

Fanning the Fatherhood **FIRE**:

A National Fatherhood Summit
June 4-6, 2019 | Nashville, Tennessee



Family-focused  Interconnected
Resilient  Essential

W15 **Positive Reentry After Incarceration**

Presenters:

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Lindsey Cramer



Background

- A growing body of research supports the **importance of family-focused practices** for incarcerated fathers – **during incarceration and following release.**
- However, implementing family-focused practices in correctional settings and community settings can be **challenging** and there is limited research on best practices – **but plenty of lessons on promising approaches.**



Parental Incarceration: Far-Reaching Impacts

- Approximately **2.7 million** children have a parent currently serving time in a correctional facility.
- More than **5 million** children have experienced parental incarceration in their lifetime.
- Parental incarceration:
 - Has disproportionate impact on children in families with lower incomes and minorities.
 - Is stressful and traumatic for minor children.
 - Can create or contribute to economic, residential, and social disruptions for children.



Parental Incarceration: Far-Reaching Impacts

- Incarceration inhibits parents' abilities to fulfill familial responsibilities.
- Father-child and father-family communication/contact is challenging during incarceration for several reasons:
 - Correctional policies and practices that govern contact and communication.
 - Distance of facilities from where minor children (and their families/caregivers) live.
 - Phone calls and in-person visits to facilities, which can be cost prohibitive for families.
 - Feelings of fear and shame among incarcerated parents, children, and their caregivers.
 - Feelings of frustration, confusion, and anxiety navigating correctional institutions and their policies.



Hidden Victims: Children and Families

- Parental incarceration can:
 - Have adverse impacts on families.
 - Challenge healthy family functioning.
 - Cause loss of emotional/financial support for intimate partners, co-parents, caregivers, other family members.
- Interventions/practices have the potential to:
 - Repair and strengthen the relationship between children/families and incarcerated individuals.
 - Mitigate the potentially harmful consequences of incarceration on families and children.
 - Facilitate successful reentry for formerly incarcerated fathers.



Return to Community

- Family members do often provide significant support:
 - Particularly in immediate post-release months.
 - Despite their own resource limitations and service needs.
- Returning fathers have a range of needs:
 - Housing, employment, education, skill building.
 - Mental health and substance abuse treatment.
 - Identification (driver's license, birth certificate), transportation, clothing, food.
- Service needs are related to reentry success.
- Family support pre-release and post-release is associated with reentry success.



Other Considerations

- Programs should:
 - Be flexible.
 - Adapt to changing needs of participants and family.
 - Respond to changes in policy and context.
 - Meet families where they are.
 - Build effective partnerships.
 - Leverage opportunities in institutional and community environments.
 - Work collaboratively with community partners
 - Be willing to make mid-course corrections.



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Strength in Families program

- Office of Family Assistance grantee since October 2015.
- Community-centered, skill-based, pre- and post-release supportive services for reentering fathers.
 - Strengthen positive father-child engagement.
 - Support healthy partner relationships.
 - Enhance education and employment opportunities.
- Vision - children will be:
 - Living safely at home.
 - Enjoying positive relationships with parents and care-providers.
 - Supported by families who have necessary skills and access to resources and services needed to thrive.



Program Structure

Pre-release (up to 9 months):

- Skill-building classes focused on **parenting, healthy relationships, employment and/or education** readiness.
- Transition planning with Instructors, Case Managers, Education/Employment Navigators.
- Intensive, solution-focused counseling with willing family members and participants to support successful transition.
- Video visits with partners and/or children on approved visit list.

Post-release (up to 6+ months):

- Case Managers and Navigators help build skills learned pre-release.
- Ongoing case management. Primary areas of focus:
 - Access to key services and resources.
 - Job search assistance.
 - Family reintegration when possible (counseling available).
 - Development of long-term plan for participant/family success and ongoing community support system.



Curricula – offered 3-9 months pre-release

Parenting Inside Out®

- Evidence-based parenting skills training program developed for criminal justice involved parents.
- 8 sections/28 modules - 15 weeks/60 hours.
 - Communication and Problem Solving
 - Parenting Children as Individuals
 - Parenting Through Family Challenges
 - Transitioning to the Community

Walking the Line

- Research-based curriculum from PREP, Inc. – 28 hours.
- Focus on improving relationships prior to release and managing expectations/employing effective strategies after release.
 - Understand how your experiences/issues can fuel conflict.
 - Recognize communication danger signs, handle anger & stress.
 - Gain skills needed to navigate reentry into society successfully.



Job Readiness – examples of topics covered

Job Seeking Skills

- Resumes, Cover Letters
- Find your strengths, skills, abilities
- Labor market information, job search strategy
- Interview skills
- How to keep your job

Other Workshop Topics

- Handling money, budgeting
- Pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship programs
- WorkSource offerings
- Reentry Mythbusters
- Education options/career planning



Case Management – pre- and post release

Role of Case Managers:

- Develop family transition plans with fathers, including goals and milestones.
 - “Walk alongside” to develop “participant-driven,” strength-based plans.
- Build relationships with community service providers.
- Help fathers and families access resources and services in the community.
- Conduct in-person meetings pre- and post-release.
- Follow a family-focused approach – work with fathers and their families.
- Celebrate successes with fathers and their families!



Role of Education and Employment Navigators

- Lead individual/group meetings focused on education, training, job goals.
- Work with prison facility staff to register participants for *Job Seeking Skills* class (and *College Readiness*, if interested).
- Help fathers identify skills, abilities, strengths, areas to improve, employment barriers.
- Participate in Transitional Planning and Case Management meetings with other *Strength in Families* program staff, participants, facility staff, and/or family.
- Support fathers post-release to help them understand systems, access resources and services.
- Develop community partnerships to support access to necessary reentry services.
 - WorkSource programs, Vocational Rehabilitation services.
 - Job readiness/Job retention, Money Management workshops.
 - College application, enrollment, financial assistance.



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Background

- *Family Reentry* began in 1984 as a reentry support group for men at the Isaiah House in Bridgeport.
- The agency now provides intervention, reentry, and family & children programs in:
 - 8 municipal regions/judicial geographic areas.
 - 2 parole districts.
 - 5 prisons.



Young Fathers Reentry Program

The Power of Peer Mentoring

Second Chance Mentoring grant (2015-2018):

- Fatherhood services.
- Comprehensive reentry case management services.
- Peer mentoring with successful ex-offenders in community.

Goals:

- Strengthen families.
- Enhance quality of life for children of incarcerated parents.
- Reduce recidivism.
- *Program Manager: Da'ee Muhammad McKnight*
- *Fatherhood Facilitator: Salah Hanaif*
- *Case Manager: Ebony Epps*



Client Engagement Pre-Release

- Clients are matched with a successful ex-offender mentor 6+ months prior to release.
- Intake and criminogenic needs assessment (LSI-R).
- Fatherhood/reentry groups.
 - Inside Out Dad + hybrid of various curricula.
 - Perpetual group cycle until released into the community.
- Client File transferred to Case Manager for development of Reentry Plan.



Client Engagement Post-Release

- Resume preparation/pre-employment skills.
- Employment referrals through private sector.
- Focus on basic needs:
 - ID's (birth certificate, Social Security card).
 - Job search attire.
 - Driver's license.
 - Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA) training.
 - Referrals for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services.
 - Registration for Selective Service.
 - Referrals for Adult Education.
 - Diaper bank for children.



Client Engagement Post-Release



- Peer mentor assistance to help clients navigate successful community reintegration.
- Social services referrals for co-parent or primary caregiver
- Family participation in community cultural enrichment events for dads and families.
- Client and co-parent participation in post-release fatherhood survey.



Dontre's Story

- Dontre Crawford will discuss the program and its implementation from the perspective of a young father
- The importance of having Successful EX-offenders involved in the reentry process



Questions and Answers



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Stay in touch with us!

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