

Parenting Connection

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Parenting From Prison Reduces Consequences of Parental Incarceration

Parenting education programs may serve a vital role in helping to reduce the numerous negative consequences associated with parental incarceration and also build important skills and behaviors among incarcerated parents. Indeed, incarcerated parents are likely to suffer from a multitude of risk factors that may stem back to their own childhood.

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M A T T E R S

For example, research suggests that incarcerated parents have experienced many negative events throughout their lifetime. In particular, female compared to male inmates are more likely to have come from families plagued by substance abuse issues and violent backgrounds and are more likely to have experienced rape, incest and physical or sexual abuse (Feinman, 1994; Wellisch, Predergast, & Anglin, 1994). For these and a variety of other reasons, incarcerated parents may have lacked appropriate adult role models while growing up. Due to the lack of role models, these individuals may have never observed or experienced effective parenting practices and are likely to benefit from positive parenting education.

Parenting education programs also teach parents positive parenting skills and effective communication skills, which help to improve parenting practices in general (Cowan & Cowan, 2002). Additionally, parenting education programs targeted specifically for incarcerated parents may help in the process of reuniting with their families post-release. Evaluations of existing parenting education programs offered in prisons suggest that participation in these programs leads to positive changes in parental attitudes. For example, Thompson and Harm (2000) found significant improvements in participants' self-esteem and child expectations,

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corporal punishment and family roles among incarcerated mothers. Furthermore, parenting education programs in prison have also been found to increase knowledge of child development and non-violent approaches to child behavior management (Showers, 1993).

Parenting education programs aim to teach incarcerated parents new behaviors and skills that may help to lessen the negative consequences of parental incarceration and may help to reduce the negative impact of this forced separation on children. Providing incarcerated parents the opportunity to both learn and practice new parenting skills in the classroom could prove valuable in easing the process of reuniting with one's children post-release and in combating the negative consequences of parental incarceration.

Numerous studies report a link between engagement in educational programming while incarcerated and recidivism rates. Inmates who participate in education programs have significantly lower recidivism rates than inmates who do not participate in such programs (Fabelo, 2002; Gordon & Weldon, 2003; Chappel, 2004). Research evidence also suggests that recidivism is 6% lower for inmates who stay in touch with their families while incarcerated (Ditchfield, 1994). Therefore, inmates who maintain family bonds while incarcerated have lower recidivism rates than those who do not maintain such bonds. Thus, parenting education is beneficial not only in the sense that these programs teach positive parenting practices and help to strengthen family bonds, but also because there is a potential for these programs to reduce recidivism rates.

Evidence documenting the efficacy of parenting programs in incarcerated populations is limited (Palusci et al., 2008) and there is a need for continued research in this area. Adding to the sparse research evidence on the efficacy of these programs, it is important to note that the number of parenting education classes that encourage the strengthening of family bonds through visitation (Perez, 1996) or that provide participants the opportunity to practice and build effective communication skills are few in number. Moreover, the majority of parenting education programs in prison have targeted mothers, and very few studies to date have evaluated the effectiveness of parent education for incarcerated fathers. Parenting from Prison (PFP) is one such parenting education program offered in prisons in the state of Colorado that aims to strengthen family bonds and increase knowledge of and positive attitudes toward parenting practices among both male and female inmates.

The Parenting from Prison (PFP) program is an adaptation of the Partners in Parenting (PIP) curriculum, which is offered by Colorado Parenting Matters, LLC. The PIP curriculum was enhanced to include topics specifically relevant to incarcerated parents (e.g., maintaining contact with children during incarceration, reuniting with children post-release). The PFP curriculum aims to strengthen family relationships and increase positive behaviors. These tasks are accomplished by increasing parental knowledge about risks, resiliency and developmental assets. Parents learn about effective resiliency factors, and about the risks that should be of concern, with a strong emphasis placed on preventing substance abuse. Risk factors discussed in the curriculum include community (e.g., availability of drugs), family (e.g., family history of the problem behaviors), personality/behavioral (e.g., antisocial behavior) and peer-related (e.g., friends who engage in the problem behavior) factors that place children at risk for substance abuse and related problems in adolescence or adulthood (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). Resiliency (e.g., social competence) and protective factors (e.g., solid family bonds) are those that help safeguard youth from substance abuse (Hawkins et al., 1992).

The PFP curriculum consists of 20 sessions. Topics covered in the PFP curriculum include: self-esteem, risk and resilience factors, communication, discipline, problem solving and decision making. Furthermore, information about drugs and alcohol is provided within all of these topics (e.g., associations between self-esteem and drug and alcohol use, discipline about drugs and alcohol). A key component of the PFP curriculum is BrainWise® (Barry, 1999) and the 10 Wise Ways are integrated throughout all components of the PFP curriculum. A major goal of BrainWise® is to teach new skills (e.g., building support networks,



recognizing warning signals, strategies to prevent emotional reactions from escalating) that enable individuals to respond to problems with good judgment rather than impulsive reactions. PFP also places a great deal of emphasis on issues related to reintegration. For example, participants learn about topics related to reunification with one's family (e.g., making a reunification plan, making decisions about prior intimate relationships) and finding employment post-release (e.g., discussing conviction record with potential employers, practicing interview skills). Prior evaluations of PFP suggest this program is effective in increasing parenting efficacy, parenting skills and parental knowledge (Gonzalez, Romero, & Cerbana, 2007). It is a program model listed on the National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices.

For more information, contact Christine B. Cerbana, Managing Director, Colorado Parenting Matters, at ccerbana@gmail.com or (970) 227-5602 or visit the www.coloradoparentingmatters.org website.

by: Christine B. Cerbana
Colorado Parenting Matters

Zero to Three Website Provides Early Development Resources

Neuroscientists have documented that the earliest days, weeks and months of life are a period of unparalleled growth when trillions of brain cell connections are made. Research and clinical experience demonstrate that the earliest relationships and experiences a child has with parents and other caregivers dramatically influence brain development, social-emotional and cognitive skills, and future health and success in school and life.

While intimate contact and hands-on learning between incarcerated parents and their babies and toddlers is impossible in nearly all correctional facilities, incarcerated parents and their children may receive some benefit from increasing their knowledge of early childhood development.

Founded in 1977 by leading researchers and clinicians in diverse disciplines focused on child development, the Zero to Three non-profit organization works to ensure that babies and toddlers benefit from the early connections that are critical to their well-being and development.

Zero to Three seeks to play a key role in ensuring that babies and toddlers get a strong start in life by supporting:

- Parents with practical resources that help them connect more positively, deeply and continuously with their babies
- Professionals with knowledge and tools that help them support healthy early development
- Policymakers in advancing comprehensive and coherent policies which support and strengthen families, caregivers and infant toddler professionals

Zero to Three seeks to provide the knowledge and to increase the will of parents to support infants and toddlers in reaching their full potential. To do this, Zero to Three has created a website with resources and practical tools for parents, professionals and advocates. Among the resources on the www.zerotothree.org website are:

- Early Development & Well-Being
 - Ages and Stages
 - Brain Development
 - Challenging Behaviors
 - Developmental Screening and Assessment
 - Early Intervention

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- Health and Nutrition
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
- Sleep
- Social and Emotional Development
- Temperament
- Trauma and Stress
- Early Learning
 - Child Care
 - Early Literacy
 - Early Math and Science
 - Language and Communication
 - Play
 - School Readiness
 - Screen Time
 - Social Skills
- Parenting
 - Discipline and Limit Setting
 - Grandparents & Extended Family
 - Military and Veteran Families Support
 - National Parent Survey
 - Positive Parenting Approaches

To join CEA go to: www.ceanational.org

***DADLY Dads* Book Highlights**

Real Images of Fathers

A new coffee table book, *DADLY Dads: Parents of the 21st Century* will be available June 2017. *DADLY Dads* will showcase the good nature, wisdom and value of fathers as parents. Published through Motivational Press, its compelling photos and content will inspire conversation about the refreshing, positive images of 21st century fathers as responsible, competent, active and nurturing parents.

The idea came about when two dads — authors Hogan Hilling from Crestline, California and Austin Dowd of Raleigh, North Carolina — met at a dads' convention and discussed an idea about shooting environmental portraits of dads.

"I loved the idea," said Hilling, author of ten published books. "I suggested adding a form with questions for dads to answer and more photos of dads with their kids. The result was pure gold with dads opening up and sharing intimate facets of fatherhood."

The passionate, tender and loving candid photos combined with the genuine, eloquent and heartfelt comments from a diverse group of amazing dads all over the world represent fatherhood and masculinity at its best.

DADLY DADS

PARENTS OF THE 21ST CENTURY



"Fatherhood Is Alive and Well All Over the World."
—Hogan Hilling



“Austin and I hope and believe that readers will come to the same conclusion we have about the true state of father-hood — that the responsible, active, nurturing caring, loving, dedicated dads far outnumber the irresponsible, absent dads,” Hilling said. “And more importantly, that fatherhood is alive in well all over the world.”

The book features a diverse group of 114 dads of various family dynamics from USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland, Netherlands, France, Argentina, Brazil and South Africa.

One of the dads featured in the book is Darius Walker who is incarcerated at the Redgranite Correctional Institution in Wisconsin. Darius is a dad of a twenty-five year-old son, Darius, Jr.

As Darius explains in his section of the book titled, “Phoenix Dad,” while he worked as a manager for a fast food chain he had been living a life plagued by poor choices that included criminal activity and alcohol abuse. He is forever remorseful for the death of the victim and especially his loved ones.

During his time in prison, Darius says, “I have *risen like a Phoenix from the ashes* and renewed my faith in God. I am a full-time college student, pursuing a Bachelor of Ministry Degree. I’ve also developed my love for the arts and music. I enjoy singing, songwriting and rapping. I use music to express how much I admire and love my son, who is a gifted musician and artist. I also enjoy watching sports. I’ve learned to set my ego aside and also determined to continue learning how to be the best dad I can be during my incarceration.”

Darius doesn’t allow the concrete prison walls to keep him from building a relationship with his son. “I also encourage my son to be great, remind him that he can do anything and to appreciate the many opportunities he has to live a successful and productive life.”

Darius believes that “*Pride is a learning disability.*” He feels that even though I did not set a good example for his son, he still has time to serve as a better role model for him. “A child needs to experience a parent’s love in action not in theory. My son doesn’t ask me for material things. What he expects me to do is make my presence felt in his life by being open and honest when we discuss life issues, experiences and thoughts with each other. This is even more important since my incarceration. While concrete prison walls and fences keep us apart, I feel I’m still responsible for staying emotionally connected with him in ways that will offer words of encouragement and to show him his wellbeing is my top priority.”

When Darius Jr. expressed a desire to play drums, Darius saved money from his prison earnings for a year to buy him a drum machine.

One of the people Darius credits with helping him change the course of his life as a father is Pastor Jerry North of Provision Ministry. “I met him in prison while he worked as the chaplain for another correctional facility. He was my first pastor and became my surrogate father. I watched him humble himself to serve other people through love of God and mankind. He taught me the true meaning of unconditional love by his actions and how to endure life. He also inspired me how to love without judgment and to always be kind to people.”

Hogan Hilling’s next project is another book, *Amazing Moms: Parents of the 21st Century*. So far moms from USA, Canada, Australia, UK, France, Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, Hungary, Mozambique, China and Malaysia will be represented in the book. The book will also include incarcerated moms. The book is scheduled to debut this summer.

DADLY Dads: Parents of the 21st Century and Hogan Hilling’s other books may be ordered by contacting him at hogan@unitedweparent.com for autographed copies or purchased at Barnes and Noble or Amazon.com.



Child Welfare Information Gateway Provides Tools for Families of Prisoners

Child Welfare Information Gateway promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more.

A service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Information Gateway provides access to print and electronic publications, websites, databases, and online learning tools for improving child welfare practice, including resources that can be shared with families.

Parental incarceration and the disruption of family relationships can produce negative outcomes for children, including poverty, poor academic performance, aggression, depression, delinquency, and substance abuse. Incarcerated mothers and fathers are unable to work on parenting skills that may be necessary for reunification, and separation interferes with the ability of parent and child to form or maintain a strong attachment.

Family-centered services for incarcerated parents, their children, and families focus on parenting programs, family strengthening activities, nurturing of family relationships, community supports for families during incarceration and following release, and gender-specific interventions.

National Resources

Child Welfare Practice with Families Affected by Parental Incarceration

Provides an overview of the intersection of child welfare and parental incarceration; highlights practices to facilitate parent-child visits during incarceration, include parents in case planning, and work toward reunification; and points to resources to help caseworkers in their practice with these children and families.

Fathers for Life: Strengthening Families and Fatherhood: Children of Fathers in the Criminal Justice System - U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (2011)

Encourages and supports positive relationships of families with infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children of incarcerated fathers or fathers on probation or parole.

Incarceration and Family Relationships: A Fact Sheet - National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (2010)

Provides data on the nature of family involvement among inmates, research on factors that strain family relationships when one partner is incarcerated, and efforts to maintain marriages and parent-child relationships during incarceration.

Incarceration and CPS Involvement - Berger, Cancian, Cuesta, & Noyes (2016)

Examines the intersection of parental incarceration and Child Protective Services involvement and its influence on parents, children, and families.

Incarceration and the Family: A Review of Research and Promising Approaches for Serving Fathers and Families - Herman-Stahl, Kan, & McKay (2008)



Explores the characteristics of incarcerated individuals, their partner and parenting relationships, and the processes through which imprisonment and reentry may undermine these attachments in order to develop effective family strengthening programs and policies.

Meeting the Needs of Children With an Incarcerated Parent - Reckman, Gates, Schnug, & Rothstein (2012)

ABA Children's Rights Litigations

Encourages attorneys, social workers, and related professionals to acknowledge the significance of the child-parent relationship when working with children who have an incarcerated parent.

Mothers in Prison: Maintaining Connections With Children - Mignon & Ransford (2012)

Social Work in Public Health: Special Issue: The Impact of Parental Incarceration on Children and Families

Identifies challenges to the development and maintenance of contact between incarcerated mothers and their children, including recommendations for correctional agencies to enhance opportunities for incarcerated mothers to foster positive connections with their children.

A Voice for the Young Child with an Incarcerated Parent - Reckman & Rothstein (2012)

ABA Children's Rights Litigations

Evaluates the trauma of incarceration on parent and child interactions and offers strategies to overcome barriers to support healthy parent-child interactions in prison.

State and Local Resources

Arizona Family Members Behind Bars: Difficult Questions Children Ask and Answers That Might Help: A Caregiver's Guide to Arizona's Criminal Justice System From Arrest to Release - Arizona's Children Association & the Pima Prevention Partnership (2011)

Provides tips and suggestions to assist parents and other caregivers help children understand and cope with the impact of having a parent imprisoned in Arizona.

Beyond the Walls: A Guide to Services for Families Affected by Incarceration - Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (2009)

Describes available services to provide support and help families dealing with the incarceration of a family member.

Children's Justice Alliance

Seeks to improve outcomes for children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system and supports initiatives to create systems change and parent leadership in Oregon.

Connecting Children with Incarcerated Parents - Advocacy, Inc., Corinne Wolfe Children's Law Center, New Mexico CASA Network, New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department, New Mexico Citizen Review Board, & New Mexico Children's Court Improvement Commission (2011)

Child Protection Best Practices Bulletin: Innovative Strategies to Achieve Safety, Permanence, and Well-Being

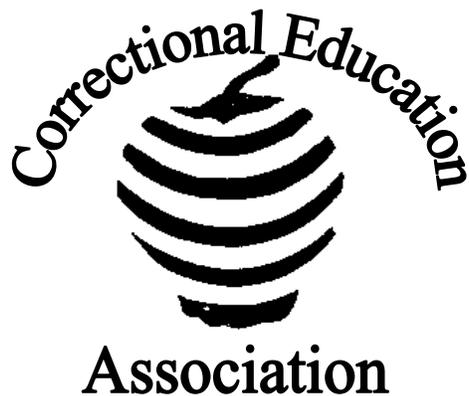
Highlights current practices for parent-child contact visitation as well as identifies barriers to parent-child visits.

The Effects of Parental Incarceration on Children: Needs and Responsive Services - General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Joint State Government Commission (2011)

Includes information from research findings on the adverse effects of parental incarceration on children, and proposes recommendations in the following areas: arrests and judicial proceedings, caregiver and support services, family and corrections interaction, and reentry and reunification.



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Editor's Message:

Parents are a child's first teachers. From them is where a child will get his or her first experiences with books and reading. Many correctional teachers, literacy organizations and faith groups realize this and have developed parent/child reading programs that bridge the divide between incarcerated parents and their children. These programs may provide free books that the incarcerated parent may record and share with the child, education on how to select books and involve children in reading, and even special visiting opportunities for incarcerated parents involved in the program.

The *Prison Parenting Programs: Resources for Parenting Instructors in Prisons and Jails* handbook describes some of these programs that have been established in Alabama, Illinois, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

Go to the www.ceawisconsin.org website and check the "Multi-Faceted Programs" and "Parent/Child Book Reading Programs" sections of the *Prison Parenting Programs* handbook for descriptions of programs and think about starting a program in your area. Each program in the handbook has a contact person or website listed where you can get more information on the program.

Jerry

Tell Us About Your Program
Email your article to:
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