

Parenting Connection

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Pure Heart Aims to Create a Safe Haven

Sherelle Hogan grew up with her parents behind bars. Both of her parents were in prison from the time she was 6 to 14 years old. She experienced first-hand that children of these incarcerated parents are often forgotten.

In Sherelle's home state of Michigan, 228,000 children currently suffer from the devastation of having a parent incarcerated. Sherelle has observed, "When experiencing such a traumatic circumstance as a child, it can lead to the ultimate stigma which is being emotionally unavailable, uneducated and placed in the criminal system."

As an overcomer herself, Sherelle felt, "It was my obligation to create a safe haven for these children to come together and see that they are not alone." To focus on these children who have been psychologically affected, she founded the Pure Heart Foundation in 2015. Pure Heart Foundation has created effective programs that will not only enhance these children academically, but it will help them break barriers and succeed in life in spite their circumstance.

Pure Heart Foundation is a community based, non-profit organization that offers therapeutic, emotional learning and embracing experiences for children of incarcerated parents. Pure Heart Foundation is designed to respond to the overall concerns of children from incarcerated parents and households.

Understanding the traumatic effect that incarceration of a parent has on each child mentally, socially, academically and financially, Sherelle says, "Pure Heart aims to create a safe haven for each child to express themselves, break emotional barriers, encourage one another and face this huge giant with children who can empathize with them. Bridging the gap through a positive atmosphere, academic enhancement, mentorship and character development, Pure Heart seeks to turn doubts into dreams, heal hurt hearts and break the cycle of incarceration.

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Pure Heart aims to give children the necessary tools and resources needed in order for them to become positive citizens of society and compete in this global world. Its goal is to give these children all opportunities possible so they can be all they can be and maximize each life experience. Through therapeutic, emotional learning and embracing experiences Pure Heart strives to give these scholars a place where they can be motivated, inspired, and supported in their efforts.

Since its founding, Pure Heart has served children throughout the state of Michigan and has helped children navigate through the stigma and barriers that comes with having a parent incarcerated. Through the Pure Heart Foundation programs, 4,000 students have received counseling, tutoring, mental wellness sessions, after school programs, scholarships, Christmas giveaways, trips to the Pistons game, and more, helping to fill the gap of absent parents and to make sure they do not end up in the prison system too.

The Pure Heart Foundation offers several afterschool enrichment programs. Some examples of the programs by the Pure Heart Foundation are:

- **Hear My Voice Afterschool Enrichment Program** – Hear My Voice provides students with a healthy outlet for surging emotions. Reading original poetry aloud can encourage trust and empathy in the community, while also emphasizing speaking and listening skills that are often neglected in literature class. This program allows children to build a community of communication, enhance reading levels, improve literacy scores, and foster social and emotional learning.
- **Know Yourself Mentoring Program** - Know Yourself is designed to enrich, empower and educate scholars on the importance of self-value. The Know Yourself Movement will enhance and strengthen children in areas such as self-esteem and character development. It will foster a community of youth knowing the importance of self-worth. The key components of this program will identify the influences of self-esteem, educate scholars on indicators of low self-esteem, create an environment that will allow scholars to show their uniqueness and do a variety of activities that will increase their self-esteem.
- **Dear Mom, Dear Dad Saturday Meet Up Session** - Dear Mom, Dear Dad is a program that was developed to encourage a consistent communication between children and their incarcerated parent. Scholars meet every Saturday and write their parent in letter form or via email. This program fosters healthy communication, breaks communication barriers and develops relationships despite distance. Each month in this session a photographer is present to send updated photos to the parent that is incarcerated.

To find out more about the Pure Heart Foundation programs or to donate to the Foundation, go to www.pureheartcares.org or email info@pureheartcares.org.

To give voice to her personal journey, Sherelle Hogan has authored an autobiography, *The Prisoner's Kid: My Journey to Freedom*. The sad, funny and upsetting autobiography shares a story of an urban American youth who struggled to cope with the life-altering effects of America's mass incarceration. A childhood punctuated with both parents being incarcerated, Sherelle found herself in a life of psychological imprisonment that was equivalent to what her parents were coping with. Often, she experienced haunting feelings of being unwanted and thoughts of suicide. After being nearly suffocated by soul-shattering trauma, being on life support did not derail her fight for her emotional, spiritual, and mental freedom. This compelling and inspiring story will undeniably engulf emotions. In sharing life's darkest moments and the ability to find light through darkness, *The Prisoners' Kid* is a truly a survivor's story of triumph that will inspire others to free themselves from entities that often imprison the mind, body, soul, and spirit. A powerful woman now applauds the girl of the past. *The Prisoners' Kid* is an example of how the circumstances that were meant to kill you may be turned into the catalysts for your life's richest blessings.

To order *The Prisoner's Kid: My Journey to Freedom*, go to www.sherellehogan.com.



How 11 States Handle Prison Nurseries

In a March 4, 2018 article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, reporter John Caniblia details how 11 states offer nurseries for incarcerated women who give birth while serving their prison sentences. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons has a similar program.

The prison nurseries seek to help incarcerated mothers bond with their children. Most of the women participating were sent to prison for low-level offenses. Many of the nursery programs work to ease re-entry for the women and prevent them from cycling back to crime.

The prison nursery programs described in the *Plain Dealer* are:

California

Program: Community Prisoner Mother Program, Pomona, California

Eligibility requirements: The mothers are screened extensively for behavior and mental health issues. They cannot be convicted of a violent offense. But the regulations make an exception for manslaughter in the case of an abusive male spouse or partner, as long as the woman has no other prior offenses. The incarcerated women who are chosen for the program can give birth to a child and spend as much as six years caring for the child in a 24-bed facility 30 minutes east of Los Angeles.

Length of stay: More than 90 days and up to six years.

Other information: A private contractor runs the dorm-like structure, providing treatment, high school and college classes, and job training for mothers. While their mothers are in classes, the children take part in Head Start programs and other classes. The mothers care for their children in their rooms.

Delaware

Program: New Expectations Group Home, Newark, Delaware

Eligibility requirements: The program offers a nursery setting in a group home for pregnant women and young mothers convicted of crimes. The women who are able to enter the program are placed on probation, rather than being sentenced to prison. No woman with a history of violence or crimes against children can be involved. Those with mental health or behavioral also are not permitted. Most of the women who go through the program are addicted to drugs.

Length of stay: About 15 months.

Other information: The Delaware prison system and its medical provider, Connections Community Support Program, monitor the home. A woman cannot leave unsupervised, smoke or carry money. Those who break the rules are sent to prison for the completion of their sentences, and the child is placed with family or authorities.

Illinois

Program: Moms and Babies, Decatur Correctional Center, Chicago, Illinois

Eligibility requirements: The program screens mothers for mental and physical health, as well as their criminal backgrounds. The mothers must attend a variety of individual and group therapy sessions to help them deal not only with parenting, but also the reasons behind what led them to prison.

Length of stay: 24 months, meaning the mother must be eligible for release from prison within that time.

Other information: A spokeswoman for the prison system did not have figures on the recidivism rate for the program but said the program has an "80% success rate." The program promotes building a strong bond between the mother and the child while the inmate is in prison, and it offers special monitoring and family services counseling that will ensure the family remains strong after the mother is released.

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Indiana

Program: Wee Ones Nursery, Indiana Women's Prison, Indianapolis, Indiana

Eligibility requirements: Mothers cannot have any charges or allegations of violence in their criminal histories, whether they were convicted of those charges or not. They also cannot have serious misconduct issues in prison and must have at least an eighth-grade reading level. The nursery has "nannies," inmates who help the mothers with their newborns. The nannies must meet the same requirements as the mothers in the program.

Length of stay: About 18 to 24 months.

Other information: The program, begun in 2008, is modeled after Ohio's prison nursery, and the focus is on providing young mothers with the tools to bond with their children in a safe, upbeat environment. The recidivism rate for mothers in the program is about 19%, versus the 35% rate for the overall female population, a prison spokesman said.

Nebraska

Program: The Nursery Program, Nebraska Correctional Center for Women, Southeast Nebraska

Eligibility requirements: Acceptance is determined by a committee on a case-by-case basis. The mother must never have committed a crime against children, must be screened by a parenting coordinator and prison substance abuse director. The woman cannot have used drugs during her pregnancy and must have an excellent record as an inmate. The mother must be eligible for release within 24 months.

Length of stay: 18 to 24 months.

Other information: The program began in 1994. It has a recidivism rate of about 10%; the overall recidivism rate for the state is about 30%, said Mary Alley, the nursery program's coordinator. Authorities have highlighted the prison nurseries in Nebraska, Washington state and Ohio as being at the forefront of the movement to build the bond of mother and infant.

New York

Program: The Bedford Hills Nursery, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, New York

Eligibility requirements: The prison's medical and mental health staff determines whether a woman is fit for the program. The mother must go through an eight-week prenatal class and a nine-week parenting program. While at the nursery, she is required to see a pediatrician twice a month for infant screenings and medical concerns. The child's health is also an important factor in participation, as the program cannot support the needs of infants born with serious medical issues.

Length of stay: 12 to 18 months. The mother must be released from prison within that time.

Other information: The program is the oldest in the country, beginning in 1901. A clinical social worker solely assists nursery mothers, helping women prepare for re-entry. The recidivism rate for the program is about 3%, according to published reports. Overall, the female recidivism rate in New York is about 30%.

Ohio

Program: Achieving Baby Care Success, Ohio Reformatory for Women, Marysville, Ohio

Eligibility requirements: The mother must be sentenced to prison for a low-level, nonviolent felony. She cannot have convictions for any crime against a child. The Department of Jobs and Family Services from the inmate's home county must be willing to approve the placement. Both the mother and the child must be medically cleared to participate. The prison's warden must approve the decision.

Length of stay: 36 months

Other information: Ohio's program began in 2001 to reduce recidivism and prevent the children of incarcerated women from heading to prison. Ohio officials said they believe that breaking the bond between parent and child soon after delivery can affect the child's emotional well-being. The state said it has not done a study involving the women in the nursery program.



South Dakota

Program: Mother Infant Program, South Dakota Women's Prison, Pierre, South Dakota

Eligibility requirements: A mother who comes into the prison system pregnant is screened for mental health issues and must attend parenting classes designed to help her nurture her infant. Permanent arrangements are made with family or the state's Department of Social Services.

Length of stay: 30 days

Other information: The majority of incarcerated women have children and most of them regain the care for them after they leave prison. The Mother Infant Program builds the bond between mother and child.

Texas

Program: Baby and Mother Bonding Initiative, Available at the state's women's prisons

Eligibility requirements: The mothers must deliver their children while they are inmates and must be eligible for release within a year. They cannot have any felony or immigration detainers or have a history of violence or sex crimes. Mothers must go through detailed mental health screening processes from the University of Texas Medical Branch and the Texas prison system.

Length of stay: 12 months

Other information: The program is a partnership with the University of Texas and the prison system. The recidivism rate is 20% for the women who go through the program; the recidivism rate for the women in Texas prisons is about 30%, a prison spokesman said.

Washington

Program: Residential Parenting Program, Washington Corrections Center for Women, Gig Harbor, WA

Eligibility requirements: Prison and mental health staff study the women's criminal past and behavior before they are allowed to enter the program. Mothers must attend pre- and post-natal programs that involve parenting skills, child development, nutrition, and family life skills. They must draft plans with family services coordinators that will help their children and themselves after they leave prison.

Length of stay: 30 months

Other information: The program says its recidivism rate is 3% to 5%; the overall recidivism rate for the state is about 30%. The program's key focus is breaking the "intergenerational cycle of incarceration."

West Virginia

Program: Keeping Infant Development Successful, Lakin Correctional Center, West Columbia, WV

Eligibility requirements: A woman who is pregnant upon entering prison delivers her child and can be placed in the program. The mother must be cleared by mental health and medical staff; she cannot have a history of sex offenses or violence. She must participate in all prenatal and parenting classes.

Length of stay: 18 months, though it can be extended by the prison's warden

Other information: The program is highly structured, as less than 1 in 5 inmates who apply are accepted. The recidivism rate is less than 1% for the women in the program, compared to about 17% of the rest of the female prison population.

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons

Program: Mothers Infants Nurturing Together, Halfway houses near women's federal prisons

Eligibility requirements: The federal government's program is for women convicted of low-level crimes. They must be in the last three months of their pregnancy when sentenced and have less than five years on their sentence. The mother can spend three months with the newborn before giving the child to a family member or social service agency. The mother or family member must assume the financial responsibility of the child while the mother is in the program.

Length of stay: 3 months

Other information: The program, like that of the 10 states, is structured, and the screening can be intense, as authorities look into each candidate's criminal background and mental health history.



Pups Prepare Inmates to Be Mothers

An article entitled, "Parenting, Prison and Pups with a Purpose", in the May/June 2018 issue of Corrections Today magazine described an innovative study of how dog-assisted therapy can be used to improve inmates as mothers. The study was designed by Kimberly Collica-Cox, Ph.D., associate professor in the Dept. of Criminal Justice & Security at Pace University and director of Parenting, Prison & Pups, and Bruce Fagin, executive vice president of strategic and organizational advancement at the Good Dog Foundation.

When mothers and children are separated as a result of incarceration, it impacts both detrimentally, often exacerbating mental and behavioral health problems for the mother and child. Since the innovative use of therapy dogs has proven to be successful in reducing trauma-induced feelings in other settings, the researchers are seeking to determine how effective their use will be with female inmates who often have long histories of abuse and trauma. The hope is that the therapy dogs can help in the restoring of mother-child bonds that can result in behavioral and emotional benefits for both mothers and their children.

The project is a partnership between Pace University, the Metropolitan Correctional Center, the Westchester County Department of Corrections, and the Good Dog Foundation; all located in New York. The Parenting, Prison, & Pups program weaves together the evidence-based Parenting Inside Out curriculum with the activities of specially trained therapy dogs and their handlers, who are licensed mental health professionals.

Classes that target parenting skills can be tremendously useful in helping jailed females to enhance their parenting skills and improve their relationships with their children and children's caregivers.

Unlike women in prison, jailed women's average sentence is often months instead of years. This requires flexibility in time management. Rather than offering classes weekly, the jail had to schedule classes two to three times per week to increase the number of possible program completers. The shorter periods of absence from their children and from the community does allow for the jailed women to use skills they learn to their home environment sooner.

The researchers believe, "Therapy dogs jail-based parenting programs can help mothers develop healthy bonds with their children by empowering them to feel more confident about parenting, by increasing their knowledge of effective parenting techniques and by promoting a healthy parent-child relationship."

Studies in other settings have demonstrated the psychological benefits of utilizing dog-assisted support. "Dogs can help mediate the relationship between adults that enables more open and useful communication. In addition, animal-assisted therapy has numerous benefits by reducing stress; lessening anxiety; improving emotional well-being and behavior; decreasing depression; lowering blood pressure, heart rate and perceived feelings of loneliness; and enhancing communication and reading skills, all while raising the perceived quality of overall health."

Correctional departments have been using some form of animal-based programming with varying degrees of success for years. Scattered results show correlations with increasing self-worth and confidence, increasing social skills, decreasing infractions, and increasing engagement in therapeutic participation.

The research study is utilizing control groups, pretests and posttests, and a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the differences between female inmates who complete an evidence-based parenting program with animal-assisted therapy and those who complete the same evidence-based parenting program without animal-assisted therapy.

The researchers hypothesis is that the use of animal-assisted therapy in a jail setting will "hasten and enhance bonding among inmates, instructor and teaching assistants; heighten feelings of safety for



inmates as they confront a wide range of emotions (including guilt and shame for being in prison); and facilitate skill-learning and higher levels of program retention than in the control groups.”

Class Topics:

- Class 1: Getting Acquainted
- Class 2: Effective Speaking Skills
- Class 3: Effective Listening Skills
- Class 4: Effective Problem-Solving Skills
- Class 5: Bonding through Play and Reading: Child-Centered Play.
- Class 6: The Child’s Job and the Parent’s Job
- Class 7: Directions and Encouragement
- Class 8: Rules, Rewards and Consequences
- Class 9: Time Out with Back-Up Privilege Removal
- Class 10: Yoga, Meditation and Stress Management
- Class 11: CPR, First Aid and AED
- Class 12: Going Home: You and Your Children
- Class 13: Healthy Adult Relationships
- Class 14: Reunification Day

It is the hope of researchers Kimberly Collica-Cox and Bruce Fagin that “The therapy dogs will continue to serve as avatars (surrogates) for female inmates as they learn and practice parenting skills. This new program/study, with therapy dog team activities carefully intertwined into an evidence-based parenting curriculum, is a novel and easily replicable way to enhance restoration of the mother-child bond, to improve self-esteem and to diminish intergenerational offending patterns. If successful, this pilot program will establish a model that can become a focus of public policy and address some key aspects of the mental health crisis in U.S. jails and prisons.”

The entire “Parenting, Prison and Pups with a Purpose” article may be found at: http://www.aca.org/ACA_Prod_IMIS/DOCS/Corrections%20Today/2018%20Articles/May%202018/Collica-Cox_Fagin.pdf .

Caretakers Urged to Participate in BYU Survey

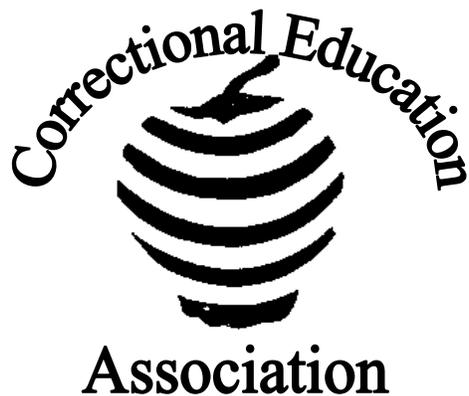
Spencer Moore and Professor Justin Dyer at Brigham Young University are conducting a research study whose purpose is to better understand how the experience of incarceration affects the mental health of those caring for children with incarcerated parents and which factors influence their mental health. The anonymous study will specifically survey depressive symptoms, demographics including race and income, and how often individuals have accessed mental health care resources.

The researchers are specifically recruiting men and women that care for a child whose parent is in jail or prison. To qualify for the survey, the participant must be the current primary caretaker of a child or children with an imprisoned parent. The survey will take less than 10 minutes and those that complete the survey will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card.

The survey can be taken online and interested individuals should email Spencer Moore at byucaretakerstudy@gmail.com to become enrolled and receive a link to the survey. The deadline for completing the survey is May 31, 2019.



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Editor's Message:

Parents may be surprised and dismayed by the disrespectful and at times hateful comments that their children are exposed to in daily conversations, social media and public media.

Parents can help their children deal with hurtful comments by consistently reminding them that instead of entering into destructive interactions they can "Choose to be kind to people. Choose to do the right thing."

To speak with their children about this topic, parents may consider modifying a quote from CEO of Starbucks, Howard Schultz, who had to deal with disrespectful and hateful incidents in his stores, "Today and every day, we have a choice in how we treat one another in our homes and in our neighborhoods . . . We can choose to answer the challenges of the day with kindness and compassion. We can choose to listen, to understand and to act with respect. We can choose to live by the values that reside in each of us, and honor our commitment to nurture the human spirit with love, and offer everyone in our communities a place of inclusion and optimism."

Jerry

**For past issues of this newsletter,
parenting handbooks and more, go to
www.ceawisconsin.org**

