom are at risk of growing up with low literacy skills:

- Children from low-income families
- Children in shelters
- Children in low-income housing
- Children of prison inmates
- Refugee children
- Migrant children
- Rural children

The Children of Prison Inmates program inspires children of inmates to read more often and gives prisoners extra confidence to read to their children, even if they are not strong readers themselves. CLiF reaches children of inmates and their parents through these activities:

- Inspiring storytelling presentations for inmates and their children
- On on-site libraries in prison visiting rooms
- Book giveaways – Parents choose brand-new books to send home as gifts; children select new books on visiting days
- Literacy seminars for inmates to help them read with their children
- The Storybook program that allows inmates to record children's books and send the recordings and the books home to their children

On CLiF's website, [clif@clifonline.org](mailto:clif@clifonline.org), is a blog containing many postings on what's new in children's books, advice for parents regarding children's behavior and the impact of literature on children's lives. The following is a posting made by Duncan McDougall, Children's Literacy Foundation Executive Director, about his experiences giving literacy presentations at a New Hampshire prison.

## CLiF Spotlight:

### Connecting Inmates and their Children Through Stories

When an officer behind the tinted bulletproof glass pressed a button, the second heavy steel door closed with a reverberating clang. Deb and I descended a wide metal grill stairway and entered the New Hampshire State Prison for Men (NHSPM), home to 1,600 inmates. Coils of razor wire and periodic guard posts encircled the perimeter, and a chill wind swept through the central courtyard.

Deb Nelson is an AP English teacher from Lebanon, NH, and the newest member of CLiF's Board of Directors. Recently she and I spent seven hours in NHSPM as part of CLiF's Children of Prison Inmates program.

We gave four presentations to a total of 135 inmates about the significant positive impact that sharing books regularly can have on their children's development, and ways to make reading fun and easy even if



the parent is not a strong reader. Nationally, 70% of prison inmates have low literacy skills, and their children are at very high risk of following in their footsteps.

Over the next year, CLiF will provide NHSPM and another prison in Rutland, Vermont with

- a children's book library for the family visiting room
- special storytelling events and book giveaways for inmates and their kids during Father's Day and other holidays
- literacy seminars designed to encourage and help inmates share books and stories with their children
- and many new children's books the inmates can mail home to their kids, or read and record to CD and mail both the book and recording home

Since CLiF started its prison program ten years ago, I've found almost all the inmates who attend CLiF events are attentive and interested in trying to do something positive for their children. It's common for more than half of the inmates to shake my hand and thank me warmly for coming to talk with them and bringing books that they can send to their kids.

I spend much of my time at CLiF telling stories to scads of children and giving periodic presentations to groups of adults. But nothing is quite as surreal as standing before a room full of large, generously tattooed inmates in a well-guarded facility, extolling the virtues of *Timothy Tunny Swallowed a Bunny* and *Sheep in a Jeep*.

During one of the NHSPM seminars I said to the inmates: "If you don't mind, I'm going to pretend you're a group of kids, and I'll read a few pages of a story so you can witness some of the techniques we discussed."

I grabbed *My Friend Rabbit*, a cute story aimed at two- to six-year-olds about a rabbit who gets a toy plane stuck in a tree and creates a ladder of animals to help him get it down.

I read aloud five pages of the 20-page tale, closed the book, completed the seminar, and then told the first row of inmates they could come up to select books for their children. Deb and I helped inmates find the right titles. We heard many comments like this: "My daughter is twelve but I'm not sure what's she into. I haven't seen her for a few years. Do you have any suggestions for books?"

Suddenly someone called, "Mr. Duncan. Mr. Duncan!" Several inmates in the second and third rows were waving me over.

"What's up?" I asked.

"Well," they said eagerly, "What happened in the rest of the story?"

So, pretending I had 40 six-year-olds in front of me, I read *My Friend Rabbit* from start to finish in that dark, echoing cement room. The inmates laughed, asked questions, and offered crazy ideas just like any other group of young kids I've ever met. And, transported by the power of a story, for a few moments those inmates might have felt like they were kids again, too.

**For past issues of the Parenting Connection newsletter, go to [www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org)**



# Kansas DOC Offers Range of Family-Based Services

The Kansas Department of Corrections provides a full range of family-based services designed to provide family members with information about the correctional system, help incarcerated parents develop better parenting skills, provide the incarcerated parents opportunities to stay connected with their children, support the caregivers of the children of incarcerated parents, and assist offenders in transitioning back into their family.

Within most of the male facilities, standardized parenting classes, Play and Learn sessions, caregiver support groups, and Family Transitions workshops are in place. Within the Kansas Department of Corrections' only women's facility, mothers in prison participate in parenting classes and receive an all-day visit with their children to reward successful completion. The institution also remodeled visitation areas to be bright and colorful, with toys, books, and partitions for privacy encouraging an intimate and positive visiting experience. Family Transitions classes and workshops are also offered, allowing the women and families to address issues such as communication, expectations, and forgiveness prior to release.

## Family Orientation

Family Orientations provide family members with information about ways they can assist their incarcerated loved one transitioning back into the community. Information is provided about risk reduction as well as parole conditions and requirements. Community based resource information is also available. Family Orientations are currently available in the Kansas City, Topeka and Wichita parole offices.

## Family Transition Class

The Family Transition class is offered to incarcerated individuals who will be releasing to a family member or who have had difficulties with family members in the past. Each of the six sessions addresses a topic relating to family reintegration. The objective of the Family Transition class is to assist participants in transiting back to their families upon their release. A main focus of each session is to provide the participants with an understanding of the balance between the expectations of their family members upon their release and the participant's expectations. Upon completion of the class, participants should be able to identify how to balance the wants and needs of their family with their own wants and needs. Following the completion of the Family Transition Class participants are eligible to participate in a Family Workshop held at the facility. Facility staff, family members and the inmate are encouraged to attend the Family Workshop to discuss family concerns.

## Family Workshop

A Family Workshop is a meeting held at the facility and includes the inmate and their family. The Family Workshop provides an opportunity to discuss expectations and concerns the inmate or family member(s) have prior to release. Family Transitions Classes and Workshops are currently available at the Topeka, Lansing, Winfield, El Dorado and Ellsworth Correctional Facilities.

## InsideOut Dad Parenting Curriculum

The National Fatherhood Initiative developed the *InsideOut Dad* in 2005 to help incarcerated fathers to become better dads while on the inside and continue their growth as dads when they return to communities. The program is based on the philosophy that supports the growth and development of fathers and children as caring, compassionate people who treat themselves, others and the environment with respect and dignity. The *InsideOut Dad* Parenting Curriculum is currently taught at the Winfield, Ellsworth and El Dorado Correctional Facilities.



## Parenting Inside Out Parenting Curriculum

*Parenting Inside Out* is a parenting curriculum developed specifically for incarcerated and criminal justice involved parents. It is based on the best practices *Parent Management Training* program for at-risk families, but addresses the unique situation and issues of criminal justice involved parents and accommodates different institutional teaching environments. The *Parenting Inside Out* curriculum is currently taught at the Lansing Correctional Facility.

## Active Parenting Now

The *Active Parenting Now* curriculum shows parents how to develop courage, responsibility and character in their children. It also explains positive discipline and communication techniques that help families run more smoothly. The *Active Parenting Now* curriculum is currently taught at the Topeka Correctional Facility.

## Play and Learn

*Play and Learn* classes are offered in conjunction with the *InsideOut Dads* and *Active Parenting Now* classes. The *Play and Learn* classes provide children whose parents are incarcerated an opportunity to come to the facility and interact with their parent in a safe, structured and facilitated play group session. This interaction provides the incarcerated parent an opportunity to bond with their child as well as practice the skills they have learned throughout the parenting class. *Play and Learn* classes are currently available at the Winfield and El Dorado Correctional Facilities.

## Caregiver Support

Caregiver support groups provide an opportunity for the caregivers of the children of incarcerated parents to gain a better understanding of the impact incarceration may have on children and strategies and ideas of how to help the children. The groups also provide an opportunity to learn more about resources available as well as discuss concerns or problems they have encountered during their caregiver experience. Caregiver support groups are currently available in the Winfield and El Dorado Correctional Facilities.

program information from the Kansas Department of Corrections website

## 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:

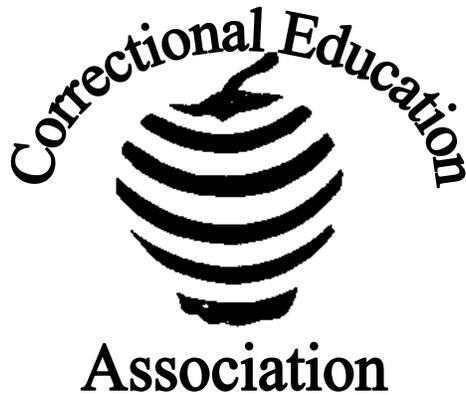
- Share a creative lesson plan that you use in your Parenting Class
- Compile a list of books and videos you use in your Parenting Class
- Describe how your parent/child book project works
- Share advice on establishing a Fathers or Mothers Fair
- Describe a training workshop that you found useful
-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

Email your articles to [jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com](mailto:jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com).

To join CEA go to: [www.ceanational.org](http://www.ceanational.org)



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### **Editor's Message:**

Incarceration of a parent often negatively affects the entire family. Not only does the family have to deal with the social stigma associated with a family member being in prison, but many factors impacting the family's survival are exacerbated. Financial stability, employment, housing, medical care, education, and child care may all be threatened.

In addition to the incarcerated parent developing parenting skills and staying connected with the family, the family needs to address the issues that impact their daily lives. Two websites can be very valuable in helping the family cope with these daily issues and they are FREE.

Fair Shake's innovative nationwide website, [www.fairshake.net](http://www.fairshake.net), focuses on successful prisoner reentry. Fair Shake offers former offenders and their families a free virtual office that can be accessed from any computer. In addition to email, data storage and a personal resource directory; members can create a web page to use as a supplement to employment, housing, medical care, or community services applications.

A service provided by the Goodwill Community Foundation is its [www.GCFLearnFree.org](http://www.GCFLearnFree.org) website. The website offers online learning opportunities to anyone who wants to improve the technology, literacy and math skills needed to be successful in both work and life. Hundreds of interactive lessons topics include: Everyday Life, Career, Internet Basics, Math Basics, Email Basics, Job Development, Reading, and Money.

Urge the incarcerated parents you work with and their families to use these websites before and after release to increase their chances of a successful return to their family and community.

**Jerry**

