Parenting from Prison

Building Bonds, Bridging Walls
And How are the Children?

“Separation due to incarceration has immediate effects on children such as feelings of guilt and shame, fear of abandonment and loss of financial support. Long-term effects of separation can range from maturation regression to impaired ability to cope with future stress or trauma. Regular contact can help decrease the negative impacts of incarceration.” (Adelist-Estrin, 2010)
Where it Began

• 2000 – Children of Incarcerated Parents Work Group convenes to understand issues facing children of incarcerated parents.

• 2001 – Oregon legislature creates a cross-agency advisory group to develop recommendations to increase family bonding for children of incarcerated parents.
  • Multidisciplinary participants
  • Wide array of stakeholders

The Oregon DOC Accountability Model

Children and Families:

“"The department encourages productive relationships between families and inmates to strengthen ties and increase the likelihood of success upon release. The period of a parent’s incarceration provides an excellent opportunity for positive intervention with families at risk.”

“"The department leads a statewide partnership called The Children of Incarcerated Parents Project that has the best interests of children in mind. Project initiatives to date provide inmates with tools for successful parenting and allow opportunities for inmates to practice those pro-social behaviors.”
Parenting Inside Out

- 2002 – Oregon DOC adopts recommendation to offer parenting classes in its prisons and partners with the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC)
  - No research-based program available
  - OSLC develops a new curriculum based on best practice Parent Management Training program
- 2003 – Piloted and revised
- 2005 – NIMH grant for RCT
- 2005-2009 – Parent Child Study
- 2012 – Placed on NREPP
What is Parenting Inside Out?

- **Evidence-based**: cognitive-behavioral parent management skills training program
- **Outcomes-focused**: roles, skills and behaviors
- **Learner-centered**: improves participation, lowers resistance, increases motivation and transfer of learning
- **Strengths-based**: parent is the expert on their child, PIO brings new parenting tools
Three Objectives

• Give parents skills to be effective parents whether they are parenting from inside an institution, or in the community

• Reduce the impact of parental incarceration on the child by maintaining parent-child contact

• Reduce recidivism through building family connections
Where it is Now

- Departments of Corrections and BOP facilities in 8 states
- Community programs in 25 states
- Jails in 15 states
- Australia, starting in Canada in 2018
- Second edition published in 2017
Keeping children connected to their parents

Father and son sharing a book at a family engagement event.

Columbia River Correctional Institution
Portland, Oregon
Family First
The Research

Jean Kjellstrand, Ph.D.
Challenges: Parents and Children

- Family history
- Personal history
- Poverty
- Education
- Substance abuse
- Multiple transitions
- Deviant peers
- Interpersonal skills
- Mental health
- Housing
- Employment
- System involvement
Typical Responses

• Parents
  • “Silo” approach
  • Limited or no follow-up

• Children
  • Visitation
  • Mentoring
  • Parenting education (inmates)
  • Limited or no follow-up
Past Research

• Pre-post
• Four small randomized studies ($N = 222$)
• Mixed findings
  • Parent attitudes
  • Parenting knowledge
  • Stress
A Social Interactional Learning Model

Contextual Factors

Parenting Practices

Coercive
- Aversive Behaviors
- Negative Reciprocity

Positive
- Skill Encouragement
- Limit Setting/Discipline
- Monitoring
- Problem Solving
- Positive Involvement

Adolescent
- Child/Adolescent Adjustment

Dangerous Neighborhood
- Poverty
- Lack of Skills
- Trauma
- Mass Trauma

Discrimination
- Transitions
- Stress
- Grandparenting
- Illness
- Substance Use
Parenting Inside Out

- Created by multifaceted and multidisciplinary team
- Reflects multiple experiences and voices
  - Incarcerated mothers and fathers
  - Practitioners working with incarcerated mothers and fathers in Oregon and around the U.S.
  - Researchers studying parenting under a variety of risk conditions
  - Clinical and developmental psychologists
  - Instructional designers
  - Corrections professionals and administrators
  - Advocates
Process

• Trained and supervised coaches
• Parent Management Training (PMT)
  ✓ Group-based, 36 sessions across 12 weeks
  ✓ Brief lecture, small and large group exercises
  ✓ Interactive activities throughout weeks (e.g., bear adoption - monitoring and supervision)
  ✓ Homework with feedback
  ✓ Exercises

• Individual meetings
• Graduation
Content

• Core Parent Management Training
• Connecting from prison
• Child development
• Child individuality
• Special needs
• Reentry
The Parent Child Study

Funded by the National Institute of Mental Health
Randomized Controlled Trial

• Recruit
• Screen
• Transfer
• Randomize to PIO Intervention or services as usual Control
• Assess
• PMT
• Follow-up
Eligibility

• Child 3 to 11 years
• Served in a parenting role prior
• Plan to serve in a parenting role post
• Caregiver contact info (whether correct or not)
• Not convicted of a sex offense or a crime against a child
Recruitment (Statewide)

- Screened: 1483
- Eligible: 453 (31%)
- Consented: 359 (80%)
  - 68% of men (transfers)
  - 92% of women

- Sample:
  - 50% women; 40% minority
  - 35% with children full time
  - Person crime: 60% men, 40% women
Background

- Family member incarcerated: 55%
- In foster care as child: 22% men, 28% women
- Substance abuse: 90%
- Child ever in foster care: 19% men, 32% women
  - Due to parental incarceration: 1/3 men, 1/2 women
Intervention Condition

- Received: 182 (76%)
- Dropped class: 36
- Transferred: 5
- Moved to seg: 6
- Other: 10
Analyses

• Missing data
• Clustering
• Survival analyses
• Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial Regression
  ✓ Gender, total time in prison, baseline score
Post-Intervention, Pre-Release

• Less depression
• Less parental stress
• More positive attitudes
• More positive parent-child contact
Depression

![Graph showing the relationship between baseline depression and wave 3 depression for Class and Control groups. The graph indicates a positive correlation with both groups showing an increase in depression values over baseline.]
6 to 12 Months Post-Release

- More involvement with child and family
- More confidence in parenting
- Less inept discipline
- More positive reinforcement
- Less substance abuse
- Fewer reports of criminal behavior (from self-reports)
- Fewer arrests (from official records)
Criminality

BL Self Report of Criminality (standardized)

- Graph showing the comparison between intervention and control groups for arrests over time.

- The x-axis represents time in years, ranging from -2 to 2.

- The y-axis represents the number of arrests, ranging from 0 to 2.

- The graph shows a peak in criminal activity for both groups around year 0, with a decrease afterwards.
Family Contact While in Prison

• Related to positive outcomes
• Total Arrests
  ✔ For every standard deviation increase in family contact, total arrests decreased by 11%
• Recidivism
  ✔ For every standard deviation increase in family contact, survival time increased by 42%
Intervention Participation

• Program Graduates vs Controls
  ✓ Total arrests
  ✓ Self-report of criminal behavior
  ✓ Substance abuse

• Drop outs vs Controls
  ✓ No differences
Implications

- Prison-based parenting programs can set a foundation – initial impacts on parent because focus on parent

- Provision of multiple components seems warranted to build a house
  - Opportunities to connect with children and caregivers
  - Intimate partner interaction and decision-making skills
  - Transitional housing and other early basic need supports
  - Employment
  - Mental and physical health care
  - Establishment of new pro-social support systems

- Requires coordination across multiple players within and between systems
  - During prison
  - In community after release
  - Long term follow-up – check-ins, boosters
Parenting in a Reentry Program

Carolyn House-Higgins
Strength in Families (SIF)

We are a reentry program for fathers and families serving southwest Washington State.

OUR MISSION:
To partner with reentering parents to create safer, more stable and nurturing environments for children and families.

OUR VISION:
We envision children living safely at home, having positive relationships with parents and care-providers, and being supported by families who have the skills and resources needed to thrive.
Federal Grant Overview: ReFORM

• Responsible Fatherhood Opportunities for Reentry and Mobility (ReFORM)
• Funding Agency: US Department of Health and Human Services’ (DHHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA)
• Grantee: Washington Department of Corrections
• Project Period: 5 years
• Number of Awards: 5 awarded nationally
ReFORM Grant

Purpose and Objectives:

Deliver voluntary reentry programs for fathers that focus on skill building in three key areas pre- and post-release:

✓ Strengthen positive father-child engagement
✓ Support healthy partner/co-parent relationships
✓ Enhance education and employment opportunities to improve economic mobility
Team Structure

• CQI Advisors Drs. Eddy, Kjellstrand, and Harris
• Program Manager
• Program Specialist/Support Staff
• Data Manager
• Case Management Supervisor/Recruiter
• Curricula Instruction Specialist
• Instructors (2)
• Case Managers (4)
• Education and Employment Navigators (2)
• Quality Assurance Specialist (PT)
Targeted Outcomes Sought

• Improved healthy relationship and marriage skills
• Improved parenting and co-parenting skills
• Increased frequency of father/child engagement
• Increased financial responsibility of fathers
• Progress toward greater economic stability, including increased skill attainment and employment
• Reduced recidivism
Eligible Population

- Tried and convicted as an adult
- Low-income
- Expectant father or father figure of a dependent child, or young adult child up to 24 years of age
- Within nine months of release from incarceration and recently released
Program Enrollment

• Targeted, statewide outreach using administrative data
• Brief applications completed and submitted by interested fathers
• SIF staff review criminal history, prison behavior history (programming and infractions), solicit input from Classification Counselor
• All criminal history/crimes are considered on a case by case basis
• Eligible and accepted participants invited to join SIF quarterly, based on release date
Program Structure: Pre-Release

Starting 9+ months

- Skill-building classes focused on parenting, healthy relationships and employment and/or education readiness
- SIF Dads Discussion Groups
- Education and Employment Workshops
- Family engagement – Grant-funded video visiting

Starting 6 months

- Transition planning – Case management and release planning with Instructors (3), Case Managers (4) and Education/Employment Navigators (2)
- Referral for child support payment adjustment and debt forgiveness
- Family reintegration counseling
SIF Program Structure: Post-Release

Up to 6+ months

- **Primary areas of focus**
  - ✓ access to key resources (e.g. housing, healthcare, public assistance)
  - ✓ job search/retention assistance or access to education/training
  - ✓ adjust long-term plan for participant and family success
  - ✓ building an ongoing community support system

- **SIF Case Managers and Navigators reinforce skills learned pre-release related to parenting, relationships and employment/education readiness, and provide ongoing case management**

- **Family reintegration counseling continues to be available**
Pre-Release Classes

Walking the Line (PREP, Inc.) addresses issues incarcerated men face as they negotiate relationships. Focus is on relational challenges that come from living in confinement, on being proactive about improving relationships prior to release, and managing expectations and employing effective strategies after release.

Content

✓ Understand how experiences/issues can fuel conflict
✓ Explore personality
✓ Recognize communication danger signs
✓ Handle anger and stress well
✓ Learn guidelines for making decisions regarding relationships
✓ Gain skills needed to navigate reentry into society successfully
SIF Pre-Release Classes

Parenting Inside Out

Themes of father’s reactions to and descriptions of the class at P1O graduations:

• “I wish my parents had taken this class.”
• “I didn’t think I could do it all, but I did.”
• “This class changed my life and my experience being a father with my kids.”
• “I’ve taken a lot of classes in prison over the years and this one is the best by far.”
• “I realized I really was a good dad, but was able to pick up new tips to get better at it.”
SIF Pre-Release Classes

Job Seeking Skills

• Taught through community college staff
• Preparing application materials: resume, cover letter, master application
• Brief incarceration speech for employers
• Find your strengths, skills and abilities
• Labor market information
• Job search strategy
• Interview skills
• How to keep your job skills: communication, handling hard situations

Supporting Workshops

• Handling money and budgeting
• Pre-Apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs
• WorkSource offerings
• Mythbusters for reentry
• Education options
• Career planning
SIF Dads and Families

- Program implementation began July 2016
- Cohorts of 35-40 begin quarterly across four facilities
- As of January 2018, 248 participants, including over 500 children
- Average length of time in the program 12-14 months
Who Are SIF Dads?

• Most common self-identified strengths...
• Greatest challenges dads see in their lives...
• Age: 11% of dads 18-24 yrs., 79% 25-44 yrs.
• Relationship status: 70% no current partner, 12% off and on, 20% in relationship
• Race and ethnicity of participant fathers reflects eligible population
  ✓ Native American/First Nations (4% EP vs 8% SIF)
  ✓ African American/Black (23% EP vs 18% SIF)
  ✓ Asian/Pacific Is (5% EP vs 3% SIF)
  ✓ White (67% EP vs 68% SIF)
  ✓ Hispanic (11% EP vs 9% SIF)
Risk to Recidivate

Eligible population:

- 90.7% High Risk
- 3.2% Moderate Risk
- 5.7% Low Risk
- 0.3% Unknown

SIF population:

- 90.5% High Risk
- 5.5% Moderate Risk
- 0.5% Low Risk
- 3.5% Unknown
Program Progress to Date

- From first to fourth cohorts, the rate of completed or active status increased from 52% to 78%
- Year 1 (1 qtr.):
  - 50% completion and 50% partial completion
- Year 2: of 149
  - 36% still active, 45% completed, 43% partial completion, 12% other
- Year 3 (2 qtr.): of 77
  - 94% active, 6% partial completion or drop

Definition of completion: 75% of curricula hours in three core curricula (100 hours) and at least three service contacts
QA and CQI

- QA observations
  - Instructors
  - Case manager
  - Navigator staff
- Checklists
- Narratives
- Interviews and focus groups
- Tracking
- Concerted staff communication to support program retention and consistent services
- Use data to highlight gaps and issues, as well as successes
What Have We Seen and Learned?

• Fathers want to be good dads regardless of incarceration status
• Fathers and families are open to this voluntary program
• Fathers and families can and do build resiliency
• Accurate, consistent data collection is both exceptionally challenging AND critical to do
• CQI Advisors are key partners
Questions & Answers