ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION MANUAL FOR TEACHING PARENTING SKILLS TO INCARCERATED FATHERS

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Using the literature pertaining to incarcerated fathers and program design, a family life education curriculum has been developed in order to teach parenting skills to incarcerated fathers. Family systems theory has been used to show the extensive effects that the incarceration of a parent has on the family and to show the positive effect on the family that can result from an incarcerated man becoming a more active parent. The goal of the family life education curriculum that has been developed, “Fathering for Life”, is to improve the parenting skills of incarcerated fathers and to reduce the recidivism rates of men in the prison system and the risk of the children of these men becoming involved in the criminal justice system by increasing the strength of familial bonds.
The Development of a Family Life Education Manual for Teaching Parenting Skills to Incarcerated Fathers

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A growing number of families are being destroyed due to the incarceration of one or both parents. Often, when a parent is incarcerated, they have very little or no contact with their family during their imprisonment. There has been much research done on the area of incarcerated mothers and the effect on the family, but little has been done to explore the issues pertaining to incarcerated fathers. Only recently have family life educators and social workers begun to understand the positive effect that teaching parenting skills can have on male inmates. Prison programs for male inmates related to the family have been proven to “enhance parenting skills, treat addictions, increase literacy, raise education levels, reduce recidivism rates, and improve chances of reintegration into society” (Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003, p. 2). By teaching the men to be better fathers to their children and strengthening their familial bonds, these men are given a reason to change their behavior patterns and a reason to stay out of the prison system in the future. Also, by bringing an active father back into the family and the lives of the children, the risk of the man’s children becoming involved with the criminal justice system is reduced. The information in this chapter will explain the purpose of the program that has been developed and why this particular program is important.

Purpose of the Program

This program, “Fathering for Life”, is intended to be administered to incarcerated fathers of all ages seeking to better understand their role as a parent. The overall goal of the program is to improve the parenting skills of incarcerated fathers and reduce recidivism rates of men in the prison system and the risk of the children of these men becoming involved in the criminal justice system by strengthening their familial bonds.
A complete list of the overall goals of this program can be found in the section entitled “Goals of Program” found in Appendix A.

**Justification of the Program**

There are approximately 721,500 parents of minor children in the United States prison system (United States Department of Justice, 2000). A majority of these are fathers, though most research has focused on building bonds between incarcerated mothers and their children. Some have speculated that relationships between incarcerated fathers and their children have not been studied because the mother is the typical primary caregiver for her children. However, with an increasing awareness of the importance of active fathers in the lives of their children, it is now becoming evident that it is important to strengthen the bonds and communication between children and their fathers.

The costs of incarceration are an enormous source of debt for our society. Recent numbers show that the cost of operating the United States criminal justice system is over $167 billion per year (United States Department of Justice, 2004). Research has shown that by increasing a man’s involvement in his family and his sense of connectedness with his family lowers the possibility of both recidivism and the chance that his children will become involved in the criminal justice system, a concept known as “intergenerational criminality” (Hairston, 1998). Thus, lowering the amount of men involved in the criminal justice system would lower the amount of money that the people of the United States would have to pay in order to keep our criminal justice system running. Also, by lowering the amount of future criminals, the amount of money that would need to be spent in the future on the criminal justice system would be lowered.
CHAPTER TWO
FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY

With over 700,000 parents of minor children imprisoned in the United States and the number expected in the future to be even larger (United States Department of Justice, 2000), it is easy to see how large of an impact that incarceration is having on families in this country. When researchers look at ways in which to help families affected by this issue of incarceration, many often base their programs and interventions in family systems theory. Family systems theory was derived from the general systems theory and widely used beginning in the early 1980s (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The main idea of the general systems theory is that all of the objects in a system are interrelated, and that all systems themselves are interrelated. It is the goal of general systems theory to understand the way in which different object and systems are interrelated. Family systems theory, a more specific aspect of general systems theory, looks at the way in which family members are interrelated with each other and the way that the family interacts with its environment (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). There are three main areas of family systems theory: understanding family processes, the relationship of the family system to other systems in its environment, and how the family system is able to (or resists) change (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

Understanding Family Processes

All family processes are seen as being a product of the entire system, which takes the focus away from the individual family members and focuses on the relationships between the family members (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Researchers have termed this phenomenon as “interdependence” and “mutual influence”, meaning that the family system is affected by the actions, behaviors, and attitudes of each individual member. In other words, each member of the system is interdependent (held together by the system), and what happens with one family member affects all members and the system itself (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

When examining the issue of incarcerated fathers, this assumption becomes relatively clear. The actions of the father that have caused him to be incarcerated have
also had an effect on the other members of the family. The family as a whole has lost a member, which upsets the entire system. The other parent may be forced to deal with diminished financial status, the children may feel abandoned, the grandparents may have to take on the burden of raising their grandchildren, and the list could continue to grow (Mazza, 2002; United States Department of Justice, 2000). In terms of intervention for incarcerated fathers, it is important to realize that by positively affecting the behaviors, attitudes, and actions of the man in terms of his role as a parent, one is also affecting the way that the man’s entire family system interacts with each other. The change in the man may allow the family to become more communicative, affectionate, and productive, and this change may also influence the probability of recidivism and intergenerational criminality.

The Relationship of the Family System to Other Systems

Family systems exist in the realm of several other systems, all in the categories of either subsystems or suprasystems. Subsystems are those systems that exist within the family system, such as the parent-child subsystem, the husband-wife subsystem, and the caregiver-child subsystem (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Suprasystems are those systems in which the family system exists, such as the community where the family resides, the racial or ethnic community(s) with which the family identifies, the families of origin of the parents, and the social contacts of the family members (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

Also important to the relationship of the family system to other systems are the boundaries that the family system has in place. These boundaries can be between different subsystems within the family and they are, by nature, placed between the family and its environment (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The degree to which the family allows these boundaries to be permeable decides whether or not the family is considered an open or a closed system. Families are an open system because they interact, at least to some degree, with their environment, but each individual family system varies on the degree to which they are an open system (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Food and education may come into the family, and, in turn, the family may produce (or “put out”) socialized children and contribute the future of society through work in a career.
When working with incarcerated fathers and their families, it is important to recognize this aspect of the family. It is important to recognize the family that one may be dealing with in a programmatic or intervention setting does not exist in a vacuum. The family is affected by the relationships between the members (in subsystems) and the relationship that the family and its members has with other systems in its environment. It is important to look at the geographical environment, the socioeconomic factors affecting the family, the social contacts that the family has, and the families of origin of the parents. One must also recognize the boundaries that the family has in place. The family may be a rather closed system, not allowing much information to come in or to go out. Also, it may be important to analyze the boundaries that exist between the family members themselves, especially the relationship between the incarcerated father and his children.

**Change in the Family System**

Change in the family system is either seen as being morphogenetic, change in the system that allow new forms of the system to emerge, or morphostatic, changes in the system that allow the existing structure of the family system to remain stable (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). The family system itself is seen as being goal-oriented, and the goal-oriented behavior of the family system is seen as being driven by communication between its members and the way that the members understand and organize what they are communicating. In this sense, the family is not only goal-oriented, but each member of the family is an “actor” in the family, not simply a “reactor” to the information coming in from the outside and from other family members (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Each member of the family acts on the information presented to him or her, and decides how the information would best be used to achieve the goal of the family system. In most cases, a goal of the family system is to maintain a sense of homeostasis, a sense of equilibrium, in the family (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

A goal of homeostasis in the family can account for the resistance that many men may feel when presented with the idea of an intervention/program to work on family skills and interactions. The men and their families may have an unspoken agreement
between them in order to keep things the way they are in the family. It would take an active program administrator to help the men to understand the positive impact that change in their family system could bring to them and their families. Also, a program administrator would need to be able to give the man the information and ability to be able to convince his family that the system would benefit from change.

**Conclusion**

The reasoning behind the development of this program is based in family systems theory. The central belief that all systems are interrelated and that affecting one part of a system affects all parts of the system is the reason why this program may be beneficial to individual families, communities, and society as a whole. By impacting one member of the family directly, the incarcerated father, it is hoped that the entire family system will become more productive and effective. By producing more productive and effective families, communities and societies benefit as well.
CHAPTER THREE  
LITERATURE REVIEW

When reviewing the literature in order to develop this program, four main issues became prominent when looking at parenting programs for incarcerated fathers: recognizing the importance of fathers being an active part of their children’s lives, understanding the special circumstances surrounding being an incarcerated father, understanding the effects of having an incarcerated parent on the children, and investigating the aspects of previous programs that should be incorporated and/or expanded upon for my program to be of the maximum benefit to the participants. The following is a review of the literature regarding these four areas.

Importance of Involved Fathers

In the recent past, a movement has been initiated in order to get fathers more involved in the lives of their children. Past definitions of fatherhood have been limited to “economic supporter” of the family. Now, however, men are encouraged to take an active role in the nurturing and parenting of their children. Many men have a hard time breaking down the barriers that encourage them to be a traditional, “masculine” father, only involving themselves in bringing home a paycheck and administering discipline on occasion. Men are now encouraged to make themselves a bigger part of their children’s lives, from the time before their partner is even pregnant and through the period of adolescence. Many benefits have been found for the men and their children when the man becomes an active part of the lives of his children.

In general, children of fathers who take on active role as a parent fare much better than those children whose fathers are not actively involved. Children of active fathers benefit at all stages in development in terms of their cognitive, social, and personality functioning (Meyers, 1993). Children with active and involved fathers have shown the following: a greater sense of control over what happens in their lives; greater abilities in all cognitive areas, especially verbal areas; a greater sense of empathy toward others; and these children have been shown to have less stereotypical views on what defines a “man” and a “woman” (Meth & Pasick, 1990). By men taking on both the traditional fatherly
roles and also engaging in more nurturing and active parenting styles, children will benefit in various aspects of their development. In all cases, these studies have shown that boys and girls benefit equally from having an involved and active father. It is important that children of both genders see that their father is able to perform roles that are typically “male” and “female” in order to diminish the stereotypes that children may hold in terms of gender (Meth & Pasick, 1990).

Fathers themselves also benefit from being involved in the lives of their children. Men that take on a more active role as a father report that they are more self-confident and that they feel as though they are more effective parents (Meth & Pasick, 1990). These men also report that their experience as a parent is much more meaningful and a bigger part of their self-definition (Meth & Pasick, 1990). Also, these men report that becoming an active parent has allowed them to enjoy spending time with their children much more than they did prior to becoming an active and involved parent (Meth & Pasick, 1990).

When fathers are not involved in the lives of their children, many negatives outcomes can result. Without father involvement, children may have a more difficult time developing good self-esteem and they may have difficulty coping with stressful situations (Meth & Pasick, 1990). These children have also been found to have difficulties in the areas of impulse control and cognitive abilities (Meth & Pasick, 1990). Children may feel as though their father is rejecting them by not being involved, and therefore, the children may experience later problems with self-acceptance and intimate relationships (Meth & Pasick, 1990). If the father continues to remain uninvolved in the lives of his children through their development as adolescents, these children are more likely to suffer from substance abuse problems, behavior problems, and depression (Meth & Pasick, 1990). The absence of a father can result in so many tragedies for the developing child. These children are much more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system and are also much more likely to drop out of school before they graduate from high school (Turner & Peck, 2002). It has been discovered that 90% of all runaways under the age of eighteen do not report having a father in their lives (Turner & Peck, 2002). Also, it has been found that of those children and adolescents that commit suicide, 63% of them do not have a father involved in their lives (Turner & Peck, 2002).
Children without fathers in their lives may have their developmental difficulties exacerbated by growing up in a household where a stepfather (or the mother’s significant other) sees the child as a nuisance or a problem (Turner & Peck, 2002).

**Demographics and the Special Circumstances of Incarcerated Fathers**

It has been estimated that approximately 1.5 million children in the United States have a parent who is incarcerated either in a state or federal prison (United States Department of Justice, 2000). Over one million of these children have an incarcerated father (United States Department of Justice, 2000). For this reason, it is becoming overwhelmingly important to social workers and others who work with families to understand the impact that incarceration is having on families in the United States. When studying issues surrounding incarcerated fathers, it is important to understand the barriers that exist for them to stay involved (or to become involved) in the lives of their children and remain an active member of the family from which they come.

In 2000, the United States Department of Justice investigated the issue of incarcerated parents and found many interesting characteristics associated with incarcerated fathers. The largest majority of incarcerated fathers are of African-American descent (44%), followed by men of Hispanic descent (30%), and then men of Caucasian descent (20%) (United States Department of Justice, 2000). These percentages were not seen as surprising, since they closely followed the demographics of prisoners in general. Most incarcerated fathers were found to have had previous run-ins with the criminal justice system. In fact, it was reported that 78% of state and 65% of federal inmates reported that they had had a prior sentence to either probation or incarceration. The average sentence for incarcerated fathers was found to be 80 months for those in state prisons and 103 months for those in federal prisons. Couple these long sentences with the fact that most incarcerated fathers report that they are in prisons that are an average of 100 miles away from their last place of residence, and it is easy to understand why most men report that they have had no contact with their children since the time of their imprisonment. In most cases, the children of incarcerated fathers reside in the homes of their mothers during the time of the father’s imprisonment. Other
possible caretakers may include grandparents, other relatives, friends, and social service agencies (foster care) (United States Department of Justice, 2000). Most men do not have a say in where their child is placed during their imprisonment, and in some cases the father may not even know where his children are while he is imprisoned (Hairston, 1988, 1998). In terms of the types of crimes committed by incarcerated fathers, a majority of them are serving time for drug related offenses. Others are incarcerated for such crimes as various types of assault and theft (United States Department of Justice, 2000).

Children of Incarcerated Fathers

The impact of the incarceration of a parent on a child is extremely far-reaching. A majority of these children are at important stages in their development, with approximately 85% of children of incarcerated fathers being between the ages of one and fourteen years (Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003). These effects often begin at the time of the arrest of the parent (Mazza, 2002). When a child is a witness to the arrest of his or her parent, the child is often traumatized by the fear that they experience while watching their father be handcuffed and taken away by police officers. Even if the children are not witnesses to the actual arrest of the parent, they may feel as though they were abandoned, or as if the parent wanted to leave without saying goodbye to them (Mazza, 2002).

The United States Department of Justice has reported that 44% of incarcerated fathers lived in a home with at least one of their children at the time of their incarceration (Hairston, 1988; Mazza, 2002). When a man is arrested, the dynamics in his family are automatically altered. If the man was living with his children at the time of his arrest, his children experience an immediate change in their family system, along with a loss of income available to support them (Mazza, 2002). Most children of incarcerated fathers are left in the care of their mothers (United States Department of Justice, 2000), leaving an economic strain on the mother trying to raise a family on her own. Even if the children were not living in the same home as the father, they will most likely feel the financial effects of their father being incarcerated (Mazza, 2002).

One main issue for children of incarcerated parents is that they are often lied to about their father’s situation (Mazza, 2002). If the child did not witness the arrest, it is common for other adults to tell the children that the father left town because they found a
new job or because they were going off to school. Though these adults may think that they are only helping the child by not revealing the truth of the man’s situation, they are only increasing the negative feelings of abandonment that the child may experience after the incarceration of a parent. In other cases, adults may tell children what happened initially, but then the family no longer talks about the situation, creating a type of “family secret,” which can cause children’s feelings of shame and guilt surrounding the situation to increase (Mazza, 2002). This is an issue for social service workers and teachers because they may be working with a child with an incarcerated parent, but because of the social stigma attached to having an incarcerated family member, the children and other family members will not let anyone know about the family’s special needs (Mazza, 2002).

Travis et al. (2003) give an excellent summary of both the immediate effects and the long-term effects that paternal imprisonment has on children of all ages. They list the immediate effects as “feelings of shame, loss of financial support, weakened ties to the parent, changes in family composition, poor school performance, increased delinquency, and increased risk of abuse or neglect” (p. 2). They go on to list the long-term effects as “questioning of parental authority, negative perceptions of police and legal system, increased dependency or maturational regression, impaired ability to cope with future stress or trauma, disruption of development, and intergenerational patterns of criminal behavior” (p. 2).

Fritsch and Burkhead (1981) looked specifically at 91 males, who reported having a total of 194 children (mean age of 8.8 years), in order to see how their children had responded to the incarceration of their father. Over 72% of the respondents reported that their children exhibited what were termed by the researchers to be “acting out” behaviors, including such behaviors as hostility, drug and alcohol problems, running away, truancy from school, discipline problems, acts of aggression, and delinquent activities. It was speculated by the researchers that all of the children of the incarcerated fathers committed some type of “acting out” behavior, however some of the fathers were not able to report it because they had had little or no contact with their children since their incarceration. By increasing contact and communication between incarcerated fathers and their children, it
is hoped that we can reduce the severity of the negative effects of incarceration on both the man and his children.

**Program Development for Incarcerated Fathers**

Though few programs have been funded in order to teach parenting and family skills to incarcerated fathers, it is possible to pull some of the main themes from the literature in order to defend the need for the programs themselves and the units that are included in this particular program. The main goal of all programs designed specifically for incarcerated fathers is for the father to be able to be an active member of their family both during and after their incarceration. It is important to assess the needs of participants before finalizing any plans for a parenting program for incarcerated fathers. In order to make the program useful and meaningful to the participants, it must be geared toward the problems and issues that they see as being relevant.

By using information obtained by researching various successful parenting programs for incarcerated fathers and the information obtained through assessing the needs of the particular group that will be worked with, a program, “Fathering for Life”, has been developed that has four main units and an additional unit devoted to a graduation ceremony for all of the participants who complete the program. The units are as follows:

1. **Personal Development**
   a. Personal Reflections
   b. Thinking about the Future

This section of the program emphasizes the importance of the participants evaluating his past experiences and behavior. Previous programs have stressed the need for the participants to understand themselves on a personal level before they can work on their relationships with others in their lives (Mazza, 2001; Turner & Peck, 2002). This is especially true when looking at furthering one’s abilities as a parent (Hairston, 2001). In order to help the men become aware of who they are and where they need to be as a person, two main lessons have been developed considering aspects of other successful programs: “Personal Reflections” (Hairston, 1998; Mazza, 2001, 2002) and “Thinking
about the Future” (Hairston, 1998; Mazza, 2001). The skills learned by the participants in the lesson entitled “Personal Reflections” are especially important because all future lessons will depend on the participant’s ability to reflect on their past experiences. Personal reflections are also important to bringing meaning to the various lessons in the program for the participants (Mazza, 2001, 2002).

II. Child Development
   a. Children 0-5 years
   b. Children 6-12 years
   c. Adolescence

All parenting programs should entail some type of practical education about the basic biological, cognitive, and social characteristics of children at various ages (Adalist-Estrin, 1994). This portion of the program is especially important in programs geared toward incarcerated fathers because they do not have the opportunity to see their children developing on a day-to-day basis and they may not have any formal education regarding normal child development (Boswell & Wedge, 2002; DeBord, n.d.; Gabel & Johnston, 1995; Johnson, Selber, & Lauderdale, 1998; Mazza, 2001, 2002; Travis et al., 2003; Turner & Peck, 2002). However, it may not be necessary to address all age ranges. For example, if all members in the class have only children 6-12 years of age, you may not need to address the characteristics of children ages 0-5 years.

III. Parenting Issues
   a. Discipline
   b. School & Homework
   c. Importance of being an active parent during incarceration

This section of the program takes the knowledge and insight that the participants have learned from the previous sections of the program and applies this information to “real” interactions with their children. Bushfield (2004) found that in her study of 32 male prisoners (mean age of 28.4 years) many of the men did not report having a strong father figure in their lives while they were growing up, and, therefore, did not have a guide by
which to parent their own children. This often leads to withdraw in terms of being an active parent, especially when the man was incarcerated. The goal of this section of the program is to have participants design realistic strategies for dealing with common issues of parenting, both while incarcerated and once released. Lessons on topics including “Discipline” and “School and Homework” will help the men to find their own way of being a parent to their children, hopefully giving each man the skills necessary to ease his transition as an active parent in the household once he is released (DeBord, n.d; Mazza, 2001; Turner & Peck, 2002; Vera Institute of Justice, 2001). In the previously mentioned study done by Bushfield (2004), it was found that parenting education programs that focused on such topics as those in this section of the program were able to impact the attitudes of the participants in terms of their attitudes toward discipline and punishment, the importance of father involvement, and their own thought processes and attitudes toward parenting.

Utilizing the experiences of a child of a former inmate (or current inmate) in this section of the program may enhance the participants’ understanding of the way in which their children have been affected by their incarceration (Mazza, 2001). Having a guest speaker on this topic may also help to show the men the importance of remaining an active part of their children’s lives during the time that they are incarcerated.

IV. Visitation & Communication
   a. Means of communication other than personal visits
   b. What to say during visits with your children
   c. Communicating with Your Children’s Caregivers

This component of the program is essential to achieving the overall goal of parenting programs for incarcerated fathers. All parenting programs for incarcerated fathers, along with the research on the effects of incarceration upon the children of incarcerated parents, emphasize that it is necessary that the participants learn to understand how to communicate with their families in order for them to delve into stronger, more meaningful relationships with them. Holt and Miller (1972) found in their study of 412
men released from California state prisons between 1968 and 1969 that there exists a strong positive relationship between maintaining and creating family ties while in prison and parole success. Seventy percent of those men that received several visits from their families during their incarceration did not become involved in the criminal justice system in the year following their parole (Holt & Miller, 1972). It was also found that those men who did not report having family ties outside of prison were six times more likely to end up back in prison in the year following their parole (12% of these men compared to only two percent of those who reported having active family ties) (Holt & Miller, 1972). Glaser (1964) reached a similar conclusion when looking at statistical data on federal prison releases. In this study, it was found that of those who reported active family ties outside of prison, including frequent visits with family members, 71% were not involved in the criminal justice system following their parole (Glaser, 1964).

It is also important to emphasize with the participants the importance of not glorifying their prison experience to their children, while at the same time not exaggerating the negatives of the experience. It is important that children have an accurate idea of what their parent is going through in order to better deal with the situation (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). In this section of the program, it would be useful to have the participants break into small groups and do role-playing activities centering on conversations between the men and their children (DeBord, n.d.; Mazza, 2001). Due to the various ages of the men’s children and the extreme expenses that can be incurred from communication via telephone calls, letters, and personal visits, it is important to show various means of communication that do not focus entirely on writing letters, personal visits, and telephone calls (DeBord, n.d.; Hairston, 1998; Mazza, 2001, 2002; Vera Institute of Justice, 2001). Also, it is important that the men be able to utilize realistic strategies for communicating with their children’s caretakers (Smith, 2003). Problems with their children’s caretakers can make communication with their children during their incarceration difficult if not impossible (Hairston, 1998; Mazza, 2002; Smith, 2003; Travis et al., 2003).

V. Graduation
In order for the men to feel proud of what they have accomplished, it may be good to have a graduation ceremony (Mazza, 2001). If possible, involvement of the family would be an excellent way for the men to show their families and children that they are serious about being an involved parent. Another idea is to allow participants to speak at the graduation about what they have learned and how they will use what they have learned in their future interactions with their families (Mazza, 2001).

Conclusion

In conclusion, many programs have aimed to increase the parenting skills of incarcerated mothers, but incarcerated men have often been viewed as having nothing positive to give their children. However, research has shown many positive effects for children with fathers who are actively involved in their lives, and research has shown that there are many benefits to incarcerated men (and society as a whole) when they are released back into a family in which they are active members.
CHAPTER FOUR
APPLICATION OF THE LITERATURE: A FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION MANUAL

Family life education has taken on various meanings throughout the past several years. What was once an education process that was originally only administered in schools to children and teenagers has now begun to reach out to a new audience. Family life educators have begun to focus on adult issues in their programs, including programs on such topics as pre-marital counseling and parenting education (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2003). Recognizing the applicability of family life education to furthering the knowledge of adults, this program has been developed in order to further incarcerated fathers' knowledge on the topic of parenting. This program is guided by both the literature on parenting and special issues pertaining to incarcerated fathers, along with the format of the family life education process. It is hoped that those in the family life education field will be able to reach this population in ways that are real and beneficial to the participants. A key goal of family life education programs is to distribute beneficial, applicable information and skills to the participants (Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2003).

Family systems theory explains that when one member of the family experiences an event, the consequences of that event are felt by all members of the family (Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993). Therefore, when a man is incarcerated, an entire family has to suffer the consequences. In order to reduce the impact of the incarceration on the family, it is important for the man to remain in close contact with his family in order to reduce the impact of his absence. This program is intended to help incarcerated fathers maintain/initiate their role as an active member of the family, especially in terms of being an active father. In this program, the goals of increased parenting skills and strengthening family ties are extremely useful tools for bettering the lives of incarcerated men and their families.

It is important to note that this family life education program has not been put into action in any institution. It has been designed in order to meet the goals set forth by the program, but also to remain flexible for use in many different correctional institutions. The program has left much time for group discussion, with each lesson allowing time for
the participants to learn from each other and the instructor. It has been designed to be administered in a minimum-security correctional institution, but modifications could be made to administer this program at any type of correctional institution. Incarcerated fathers of any age would be eligible for the program, provided that they have been incarcerated for a non-violent crime and that they have never been convicted of any crime against a child. Also, the participants may have children of any age, though this information should be obtained during the needs assessment process in order to make the program most applicable to the participants. The class size of this program should be limited to ten to twelve participants in order to foster the best environment for discussions and learning. Finally, though it is assumed that all participants would be literate, accommodations could be made for those lacking skills in reading and writing. Again, this information could be obtained during the needs assessment process. A needs assessment questionnaire has been included in the family life education manual for this program.

The guidelines for administering the program are detailed throughout the manual. After a needs assessment has been conducted using the needs assessment questionnaire provided in the manual, the participants would gather for two hours one night a week for ten weeks. Each session will require the participants to work individually and in small and large groups to complete the activities that are provided in the manual and designated to specific lessons. At the end of each session, the participants will be given a homework assignment that they are told is to be completed before the next session in order to provoke thought regarding the next lesson. All homework assignments will be discussed in the session, and it is expected that the men will participate in the discussion of the assignment.

The program begins with a lesson on personal development. It is believed that it is important for the participants to be able to evaluate their own past experiences and behaviors as both a man and as a father. It is important that the participants have an understanding of themselves before they begin to work on their relationships with others (Mazza, 2001; Turner & Peck, 2002). This lesson allows the men to both reflect on their pasts and look forward to their futures. Activities have been developed to allow the
participants to specifically assess their past experiences with fatherhood and their hopes for the future in regard to their role as a father.

Lessons on child development follow the lessons on personal development. Individual lessons on children ages birth to five years, six to twelve years, and thirteen to eighteen years focus on the physical, social, and cognitive realms of development. It is believed that all parenting programs should entail some form of education on child development, and in a program designed specifically for incarcerated fathers this information may be extremely necessary because they do not get to see their children developing on a day-to-day basis (Boswell & Wedge, 2002; DeBord, n.d.; Gabel & Johnston, 1995; Johnson, Selber, & Lauderdale, 1998; Mazza, 2001, 2002; Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003; Turner & Peck, 2002). Activities in these three lessons have been developed to provide accurate, useful information regarding the normal developmental tasks of children in the previously mentioned age ranges.

Following the lessons on child development, the program presents three lessons pertaining directly to common parenting issues: school and homework, discipline, and active parenting. These issues are discussed in an attempt to give the men realistic strategies for being an active and effective father both while incarcerated and once released. The lesson on school and homework provides a model for a group discussion pertaining to the ways in which a parent can foster the education of their child. The lesson on discipline involves role-play activities in which the men are faced with various situations in which they are to discipline children of different ages. The lesson on active parenting is one that involves the men hearing the real experiences of an adult who grew up having a father who was incarcerated. This guest speaker will inform the men of the importance of remaining active in the lives of their children both while they are incarcerated and once they are released, and he/she will also talk to the participants about realistic methods of being an active father.

Finally, issues pertaining specifically to incarcerated fathers are addressed in the final three lessons of the program. Lessons on visitation and communication, what to say to children who have questions regarding their father's incarceration, and how to initiate/maintain a relationship with their children's caretaker(s) while they are incarcerated all help to allow the men to take the knowledge that they have obtained in
the previous lessons of the program and apply it through contact and communication with their children. Few men in correctional institutions report being able to have physical contact with their children (via face-to-face interaction), so it is very important for them to develop realistic strategies for maintaining other forms of contact with their children (United States Department of Justice, 2000).

An important component of any family life education plan is the evaluation of the program. The goals for this program require that two forms of evaluation are conducted: one calls for a focus group of participants to evaluate their experiences with the program and one requires the prison social worker or equivalent staff member to track the future criminal records of the participants. An overall goal of the program is to strengthen the family ties of the participants. One key sign of strengthened familial bonds in incarcerated individuals is a decrease in recidivism rates (Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003). Therefore, if the program is helping to strengthen familial bonds for the participants, a decrease in recidivism rates of the participants as compared to those incarcerated individuals who did not participate in the program should be exhibited.

For the complete family life education manual, including complete lesson plans, activities and assignments, and guidelines for program delivery, see "Fathering for Life: A Family Life Education Manual for Teaching Parenting Skills to Incarcerated Fathers" found in Appendix A.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

With the number of incarcerated fathers of minor children currently standing at 721,500 in the United States prison system, it is becoming of increasing importance to serve this population (United States Department of Justice, 2000). Programs designed for incarcerated parents that focus on bringing them back into their families have been shown to have excellent benefits for both the individuals involved and society as a whole. These types of programs have been shown to reduce recidivism rates of those who participate and reduce the probability of the children of the participants to end up in the justice system themselves (Travis, Cincotta, and Solomon, 2003). This is the basis for the development of the program, "Fathering for Life", a family life education plan designed to teach important parenting skills to incarcerated fathers that can be utilized both while incarcerated and once released back into the family.

Family systems theory explains that the incarceration of a member of the family will have far-reaching effects on all members of the family (Whitechurch & Constantine, 1993). The children of incarcerated fathers are more likely to be negatively effected for several reasons, including the emotional pain of separation from the parent and the financial strain on the family that is incurred by the loss of a parent. The effects shown in children of incarcerated fathers include, but are not limited to, the following: diminished school performance, increased risk of abuse and neglect, increased instances of delinquency, disruption of development, and loss of respect for authority, both parental and legal (Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003). From a family systems perspective, the positive implications of this program are not only tied to the participant. Increasing parental abilities and becoming a more active member of the family will allow not only the incarcerated man but also his family to benefit from the program.

Though the field of information is growing, the issue of incarcerated fathers has not yet received the attention necessary in either the literature or program development. Few parenting programs have been designed specifically to cater to the needs of incarcerated fathers, often reinforcing the idea that fathers are not necessary components of the family. This image is not true, given the research that has shown the importance of active fathers in the lives of their children. Children of fathers who take an active role in
their lives benefit in several ways including the following: greater abilities in cognitive areas, an increased ability to be empathetic toward others, fewer stereotypical views on gender definitions. Fathers who are actively involved in the lives of their children also benefit in several ways, including increased self-esteem and an increase in the enjoyment of time spent with their children (Meth & Pasick, 1990). Implication of active parenting for incarcerated fathers are even more beneficial because, in addition to the aforementioned effects, incarcerated fathers who are or become active parents will build stronger familial bonds, thus decreasing the probability of them returning to a correctional institution in the future (Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003).
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: “FATHERING FOR LIFE: A FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION MANUAL FOR TEACHING PARENTING SKILLS TO INCARCERATED FATHERS”
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INTRODUCTION

This manual has been designed to aid family life educators in reaching a population that is often ignored by programmers: incarcerated fathers. The overall goal of the program is to increase the parenting skills and familial bonds of incarcerated fathers, thus reducing the recidivism rates of the participants and reducing the probability of the children of incarcerated fathers becoming involved in the correctional system themselves.

This manual includes a detailed and thorough family life education curriculum. The manual includes all of the necessary materials in order to relay information on parenting to incarcerated fathers, including lesson plans, activity handouts and instructor copies, assignments, and program evaluation plan. Topics of lessons include personal development, child development, typical parenting issues, and visitation and communication. However, it is important to note that all of the lessons allow for change in order to fit the needs of individual groups. A needs assessment interview should be done with each participant prior to the start of the program to understand what each participant needs in order to achieve the maximum benefit of the program.

The curriculum has been designed to be administered to incarcerated fathers of any age. It is assumed that the program would be administered at a minimum-security correctional facility; however, the program could be modified in order to be used in any type of correctional institution. The participants should have been convicted of a non-violent crime, and no participant should have ever been convicted of any crime against children.
GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAM DELIVERY

Target Population: Incarcerated fathers

Audience: Incarcerated fathers of any age would be eligible for this program. These men should be non-violent criminals who wish to increase their knowledge and skills related to being a father. This program could be modified to be administered at any prison, but would be most applicable in a minimum-security prison. Participants may have children of any age, and each class should not exceed ten to twelve participants. It would be assumed that all participants would be literate, though accommodations could be made for those lacking skills in reading and writing.

Recruitment Methods: An example of an advertisement to be used is included in this manual. This advertisement would be hung in prison common areas. Also, all prison staff members should be made aware of the program so that they would be able to recommend the program to eligible inmates. In order to be admitted to the program, those interested would first have to meet with a prison social worker (or equivalent staff member) who would then determine if the man qualified for participation (father, non-violent charges, desire to learn about fatherhood, etc.).

Delivery System: This program has been designed to be administered by educators via face-to-face contact with participants. This program had been designed to be administered one night a week for ten weeks, with each session lasting approximately two hours. Each meeting would involve the educator(s) and the participants meeting in a room provided by the prison for lessons, activities, and discussion. Most lessons also include a ten-minute block of time that is to be used for a break from the activities of the lesson. This break is to be granted in accordance with the rules of the correctional institution in which it is being administered. If the correctional institution does not allow for a break time within the session, the extra time can be distributed to other sections of the lesson as determined by the instructor. Each night, the participants will also receive a homework assignment, which is to be completed before the next class. This homework
assignment will enable the participant to begin thinking about the material that will be presented and discussed in the next meeting.
OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

Title: “Fathering for Life”

Goal: To increase the parenting skills and familial bonds of incarcerated fathers, thus reducing the recidivism rates of the participants and reducing the probability of the children of incarcerated fathers becoming involved in the correctional system themselves.

Resources: For further information regarding incarcerated fathers or parenting programs for incarcerated fathers refer to any of the following sources:


GOALS OF PROGRAM

The overall goals of this family life education program can be summarized as follows:

- Reduction of recidivism rates of men involved in the program.
- Increase in the strength of the familial bonds of the participants.
- Increase in parenting skills of participants.
- Reduced probability of the participants’ children becoming involved in the criminal justice system themselves.
- Reduction of costs associated with the criminal justice system.
LESSON PLAN #1

Lesson Title & Number: “Getting to Know You” (Lesson 1 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, January 2005

Overview: This lesson plan is designed to both introduce the program to the participants and to allow the participants to gain a better understanding of their past definitions of fatherhood. It is hoped that the participants will become comfortable with reflecting on their own personal experiences and thinking about their future as fathers.

Estimated Time Required: 2 hours

Goal: To reflect on past definitions of fatherhood with the intent of redefining the idea of being a father to include more positive notions. Through individual and group reflections it is hoped that the participants will reflect on their past definitions of fatherhood and the changes they hope to make in the future for their families.

Objectives:
Participants will…

• Identify past definitions of fatherhood and the implications of these definitions.
• Develop, through individual and group reflection, definitions of fatherhood to apply in the future.
• Gain experience in reflecting on one’s own personal experiences in order to achieve the maximum benefit of all lessons presented in this program.

Background Discussion: This lesson emphasizes the importance of the participants evaluating their past experiences and behavior. Previous programs have stressed the need for the participants to understand themselves on a personal level before they can work on
their relationships with others in their lives (Mazza, 2001; Turner & Peck, 2002). This is especially true when looking at furthering one’s abilities as a parent (Hairston, 2001). In order to help the men become aware of who they are and where they need to be as a person, this lesson plan has been developed considering aspects of other successful programs, encompassing both personal reflection and thinking about the future (Hairston, 1998; Mazza, 2001, 2002). The skills learned by the participants in this lesson are especially important because all future lessons will depend on the participant’s ability to reflect on their past experiences. Personal reflections are also very important to bringing meaning to the various lessons in the program for the participants (Mazza, 2001, 2002).

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, Activity #1, Activity #2, Homework #1

**Special Physical Arrangements:** To begin, desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard. All desks should be able to be moved so that the participants can engage in small group discussions. If it is not possible to have desks that are able to be moved, larger tables should be placed at the back of the room to facilitate small group discussions.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. Greeting and Introduction of Program (10 minutes)
   - Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.
   - Welcome all participants and begin by introducing the program and its administrators. Inform participants that lessons include personal development, child development, various parenting issues, and visitation and communication, and that the program will conclude with a graduation ceremony. Each lesson includes both group and individual reflection, and requires active participation by all of the men enrolled. Also, each night the participants will be given a
homework assignment that will allow them to begin thinking about the next lesson.

- Explain that, despite the ages of their children or the amount of contact that they have with their children, all participants can benefit from the knowledge gained in all of the lessons.
- Explain the purpose of the first lesson: To understand participants’ past definitions of fatherhood and to make any necessary changes to that definition in order to be the best fathers that they can be for their children and families.

2. Defining Dad (10 minutes)

- As a group, begin by asking the participants to give single words that answer the following question: What does it mean to be a dad?
- Write all responses on the wipe-board so that they can be discussed as a group.
- Once all responses have been recorded, discern between those that would be considered to be negative definitions from those that would be considered to be positive definitions.
- Identify “positive” descriptions and ask participants to give examples of the behavior described (ex. “caring”: talking to a child when they have had a bad day at school).
- Ask participants what they think could be done to the “negative” definitions to either eliminate those descriptions or change them to make them more positive.

3. Individual Activity #1: “The Past” (15 minutes)

- Pass out “Activity #1: The Past” to all participants, along with writing utensils.
- Explain that all of the questions are to be answered individually, and that the answers given will first be discussed in pairs, then in the larger group.
Instructor should walk around the room in order to address any individual questions that may arise during the activity.

4. Discussion of Activity #1 in pairs (20 minutes)
   - Instructor should divide participants into pairs in order to discuss their answers to the questions posed in “Activity #1: The Past”.
   - If it is not possible to move individual desks, participants should be allowed to move to larger tables at the back of the room.
   - Instructor should walk around the room in order to address any questions that may arise during the discussion.

5. Large Group Discussion of Activity #1 and Break (15 minutes)
   - Participants should be asked to move back to their desks back to their original positions (or the participants should come back from the large tables to their individual desks).
   - Instructor should ask for any questions that the participants had while they were completing the activity.
   - Following answering any questions posed by the participants, the instructor should discuss the significance of understanding past definitions of fatherhood in order to make any necessary changes in order to be the best fathers that they can be in the future to their own children.
   - Finally, allow participants to have a short break from activities in accordance with rules of the prison.

6. Individual Activity #2: “The Future” (15 minutes)
   - Ask all participants to rejoin the group in order to begin the next activity.
   - Pass out “Activity #2: The Future” to all participants.
• Explain that all of the questions are to be answered individually, and that the answers given will first be discussed in pairs, then in the larger group.
• Instructor should walk around the room in order to address any individual questions that may arise during the activity.

7. Discussion of Activity #2 in pairs (20 minutes)
• Instructor should divide participants into pairs in order to discuss their answers to the questions posed in “Activity #2: The Future”.
• If it is not possible to move individual desks, participants should be allowed to move to larger tables at the back of the room.
• Instructor should walk around the room in order to address any questions that may arise during the discussion.

8. Large Group Discussion of Activity #2 (10 minutes)
• Participants should be asked to move back to their desks back to their original positions (or the participants should come back from the large tables to their individual desks).
• Instructor should ask for any questions that the participants had while they were completing the activity.
• Following answering any questions posed by the participants, the instructor should discuss the significance of setting goals for fatherhood and how this program can help the participants to achieve these goals. It is important to note to the participants that this program is not intended to solve all of their fatherhood problems, it is only meant to help the participants in their journey to becoming a more active and effective father.

9. Transition into next session (5 minutes)
Participants given the homework assignment for the next session (Homework #1), and they are told that the assignment is to be completed before the next session.

Participants thanked for participating in the activity.

Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


LESSON PLAN #2

Lesson Title & Number: “Importance of Active Parenting” (Lesson 2 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, February 2005

Overview: This lesson has been designed in order to show the participants the value of active parenting. In order to do this, the participants will engage in a large group discussion of the benefits of active parenting, and the participants will hear the story of one man/woman whose father was incarcerated during much of their childhood. The men will then be able to discuss the impact that the father’s incarceration had on the man/woman and learn ways of being an active parent both during and after incarceration.

Estimated Time Required: 2 hours

Goal: To show the participants the value of active parenting both using academic research and the real life experience of an adult who grew up having a father who was incarcerated.

Objectives:
Participants will…

- Identify positive aspects of active parenting for both the parent and the child.
- Develop realistic strategies for initiating/maintaining an active parenting role through both group discussions and by hearing the story of someone who as lived through the experience of having an incarcerated father.

Background Discussion: In general, children of fathers who take on active role as a parent fare much better than those children whose fathers are not actively involved. Children of active fathers benefit at all stages in development in terms of their cognitive,
social, and personality functioning (Meyers, 1993). Children with active and involved fathers have shown the following: a greater sense of control over what happens in their lives; greater abilities in all cognitive areas, especially verbal areas; a greater sense of empathy toward others; and these children have been shown to have less stereotypical views on what defines a “man” and a “woman” (Meth & Pasick, 1990). By men taking on both the traditional fatherly roles and also engaging in more nurturing and active parenting styles, children will benefit in various aspects of their development. In all cases, these studies have shown that boys and girls benefit equally from having an involved and active father. It is important that children of both genders see that their father is able to perform roles that are typically “male” and “female” in order to diminish the stereotypes that children may hold in terms of gender (Meth & Pasick, 1990).

Fathers themselves also benefit from being involved in the lives of their children. Men that take on a more active role as a father report that they are more self-confident and that they feel as though they are more effective parents (Meth & Pasick, 1990). These men also report that their experience as a parent is much more meaningful and a bigger part of their self-definition (Meth & Pasick, 1990). Also, these men report that becoming an active parent has allowed them to enjoy spending time with their children much more than they did prior to becoming an active and involved parent (Meth & Pasick, 1990).

Utilizing the experiences of a child of a former inmate (or current inmate) in this section of the program may enhance the participants’ understanding of the way in which their children have been affected by their incarceration (Mazza, 2001). Having a guest speaker on this topic may also help to show the men the importance of remaining an active part of their children’s lives during the time that they are incarcerated.

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, Homework #2, Homework #3

**Special Physical Arrangements:** Desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard. Instructor may want to make special physical arrangements to meet the preferences of the guest speaker.
Schedule of Activities:

1. Greeting (5 minutes)
   - Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.
   - Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the evening. Inform the participants that this session will focus on understanding the benefits of active parenting for both children and the parent.
   - Instructor may want to inform the participants that they will later be joined by a guest speaker to greater enhance the impact of the lesson.

2. Discussion of Homework #1 from previous night (20 minutes)
   - Ask participants to share any of their thoughts on whether or not they think that it is important that they be active fathers.
     - If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one question that they have written down.
     - Allow for participants to react to questions
   - Write any main ideas on why active parenting is important on the wipe-board/chalkboard.
   - Discuss the ways that the participants thought of to be more active fathers for their children both while incarcerated and once released. Jot these ideas on the wipe-board and discuss how to realistically implement the ideas.

3. Break (10 minutes)
   - Allow participants to have a short break from activities in accordance with rules of the prison.
   - At this time, the instructor should have the guest speaker enter the room and prepare to speak to the participants.

4. Guest Speaker (30 minutes)
The instructor should introduce the guest speaker to the participants. Make sure that all participants are still wearing their nametags so that the speaker may address them. Inform the participants that the guest speaker will first tell his/her story and the information that they wish to share with the group, and then the participants will be allowed to ask questions and engage in discussion on the topic.

The guest speaker could be either a male or female who had a father who was incarcerated through much of their childhood. The guest speaker may be found through working with the local justice system or through a prison social worker.

It would be assumed that the guest speaker would be comfortable and knowledgeable on the topic of incarcerated fathers and the importance of active parenting.

The guest speaker should be asked to speak about his/her experience having an incarcerated father during childhood. The best case scenario would be that the guest speaker would have had an active father (or at least a father that became active in his/her life at some point during incarceration) so that he/she could discuss the impact that having an active father made in her life.

5. Question and Answer Period and Discussion (50 minutes)

It is assumed that participants will have several questions for the guest speaker. The instructor should also be available to add to answers given by the speaker or to answer any other questions asked of them directly by the participants.

If no one volunteers to start asking questions, the instructor may ask a question of the speaker, or choose a participant to ask a question.

Allow questions and discussion by the participants and the speaker to carry on until the end of the session.

6. Wrap-up and Transition to next session (5 minutes)
Participants given the homework assignments for the next session (Homework #2 and Homework #3), and they are told that the assignments are to be completed before the next session.

Participants thanked for participating in the activity.

Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


Lesson Title & Number: “Kids: 0-5” (Lesson 3 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, January 2005

Overview: This lesson has been designed to aid the participants in their understanding of child development in the first five years of life. It is hoped that the participants will gain a better understanding of basic physical, cognitive, and social growth during these early years. An understanding of child development is a crucial element of becoming a more involved and effective parent to children of all ages.

Estimated Time Required: 1 hour

Goal: To gain a better understanding of child development in the first five years of life in order to become a more involved and effective parent.

Objectives:
Participants will…

• Identify major developmental tasks of children in the first five years.
• Identify typical behaviors of children in the first five years of life in the physical, cognitive, and social domain.

Background Discussion: Parenting programs aimed at any population should entail some type of practical education about the basic biological, cognitive, and social characteristics of children at various ages, as it is a basis for understanding children and their thoughts and actions (Adalist-Estrin, 1994). This portion of the program is especially important in programs geared toward incarcerated fathers because they do not have the opportunity to see their children developing on a day-to-day basis and they may not have any formal education regarding normal child development (Boswell & Wedge,

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, Activity #3, Activity #3 Instructor Copy

**Special Physical Arrangements:** Desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. Greeting (5 minutes)
   - Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.
   - Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the evening, beginning with going over Homework #1 and then moving on to the lesson dealing with understanding child development in the first five years of life.

2. Discussion of Homework #2 from the previous night (20 minutes)
   - Ask participants to share in what ways they think that children are developing in the first five years of life.
     - If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one idea that they have written down.
     - Allow for participants to react to ideas, discouraging any judgmental comments.
     - Make sure to get the opinion of men who have older children on what they remember about their children during this time period.
   - Instructor should be writing main ideas and thoughts on the wipe-board/chalkboard
Once several ideas have been shared, draw out the main ideas in the major developmental areas: physical, cognitive, and social.

Stress the importance of understanding of child development in these main areas at various ages in order to become a more involved and effective father to children of all ages.

3. Large Group Activity (20 minutes)
   - Pass out “Activity #3: Kids: 0-5”
   - Explain that all of the statements are either true or false and that each participant will have a few minutes to go through and individually determine whether the statements are true or false before the each statement is discussed as a group.
   - The instructor should refer to “Activity #3: Kids 0-5 Instructor Copy” as to which statements are true and which are false. Provided also is a brief explanation of why each statement is either true or false. It is assumed that the instructor could add to the explanations if necessary.
   - The instructor should ask for volunteers to tell whether they deemed a statement true or false, and the instructor should reply in accordance with the Instructor Copy of the activity. Any questions that the participants have regarding the truth or falsehood of the statements.
   - The instructor may also want to draw a line down the middle of the wipe-board and write the true statements on one side and the false statements on the other as each question is answered.

4. Discussion of Activity #3 and Transition into next lesson (5 minutes)
   - Once all statements in Activity #3 have been addressed, it would be appropriate to discuss the significance of understanding child development in the first five years of life.
   - Following this discussion, inform the participants that after a short break, we will move into the next lesson regarding child development between the ages of six and twelve.
Thank participants for actively engaging in the activity.

5. Break (10 minutes)
   - Allow participants to use the restroom and converse with each other and the instructor in accordance with the rules of the prison.

References:


LESSON PLAN #4

Lesson Title & Number: “Kids: 6-12” (Lesson 4 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, January 2005

Overview: This lesson has been designed to aid the participants in their understanding of child development between the ages of six and twelve, sometimes labeled as the “pre-teen” years. It is hoped that the participants will gain a better understanding of basic physical, cognitive, and social growth during these early years. An understanding of child development is a crucial element of becoming a more involved and effective parent to children of all ages.

Estimated Time Required: 1 hour

Goal: To gain a better understanding of child development between the ages of six and twelve in order to become a more involved and effective parent.

Objectives:
Participants will…

• Identify major developmental tasks of children between the ages of six and twelve.
• Identify typical behaviors of children between the ages of six and twelve in the physical, cognitive, and social domain.

Background Discussion: Parenting programs aimed at any population should entail some type of practical education about the basic biological, cognitive, and social characteristics of children at various ages, as it is a basis for understanding children and their thoughts and actions (Adalist-Estrin, 1994). This portion of the program is especially important in programs geared toward incarcerated fathers because they do not have the opportunity to see their children developing on a day-to-day basis and they may

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, Activity #4, Activity #4 Instructor Copy, Homework #4, Homework #5

**Special Physical Arrangements:** Desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. Reunite the group following break (5 minutes)
   - Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the rest evening, beginning with going over Homework #2 and then moving on to the lesson dealing with understanding child development between the ages of six and twelve.

2. Discussion of Homework #3 from the previous night (25 minutes)
   - Ask participants to share in what ways they think that children are developing between the ages of six and twelve.
     - If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one idea that they have written down.
     - Allow for participants to react to ideas, discouraging any judgmental comments.
     - Make sure to get the opinion of men who have older children on what they remember about their children during this time period.
   - Instructor should be writing main ideas and thoughts on the wipe-board/chalkboard
Once several ideas have been shared, draw out the main ideas in the major developmental areas: physical, cognitive, and social.

Stress the importance of understanding of child development in these main areas at various ages in order to become a more involved and effective father to children of all ages.

3. Large Group Activity (20 minutes)
   - Pass out “Activity #4: Kids: 6-12”
   - Explain that the all of the statements are either true or false and that each participant will have a few minutes to go through and individually determine whether the statements are true or false before the each statement is discussed as a group.
   - The instructor should refer to “Activity #4: Kids 6-12 Instructor Copy” as to which statements are true and which are false. Provided also is a brief explanation of why each statement is either true of false. It is assumed that the instructor will add to the explanations if necessary.
   - The instructor should ask for volunteers to tell whether they deemed a statement true or false, and the instructor should reply in accordance with the Instructor Copy of the activity. The instructor should address any questions that the participants have regarding the truth or falsehood of the statements.
   - The instructor may want to draw a line down the middle of the wipe-board and write the true statements on one side and the false statements on the other as each question is answered.

4. Wrap-up and discussion (10 minutes)
   - Once all statements in Activity #4 have been addressed, it would be appropriate to discuss the significance of understanding child development between the ages of six and twelve.
Following this discussion, inform the participants that the lessons in the next session will focus on adolescent development and helping children do well in school and helping with homework. Make all participants aware that both of the homework assignments (Homework #4 and Homework #5) should be completed before the next session.

Thank participants for actively participating in the activity.

Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


LESSON PLAN #5

Lesson Title & Number: “Teenagers” (Lesson 5 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, January 2005

Overview: This lesson has been designed to aid the participants in their understanding of child development between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. It is hoped that the participants will gain a better understanding of basic physical, cognitive, and social growth during these later years of childhood. An understanding of child development is a crucial element of becoming a more involved and effective parent to children of all ages.

Estimated Time Required: 1 hour

Goal: To gain a better understanding of child development between the ages of thirteen and eighteen in order to become a more involved and effective parent.

Objectives:
Participants will…

• Identify major developmental tasks of children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

• Identify typical behaviors of children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen in the physical, cognitive, and social domain.

Background Discussion: Parenting programs aimed at any population should entail some type of practical education about the basic biological, cognitive, and social characteristics of children at various ages, as it is a basis for understanding children and their thoughts and actions (Adalist-Estrin, 1994). This portion of the program is especially important in programs geared toward incarcerated fathers because they do not have the opportunity to see their children developing on a day-to-day basis and they may not have any formal education regarding normal child development (Boswell & Wedge,

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, Activity #5, Activity #5 Instructor Copy

**Special Physical Arrangements:** Desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. Greeting (5 minutes)
   - Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.
   - Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the evening, beginning with going over Homework #3 and then moving on to the lesson dealing with understanding child development between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

2. Discussion of Homework #4 from the previous night (20 minutes)
   - Ask participants to share in what ways they think that children are developing between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.
     - If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one idea that they have written down.
     - Allow for participants to react to ideas, discouraging any judgmental comments.
     - Make sure to get the opinion of men who have older children on what they remember about their children during this time period.
     - The instructor should also encourage the men to remember what they were going through when they were teenagers,
linking those thoughts back to their own children’s experiences.

- Instructor should be writing main ideas and thoughts on the wipe-board/chalkboard
- Once several ideas have been shared, draw out the main ideas in the major developmental areas: physical, cognitive, and social.
- Stress the importance of understanding of child development in these main areas at various ages in order to become a more involved and effective father to children of all ages.

3. Large Group Activity (20 minutes)
   - Pass out “Activity #5: Teenagers”
   - Explain that the all of the statements are either true or false and that each participant will have a few minutes to go through and individually determine whether the statements are true or false before the each statement is discussed as a group.
   - The instructor should refer to “Activity #5: Teenagers Instructor Copy” as to which statements are true and which are false. Provided also is a brief explanation of why each statement is either true of false. It is assumed that the instructor could add to the explanations if necessary.
   - The instructor should ask for volunteers to tell whether they deemed a statement true or false, and the instructor should reply in accordance with the Instructor Copy of the activity. The instructor should address any questions that the participants have regarding the truth or falsehood of the statements.
   - The instructor may also want to draw a line down the middle of the wipe-board and write the true statements on one side and the false statements on the other as each question is answered.

4. Discussion of Activity #5 and Transition into next lesson (5 minutes)
Once all statements in Activity #5 have been addressed, it would be appropriate to discuss the significance of understanding child development in the first five years of life.

Following this discussion, inform the participants that after a short break, we will move into the next lesson regarding understanding and helping children with issues relating to school and homework.

Thank participants for participating in the activity.

5. Break (10 minutes)

Allow participants to use the restroom and converse with each other and the instructor in accordance with the rules of the prison.

References:


LESSON PLAN #6

Lesson Title & Number: "School and Homework" (Lesson 6 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, February 2005

Overview: This lesson has been designed to help participants understand the importance of parental involvement in a child's schoolwork and homework. Through personal reflection on issues surrounding their own educational background and a large group discussion on the ways to help children do well in school, it is hoped that the participants will become more active in promoting educational achievement in the lives of their children.

Estimated Time Required: 1 hour

Goal: To help participants understand the importance of parental involvement in a child's education, causing the participant to become more actively involved in promoting educational achievement in the lives of their children.

Objectives:
Participants will...

• Identify the importance of a strong educational background.
• Developing plausible methods of becoming more actively involved in a child's education, including methods of helping develop study habits.
• Identify possible barriers to a child receiving the most out of his/her education.

Background Discussion: For incarcerated fathers, a lesson on helping a child with school and homework will help the fathers to find their own way of being a parent to their children, hopefully giving each man the skills necessary to ease his transition as an active parent in the household once he is released (DeBord, n.d.; Mazza, 2001; Turner &
Peck, 2002; Vera Institute of Justice, 2001). In a study done by Bushfield (2004), it was found that parenting education programs that focused on such topics as those in this section of the program were able to impact the attitudes of the participants in terms of their attitudes toward the importance of father involvement and their own thought processes and attitudes toward parenting.

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, Homework #6

**Special Physical Arrangements:** Desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. Reunite the group following break (5 minutes)
   - Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the rest evening, beginning with going over Homework #4 and then moving on to the lesson dealing with understanding the importance of being involved in children's educations and how to help children get the most out of their education.

2. Discussion of Homework #5 from the previous night (25 minutes)
   - Ask participants to share in their educational background and experiences.
     - If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one idea that they have written down.
     - Allow for participants to react to ideas, discouraging any judgmental comments.
     - Address such issues as the value that they place on education and the value placed on education by their families. Also, it is important to get the participants to discuss what could have been done to help them while they were in school.
Instructor should be writing main ideas and thoughts on the wipe-board/chalkboard.

Once several ideas have been shared, draw out the main themes in the discussion of education (i.e. difficulties, strengths, value placed on education, help from parents, etc.).

Stress the importance of understanding the importance of educational attainment and how important it is that parents be actively involved in the education of their children.

3. Large Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Following the discussion of the men's personal educational histories, it is time to move onto discussing the ways in which the participants can help their children to work to get the best out of their own education.

Begin by asking the participants to brainstorm on some ideas that they could do both while incarcerated and once released in order to help their children do well in school. If no participant volunteers, go around the room and ask each participant to individually share one idea.

The instructor should write all of the thoughts that are shared on the wipe-board/chalkboard in order to keep track of responses.

Several issues should be addressed during this discussion. If the following ideas are not mentioned by participants or are not sufficiently elaborate upon, the instructor should make sure to address them before the discussion is completed:

- Grades should never be a shock to parents: Always talk to your children about how they are doing in particular subjects. If you feel that your child is not telling you everything that you need to know, contact their teacher or guidance counselor. Teachers and guidance counselors should be happy to see a parent taking an active position in your child's education and discuss your child's progress with you. During your
incarceration, ask your children during visits and in letters how they are doing in school. Also, keep in contact with your children's caregiver(s) on the progress that your children are making in school and any difficulties they may be having.

- Helping children with their homework can be critical, but make sure that you are doing it for them. The importance of homework is to allow your child to continue their education at home, not simply to get the work done for a grade. If your child needs help, such as where to find certain information, this would be a good place for you to step in, but remember only to help the child with the process, not complete it for them.

- Help children organize large projects or reading assignments: If a child feels overwhelmed because they have put off reading a book or doing a large project, they may experience unnecessary stress and anxiety. Help children to break down large assignments into easier smaller sections done over time.

- Designate certain times and places for studying. This may cause you to have to change your own schedule, but it will help your child with getting their schoolwork on a schedule. You could say that the kitchen table is to be used every weeknight from seven to eight in the evening for homework assignments and studying. It is then important to decide that things like extracurricular activities, television, and meals will not interrupt this time.

- For younger children, set time aside daily to read. This is something that could be done both while incarcerated and after release. While incarcerated, consider using audiotapes to record "books on tape" for your children. Also, when your child comes to visit ask them to bring their favorite books with them for you to read to them. For older children who are beginning to read on their own, take turns reading different
pages in the story. Following release, reading to younger children and reading alongside older children can promote reading abilities in children. (It is important to remember that there may be participants who are illiterate in the program. The instructor should make special care to privately talk with these participants in order to make them aware of any literacy programs available.)

- Any other issue involving education may be added as it fits the time restraints and the desires of the instructor (DeBord, n.d.)

4. Wrap-up and discussion (10 minutes)
   - Once all issues regarding promoting education and helping with homework have addressed, make sure to reiterate the importance of parental involvement in the education of children.
   - Following this discussion, inform the participants that the lesson in the next session will be dealing with discipline. Make all participants aware that Homework Assignment #5 should be completed before the next session.
   - Thank participants for participating in the activity.
   - Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


LESSON PLAN #7

Lesson Title & Number: “Discipline” (Lesson 7 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, February 2005

Overview: This lesson has been designed in order to allow the participants to evaluate their own definitions of appropriate and effective discipline. Through both small and large group discussions, it is hope that the participants will come to understand past methods of discipline and develop realistic strategies for discipline in future interactions with their children.

Estimated Time Required: 2 hours

Goal: To allow the participants to evaluate their own definitions of appropriate and effective discipline while also developing realistic strategies for discipline to be used in the future.

Objectives:
Participants will…

- Identify past definitions of discipline.
- Evaluate current beliefs regarding appropriate and effective discipline techniques.
- Develop realistic strategies for effective and appropriate discipline for children of various ages.

Background Discussion: This section of the program takes the knowledge and insight that the participants have learned from the previous sections of the program and applies this information to “real” interactions with their children. The goal of this section of the program is to have participants design realistic strategies for dealing with discipline, a common issue involved in parenting, both while incarcerated and once released. This
lesson will help the men to find their own effective and reasonable way of being a parent to their children in terms of discipline, hopefully giving each man the skills necessary to ease his transition as an active parent in the household once he is released (DeBord, n.d.; Mazza, 2001; Turner & Peck, 2002; Vera Institute of Justice, 2001). In a study done by Bushfield (2004), it was found that parenting education programs that focused on such topics as discipline were able to impact the attitudes of the participants in terms of their attitudes toward discipline and punishment, the importance of father involvement, and their own thought processes and attitudes toward parenting.

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, Scenario Cards #1, Instructor Sheet for Scenario Cards #1, Homework #7

**Special Physical Arrangements:** To begin, desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard. All desks should be able to be moved so that the participants can engage in small group discussions. If it is not possible to have desks that are able to be moved, larger tables should be placed at the back of the room to facilitate small group discussions.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. Greeting (5 minutes)
   - Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.
   - Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the evening. Inform the participants that this session will focus solely on evaluating previously held beliefs regarding discipline and developing realistic discipline strategies for use in the future.

2. Discussion of Homework #6 from previous night (30 minutes)
   - Ask participants to share any of their experiences with discipline that they mentioned on their homework sheets and how they felt regarding
those experiences (either their experiences receiving or delivering discipline)

- If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one question that they have written down.
- Allow for participants to react to questions

- Write any main issues shared on the wipe-board/chalkboard so that they can be referred to throughout the discussion if desired.
- Once several examples have been shared, draw out themes that are seen in the questions. Allow for any discussion that may follow in response to these main themes that are drawn from the conversation.

3. Small Group Activity: Scenario Cards #1 (30 minutes)

- Ask men to get into four groups, with 2-3 men in each group, depending on the size of the class.
- Put groups on opposite sides of the room to allow men to talk freely and practice their role-play activities.
- Explain to participants that how the activity will work: Each group will receive a card with a different situation on it; each group will read their situation amongst themselves and then decide how best to answer the question at the end of the situation; participants will then practice a role-play of their situation and their solution to the question posed.
- Pass out one scenario card, blank pieces of paper, and pens to each group and allow the men to begin working on the activity.
- Instructor would be walking around to each group in order to answer any questions or address any problems that may arise.
- Once all groups have finished, the participants move back into the larger group, with all desks again pointed toward the wipe/board/chalkboard.

4. Break (10 minutes)
Allow participants to have a short break from activities in accordance with rules of the prison.

5. Enacting Role-Play and Discussion of Role-Play (40 minutes)
   - Ask for a group to volunteer to get up in front of the class and demonstrate the role-play that they have developed. If no group volunteers, pick a group that will go first.
   - After each group presents their role-play activity, the instructor will point out the significance of the question that the situation centered upon, and the positive and negative ways to respond to the question (using “Instructor Sheet for Activity Cards” as a guide to the discussion). It would be assumed that participants may have questions, and it would be appropriate to address these questions at this time.
   - Once each of the four groups has demonstrated their role-play, the instructor should write the main points regarding positive and negative discipline techniques.
   - Any questions or other suggestions by the participants regarding these questions may be addressed at this time.

6. Wrap-up and Transition into next session (5 minutes)
   - Participants given the homework assignment for the next session (Homework #7), and they are told that the assignment is to be completed before the next session.
   - Participants thanked for participating in the activity.
   - Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


Lesson Title & Number: “When I can’t see you” (Lesson 8 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, April 2004

Overview: The focus of this lesson is for the participants to develop ideas for methods of communication with their children when personal visits are not possible or visits are infrequent. It is hoped that the participants, with guidance from the instructor, will be able to work together in order to develop strategies for methods of communicating with their children. It is important that these methods of communication are age-appropriate for the children and that they can increase the amount of communication between the men and their children.

Estimated Time Required: 2 hours

Goal: To provide, through group discussion and guidance by the instructor, methods of communication with children that are alternatives to personal visits.

Objectives:
Participants will…

- Recognize that not having personal visits from children does not mean that they cannot communicate with children during their time of incarceration.
- Identify realistic strategies for communication with children when personal visits are not possible or are infrequent.

Background Discussion: Many incarcerated fathers report that they have had no personal visits from their children during their time of incarceration (United State Department of Justice, 2000). This leads to the importance of maintaining (or initiating) contact with children through alternative means. Maintaining contact with an
incarcerated parent has many benefits for the children, including, but not limited to, correcting images of the parent’s condition, preparing the child for the release of their parent, preventing the termination of parental rights, and it may ease the pain the children feel due to separation from the parent. This is why several effective parenting programs for incarcerated fathers have begun to provide guidance to participants regarding creative alternatives to personal visits with children. These programs suggest that men need to understand that communication through letters may not work with all children (Mazza, 2002). Children in elementary school may perceive that writing letters is similar to doing homework, and communicating in this manner may be discouraging to children of this age. Also, many young children are not yet able to read and write. Incarcerated fathers may feel frustrated when their children do not respond to their letters. Some alternatives methods of communication presented include: drawing pictures, sending photographs, playing games with children through letters in the mail (i.e. sending a word puzzle back and forth), recording books on tape for small children, and writing stories to children and adolescents, and phone calls (though these are often expensive) (Mazza, 2002).

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, various materials for use in lesson’s activity (old magazines and newspapers, paper, scissors (if allowed), tape, glue, children’s books of various complexity, tape recorders, audio tapes, markers, envelopes, stamps, Polaroid camera (kept in the care of the instructor), word puzzle books, and any other materials desired by instructor for use by participants), Homework Assignment #8

**Special Physical Arrangements:** To begin, desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard. Two long tables should be set up in the back of the room with an appropriate number of chairs. On these tables would be the materials needed for this lesson’s activity.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. Greeting (5 minutes)
Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.

Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the evening, beginning with going over Homework #7 and then moving on to the lesson dealing with developing realistic strategies for communicating with children when personal visits are impossible or infrequent.

2. Discussion of Homework #7 from the previous night (25 minutes)
   - Ask participants to share the ways that they came up with to remain in (or initiate) contact with their children
     - If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one idea that they have written down.
     - Allow for participants to react to ideas, discouraging any judgmental comments
   - Instructor should be writing main ideas and thoughts on the wipeboard/chalkboard
   - Once several ideas have been shared, draw out themes that are seen in the ideas, providing pros and cons for various ideas. Most likely, ideas will follow in line with such ideas as letter writing, drawing pictures, and phone calls, because these are common alternatives to personal visits.
   - This would be an appropriate time for the instructor to step-in and remind the participants on the benefits to them and their children of maintaining communication during time of incarceration.

3. Individual Activity (45 minutes)
   - Ask the participants to take a seat at the one of the long tables at the back of the room.
   - Once everyone has taken a seat, inform the participants that this activity will allow them to be creative and use some of the alternative
methods of communication discussed previously in order to contact their children,

- At this time, participants will be given various materials (old magazines and newspapers, paper, scissors (if allowed), tape, glue, children’s books of various complexity, tape recorders, audio tapes, markers, envelopes, stamps, Polaroid camera (kept in the care of the instructor), word puzzle books, and any other materials desired by instructor for use by participants) with which to utilize the knowledge gained in the previous section of this class. Participants with older children may choose to write letters to their children. If any man would like his picture taken in order to send it to his children, the man should ask the instructor to take his picture. (If any participant becomes upset because they do not feel that they can contact their children, they may be excused from the activity, encouraged to help others, or practice methods of communication though they would not send out their finished product)

- Instructor should move around the room and discuss the various projects that the men are developing, answering any questions that the participants may have during the activity.

4. Break (10 minutes)

- Allow participants to have a short break from activities in accordance with rules of the prison.

5. Discussion of Activity (30 minutes)

- Participants should move back to their desks in the semi-circle at this time.

- Ask for volunteers to share their projects. Ask the participants to explain their projects, their reason for doing that particular project, and why they feel that this project is a good way of communicating with their particular children.
Any questions or other suggestions by the participants regarding these questions may be addressed at this time, discouraging any judgmental comments.

Any man wishing for their projects to be mailed to their children should give the instructor the project and any information that they have regarding where their children are living presently. (Instructor may need to investigate addresses of children with prison staff)

6. Transition into next session (5 minutes)
   - Participants given the homework assignment for the next session (Homework #8), and they are told that the assignment is to be completed before the next session.
   - Participants thanked for participating in the activity.
   - Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


Lesson Title & Number: “What to say…” (Lesson 9 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, April 2004

Overview: The focus of this lesson is for the participants to develop realistic strategies for answering the different types questions that their children have regarding their parent’s incarceration. It is hoped that the participants will be able to work together in order to develop strategies for interacting with their children that the participants can use when they encounter these questions in interactions with their own children.

Estimated Time Required: 2 hours

Goal: Participants will understand the four main types of questions that they may encounter in interactions with their children and will be able to answer these questions in the most appropriate manner.

Objectives:
Participants will…

- Recognize the four main types of questions that children are likely to ask regarding their father’s incarceration.
- Effectively answer the questions posed by their children regarding their parents’ situation.
- Understand the importance of answering questions that children ask regarding the situation effectively and thoroughly.

Background Discussion: When men are able to visit with their children, it is important that they know how to handle the questions that children typically ask related to the situation. Many men are not able to have visits with their children due to extreme amounts of distance between the prison facility and the child’s home (United States
Department of Justice, 2000), so it is important to express that, even in letters to their
children, it is important to know what to say to children regarding the father’s
carceration. Four types of questions have been identified that children of incarcerated
fathers typically have for their fathers. The first question is, “Where are you?” It is best
that parents answer this question honestly, though the decision is best made on a case-to-
case basis of whether or not this information should remain only inside of the family.
The second question is, “Why are you in prison?” Honesty is the best policy when
answering this question. Children have an understanding that if you break a rule, you
must be punished. This is also not an opportunity to proclaim innocence to children.
Parents often want to do this because they do not want their children to reject them, but
this can often have negative effects on the children. The third question is, “When are you
coming home?” Again, it is important to be honest with children. If it is not known
when the father will be returning home, this should be told to the children. Also, if the
man does know how long he will be in prison, he should explain it to the child in the way
that the child will understand it. Finally, the fourth question is, “Are you okay here?”
Children ask this question because they want reassurance that their fathers are not in a
harmful situation. Though it is important not to scare children with the realities of prison
life, it is important to explain to children that prison is not a good place to be (DeBord,

Materials: Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, Scenario Cards #2,
Instructor Sheet for Scenario Cards #2, paper and pens for participants, Homework #9

Special Physical Arrangements: To begin, desks should be arranged in a semi-circle,
with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard. Desks should be able to be moved in
order to facilitate small group activities.

Schedule of Activities:

1. Greeting (5 minutes)
• Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.

• Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the evening:
  Beginning with lesson on what to say to children when they ask you questions pertaining to your incarceration, and then moving into a lesson centered on communicating with their children’s caretaker(s).

2. Discussion of Homework #8 from previous night (30 minutes)
   • Ask participants to share any questions that they came up with that they thought that their child/children would ask them regarding their incarceration.
     o If no participants volunteer, ask participants individually to share one question that they have written down.
     o Allow for participants to react to questions
   • Write any questions shared on the wipe-board/chalkboard
   • Once several questions have been shared, draw out themes that are seen in the questions. Most likely, these questions will fall in line with the four main types of questions that children tend to ask regarding the incarceration of a parent. Do not specifically name these types of questions at this point.

3. Small Group Activity: Scenario Cards #2 (30 minutes)
   • Ask men to get into four groups, with 2-3 men in each group, depending on the size of the class.
   • Put groups on opposite sides of the room to allow men to talk freely and practice their role-play activities.
   • Explain to participants that how the activity will work: Each group will receive a card with a different situation on it; each group will read their situation amongst themselves and then decide how best to answer the question at the end of the situation; participants will then practice a role-play of their situation and their solution to the question posed.
- Pass out one scenario card, blank pieces of paper, and pens to each group and allow the men to begin working on the activity.
- Instructor would be walking around to each group in order to answer any questions or address any problems that may arise.
- Once all groups have finished, the participants move back into the larger group, with all desks again pointed toward the wipe/board/chalkboard.

4. Break (10 minutes)
   - Allow participants to have a short break from activities in accordance with rules of the prison.

5. Enacting Role-Play (40 minutes)
   - Ask for a group to volunteer to get up in front of the class and demonstrate the role-play that they have developed. If no group volunteers, pick a group that will go first.
   - After each group presents their role-play activity, the instructor will point out the significance of the question that the situation centered upon, and the positive and negative ways to answer the question (using “Instructor Sheet for Activity Cards” as a guided to the discussion). It would be assumed that participants may have questions, and it would be appropriate to address these questions at this time.
   - Once each of the four groups has demonstrated their role-play, the instructor should write the four main questions that children may ask regarding incarceration situation on the wipe-board/chalkboard.
   - Any questions or other suggestions by the participants regarding these questions may be addressed at this time.

6. Transition into next lesson (5 minutes)
• Participants given the homework assignment for the next session (Homework #9), and they are told that the assignment is to be completed before the next session.

• Participants thanked for participating in the activity.

• Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


Lesson Title & Number: “We Need to Talk” (Lesson 10 of 10)

Author’s Name & Date: Sarah Smith, December 2004

Overview: The focus of this lesson is for the participants to develop realistic strategies for maintaining/initiating contact with the caretaker(s) of their children. It is hoped that the participants will, through group discussions and activities, develop productive methods of correspondence that they can use to initiate/maintain contact with their children's caretakers while they are incarcerated.

Estimated Time Required: 2 hours

Goal: To provide, through group discussion and guidance by the instructor, methods of communication with children’s caretakers. Also, the importance of the communication should be understood by all of the participants.

Objectives:
Participants will…

- Recognize the significance of maintaining frequent and meaningful contact with children’s caretaker(s).
- Identify realistic strategies for initiating/maintaining communication with children’s caretaker(s).
- Understand possible apprehension by caretaker(s) to communicate.

Background Discussion: In most cases, the children of incarcerated fathers live in the homes of their mother during the time of the father’s imprisonment. Other possible caretakers may include grandparents, other relatives, friends, and social service agencies (foster care). A majority of incarcerated fathers reside in a prison or jail that is an average of 100 miles away from their last place of residence, making it very difficult for men to
maintain contact with either their children and their children’s caretakers (United States Department of Justice, 2000). This distance can also discourage children’s caretakers to maintain communication between the children and their father, whether it is due to a lack of time, money, or interest. Therefore, it is important that the man make the move to initiate or maintain contact with the caregiver. Not only can the caregiver promote contact between the father and his child (children), he or she can give the father valuable information regarding the child (children’s) current situation (Hairston, 1998; Smith, 2003; Travis, Cincotta, & Soloman, 2003).

**Materials:** Nametags, wipe-board with markers or chalkboard, paper, pens, tape recorders, audiotapes, envelopes, and stamps.

**Special Physical Arrangements:** To begin, desks should be arranged in a semi-circle, with all desks facing the wipe-board/chalkboard. One long table should be placed at the back of the room where participants could go to record messages onto audiotapes, if desired.

**Schedule of Activities:**

1. **Greeting (5 minutes)**
   - Greet men as they arrive; have them put on nametag and take a seat at one of the desks.
   - Welcome participants and let them know the schedule for the evening, beginning with going over Homework #10 and then moving on to the lesson dealing with developing realistic strategies for communicating with children’s caretaker(s).

2. **Discussion of Homework #9 from the previous night (30 minutes)**
   - Ask participants to share who they wrote down as being the caretaker(s) for their children while they are incarcerated. Write down answers given on the wipe-board/chalkboard.
If no one volunteers an answer, proceed by talking about typical caregivers for children with incarcerated fathers (mothers, grandparents, foster care system, etc.)

For those participants who may not know who is caring for their children, have them make an assumption as to where their child is living based on what he does know about his children and family. Also, explain that this lesson will be beneficial to them if they decide to try to find out where their children are living.

- Ask participants to share their feelings on the relationship that they have with their children’s caretakers.
  - Possible discussion topics include: issues of incarceration, distance, visitation, anger, fear, parenting style, discipline, etc.

- Ask participants to give their feedback on why they think that it is important to initiate/maintain a relationship with their children’s caretaker(s).

3. Individual Activity (35 minutes)

- Ask the participants to take a seat at the long table at the back of the room.

- Once everyone has taken a seat, inform the participants that this activity will allow them to create a method of correspondence to be used in order to maintain/initiate contact with their children's caretaker(s).

- Address any issues that participants may have if they do not know where their children are staying (or with whom they are staying) during the participant's time of incarceration. These men should be encouraged to participate in the activity, pointing out that doing so may be beneficial to them in the future and it may allow them to address any feelings that they have regarding their children's placement.
At this time, participants will be given the opportunity to create a method of correspondence that will be sent to their children's caretaker(s). The men should use supplies such as pens, pencils, paper, tape recorders, and audiotapes in order to create their individual methods of correspondence. Once a participant finishes his correspondence, he should be provided with an appropriate envelope and postage so that the correspondence can be delivered to the intended recipient. (If any participant becomes upset because they do not feel that they can contact their children's caretaker(s), they may be excused from the activity, encouraged to help others, or practice methods of communication though they would not send out their finished product).

Instructor should move around the room and discuss the various projects that the men are developing, answering any questions that the participants may have during the activity.

4. Break (10 minutes)

- Allow participants to use the restroom and converse with each other and the instructor.

5. Discussion of Activity (30 minutes)

- Participants should move back to their desks in the semi-circle at this time.
- Ask for volunteers to share their correspondence. Ask the participants to explain their letters, their reason for writing particular bits of information (and what they chose not to say), and why they feel that this project is a good way of communicating with their children's caretaker(s).
- Any questions or other suggestions by the participants regarding these questions may be addressed at this time, discouraging any judgmental comments.
6. Wrap-up of program (10 minutes)

- The program has now concluded. Participants are informed of the graduation ceremony, which will take place at a time convenient for instructor and the prison staff. Participants will be notified of the time of the ceremony so that they can invite family members to participate if desired.
- Participants are thanked for taking part in the program and allowed to ask any questions that they may have regarding the program or the graduation ceremony.
- Participants will then be released back into the care of the guards.

References:


GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATION CEREMONY

In order for the men to feel proud of what they have accomplished, it would be advisable to have a graduation ceremony at the end of the program. If possible, involvement of the family would be an excellent way for the men to show their families and children that they are serious about being an involved parent. Another would be to allow participants to speak at the graduation about what they have learned and how they will use what they have learned in their future interactions with their families (Mazza, 2001). The portion of the program that is dedicated to the graduation ceremony is subject to change due to specific correctional institution rules and participants’ requests. The participants and the program administrators should work together to develop a ceremony that is relevant and meaningful for the participants. It is assumed that the graduation ceremony would last for two hours, and it would occur at a time and date that works best for the correctional institution and the program administrators.

References:

Activity #1
“The Past”

Name:______________

1. Who was the most important person to you when you were growing up?

2. What did you do with your dad?

3. What is one thing that you wish your dad had done with you?

4. What would your dad say about you?
Activity #2
“The Future”

Name: ______________

1. What do you wish that you could do for your children?

2. What would you like to change about your relationship with your kids?

3. What would your kids think about you being in this class?

4. What is one thing that you hope to learn from this class?
Activity #3
“Kids: 0-5”

Name:______________

True or False?

1. Children grow slowly in the first few years of life.

2. You shouldn’t respond to babies’ cries and babbles.

3. The relationship that a baby has with its parents will affect all of their relationship with other people in the future.

4. It is important to keep babies’ schedules regular.

5. Babies are always learning, whether or not they can tell you about it.

6. It is important for babies to be allowed to explore.

7. It is not normal for babies to cry a lot.

8. Crying always means that a baby is mad.

9. Childproofing your house is not necessary because you can teach a baby not to touch dangerous things.

10. All babies sleep through the night.
1. Children grow slowly in the first few years of life.
   □ False: Children develop very rapidly during this time period, especially during the first year of life.

2. You shouldn’t respond to babies’ cries and babbles.
   □ False: Parents and other adults should pay special attention to babies’ cries and babbles because this is the way that they can communicate with you. Since babies cannot talk yet, it is important to realize that this is how they tell you what they need. Parents paying attention to these early forms of communication let babies know that their needs will be met, thus allowing positive attachment patterns to develop.

3. The relationship that a baby has with its parents will affect all of their relationship with other people in the future.
   □ True: The bonds that an infant has with their parents affects all the relationships that they will have in future, including friendships and romantic relationships.

4. It is important to keep babies’ schedules regular.
   □ True: Keeping a baby’s routine as regular as possible allows the baby to be comfortable, always knowing what is coming next.
Also, maintaining a regular sleep and feeding schedule keeps babies physically healthy.

5. Babies are always learning, whether or not they can tell you about it.
   - True: Long before babies can tell you what they have learned with words, they are taking in and processing information about their environment.

6. It is important for babies to be allowed to explore.
   - True: As stated before, babies are always learning, and an important way that they learn is by getting down and exploring their environment. It is important to not, however, that babies should only be allowed to explore in areas that are safe (child-proofed) and under the close supervision of adults.

7. It is not normal for babies to cry a lot.
   - False: Most babies cry when they need something. Since babies are dependent on their caregivers for just about everything, and they are not yet able to tell adults what they need using words, they often cry several times a day.

8. Crying always means that a baby is mad.
   - False: As stated before, babies have to cry in order to let you know they need something. Babies could be crying for many reasons, including hunger, restlessness, needing to have a diaper change, because they are too hot or too cold, etc.

9. Childproofing your house is not necessary because you can teach a baby not to touch dangerous things.
False: All of the rooms that a baby is allowed to explore should be child-proofed, and all of the rooms that a baby is not allowed to explore should be securely blocked off. It is not always possible to explain to a small child what can hurt them, and even children who do understand dangers sometimes get curious. It is always better to be safe than sorry—and don’t forget the importance of adult supervision!

10. All babies sleep through the night.
   False: Though some parents do get lucky and have babies who sleep through the night relatively early (in the first few months), most children take anywhere from 6 months to 3 years to sleep through the night.

All information obtained from the following source:

Activity #4
“Kids: 6-12”

Name: ______________

True or False?

1. “Back-talk” is usually a sign of growing independence.

2. Fears from childhood often carry over into these ages.

3. Kids at this age are not able to understand the point of view of others.

4. Violence in the media and in the home can make kids think that it is normal to be violent toward other people.

5. Children’s feelings are not easily hurt by others.

6. Mood swings are normal for girls and boys of this age.

7. Kids are more and more aware of how they look and dress at this age.

8. It is not important to involve kids in solving their own problems.

9. It is not normal for kids of this age to form bonds with adults that are not their parents.

10. Kids of this age are very afraid of rejection by loved ones and peers.
1. “Back-talk” is usually a sign of growing independence.
   □ True: Though most parents feel that their children are simply being rude, back-talk is a very common symptom of growing independence. Pre-teens often use back-talk to insert their feelings on an issue, testing their parents’ reactions.

2. Fears from childhood often carry over into these ages.
   □ True: It is not abnormal for pre-teens to still have very child-like fears, for example, a fear of the dark. Parents should take special care not to ridicule pre-teens for their fears.

3. Kids at this age are not able to understand the point of view of others.
   □ False: Young children are usually unable of taking the point of view of others, however, pre-teens are very capable of looking at issues from another’s point of view. It is important to encourage this behavior in your pre-teen, possibly by talking about controversial issues (politics, religion, court cases, etc.) with your child and asking your child to explain both sides of the issue at hand.

4. Violence in the media and in the home can make kids think that it is normal to be violent toward other people.
True: Children tend to mirror the behaviors that they see in everyday life. If kids are exposed to violence, whether it be real violence in the home or violence that they see in movies, television, or video games, they are more likely to see violence as a normal way to solve their problems.

5. Children’s feelings are not easily hurt by others.
   False: People of all ages are capable of having their feelings hurt, but for pre-teens who experiencing huge hormonal fluctuations and an extreme fear of rejection by peers, it is possible that kids of this age are even more susceptible to getting their feelings hurt by others.

6. Mood swings are normal for girls and boys of this age.
   True: As stated previously, children of this age are undergoing huge hormonal fluctuations, which can be a biological cause for mood swings in both sexes. Also, actions associated with a growing sense of independence can sometimes be interpreted as mood swings.

7. Kids are more and more aware of how they look and dress at this age.
   True: Kids at his age are typically seeking acceptance by peers, leading to an increased awareness of their physical appearance. Also, a growing sense of independence may lead to a child developing a sense of style that is all their own.

8. It is not important to involve kids in solving their own problems.
   False: It is important to involve pre-teens in solving their own problems. Parents should not always try to solve problems for
their children, but should instead prompt their pre-teens to think of effective methods of problem solving in various situations. Remember that you can’t always be there to solve their problems for them.

9. It is not normal for kids of this age to form bonds with adults that are not their parents.
   - False: It is not abnormal for pre-teens to bond with adult teachers, coaches, doctors, etc. However, it is important to make sure that your child does not feel that they need those relationships in order to compensate for a relationship that they do not have with their parents.

10. Kids of this age are afraid of rejection by loved ones and peers.
    - True: Like people of any age, pre-teens prefer to be accepted by their peers and loved ones as opposed to being rejected.

All information obtained from the following source:

Activity #5
“Teens”

Name:_____________

True or False?

1. Peer relationships are more important to teens than their relationship with their parents.

2. Teens who do not have a good relationship with their parents may seek out a peer group for attention.

3. Teens do not need to talk to their parents.

4. Teens are not able to make their own decisions.

5. It is important to always know who your teens are with and what they are doing.

6. If you do not talk about sex with your teen, someone else will.

7. All teens rebel against their parents.

8. Teens often mirror the behavior of their parents.

9. It is important to always ask teens “Why?”.

10. Your acceptance of your teen is very important to their self-esteem.
Activity #5
“Teens”
Instructor Copy

True or False?

1. Peer relationships are more important to teens than their relationship with their parents.
   False: Though peer relationships are important to teens, the relationship that they have with their parents is even more important in a teen’s life.

2. Teens who do not have a good relationship with their parents may seek out a peer group for attention.
   True: Teens need a strong relationship with their parents, and if they lack that, they may place unnecessary importance on peer relations. They may also seek out attention from peers that are involved in negative activities.

3. Teens do not need to talk to their parents.
   False: Teens enjoy talking with their parents, against popular thought. However, parents and adults need to allow teens to express their points of view, and recognize the importance of their views on issues.

4. Teens are not able to make their own decisions.
   False: Teens are very capable of making their own decisions, however there are some issues in which parents need to hold “veto
power” over the decision-making of their teens. It is important to remember that when making a decision that will affect your teen, always let them put in their perspective on the issue at hand.

5. It is important to always know who your teens are with and what they are doing.
   True: It is important to allow your teen to assert their independence, but it is absolutely necessary to always know who your teen is with and what they are doing together. Not only will you be helping to keep your teen safe, but your teen will also appreciate your concern (though they may not show it outwardly).

6. If you do not talk about sex with your teen, someone else will.
   True: Teens are curious about sex, and it is important that you and your teen are comfortable enough to talk about the subject. If your teen does not feel that they can go to you about issues and questions that they have regarding sex, they will turn to their peers, who may or may not have accurate information to pass on to your teen.

7. All teens rebel against their parents.
   False: The assertion of independence should not always be viewed as “rebellion”. Though teens may hold different views than their parents, parents would often find that they are not too far away from their teens on this level if they were to ask.

8. Teens often mirror the behavior of their parents.
   True: Though teens may not always want to admit it, most of their actions mirror the actions of their parents. As stated before, even
when parents see their teens as rebellious, teens and parents are very similar in mindset and actions.

9. It is important to always ask teens “Why?”.
   True: It is important to always ask teens why they feel or acted in a certain way for several reasons. First of all, by asking “why” you are telling your teen that their thoughts are important. Second, asking “why” allows your teen to verbally talk through their thoughts. Finally, asking a teen “why” may prompt them to look at the other side of an issue.

10. Your acceptance of your teen is very important to their self-esteem.
    True: It is important to accept your teen for who they are on the inside. Though they may dress, talk, and act in ways that very different from you, it is important to let them know that you love them for who they are on the inside. Along with knowing that you love them unconditionally, they will also learn to love others for what they are on the inside, as opposed to judging people based on outside appearance.

All information obtained from the following source:

1. You go to daycare to pick up your three-year-old daughter, Katie, and the teacher tells you that Katie has been getting in trouble for hitting other kids. You tell the teacher that you will talk with Katie about hitting when you get her home. **What do you tell her?**

2. Your four-year-old is playing with a friend in the other room. You hear your kid get mad and say a curse/inappropriate word to his friend. **What do you do?**

3. Your 12-year-old son is angry with you for telling him he cannot go out with his friends that night. He says to you, "I don't care what you say, I'll do what I want." **What do you do?**

4. You get a call from school to let you know that your 16-year-old daughter has been sent to the principal's office for fighting with another student. The school tells you that you need to come and pick her up from school that day, and you tell them that you will talk to her about the fight when you get home. **What do you do?**
Instructor Sheet for Scenario Cards #1  
Lesson #7: “Discipline”

The following are discussion topics for the various scenarios that are to discussed by the participants. It is assumed that the instructor may choose to add information if they so desire.

Scenario #1: You go to daycare to pick up your three-year-old daughter, Katie, and the teacher tells you that Katie has been getting in trouble for hitting other kids. You tell the teacher that you will talk with Katie about hitting when you get her home. **What do you tell her?**

- First and foremost, trying to resolve an act of aggression with another act of aggression does not work. Physical punishment such as spanking or hitting only reinforces the idea of using aggression to change someone else's behavior.
- Be sure to ask your child about the situation. Ask them not only what happened, but how they felt about what happened.
- Talk to your child about why it is inappropriate to hit other children and your disappointment that they would react in such a way. Explain that physical aggression is not a useful way to get someone to change his/her behavior.
- Suggest other ways that a child can deal with someone whose behavior is bothering his/her. Actions such as talking to a teacher or simply walking away could be useful to a child this age.
- Finally, if this is a constant problem you may want to use some form of non-physical punishment such as an early bedtime or taking away privileges may be appropriate.

Scenario #2: Your four-year-old is playing with a friend in the other room. You hear your kid get mad and say a curse/inappropriate word to his friend. **What do you do?**
Calmly ask your child to come in the other room with you so that you can talk to him/her. Inform him/her that you heard them say an inappropriate word and you would like to know if they understand what the word means.

Explain to the child that the word is hurtful and not appropriate to use. Do not use verbal put-downs (such as "You're stupid for saying that word") because that would only reinforce the idea of using words to hurt someone else who has bothered you.

Suggest to the child that they apologize to their friend and explain to the friend that he/she shouldn't have used that word.

It may be that a child has heard the inappropriate word from you or in the house, so make sure that you are always careful not to use inappropriate language around children because they often repeat what they hear their parents saying.

Again, if this is a constant problem you may want to use some form of non-physical punishment such as an early bedtime or taking away privileges may be appropriate.

Scenario #3: Your 12-year-old son is angry with you for telling him he cannot go out with his friends that night. He says to you, "I don't care what you say, I'll do what I want." What do you do?

- Pre-teens often use this form of aggression in order to assert that they have power in the parent-child relationship.
- Try leaving the room in order to allow both you and your child to calm down before reacting to the statement.
- After a brief cool-down period, approach the child and remind them that your original decision still stands. Inform them that they will have other opportunities to go out with their friends, but if they continue to be disrespectful, they will not be going out any time in the near future.
Avoid using physical punishment to assert your authority over your pre-teen. This will only show him/her that the way to exert authority is to do so using physical aggression, which may spill over into other areas of their lives.

**Scenario #4:** You get a call from school to let you know that your 16-year-old daughter has been sent to the principal's office for fighting with another student. The school tells you that you need to come and pick her up from school that day, and you tell them that you will talk to her about the fight when you get home. **What do you do?**

- Again, trying to resolve an act of aggression with another act of aggression does not work. Physical punishment such as hitting only reinforces the idea of using aggression to change someone else's behavior.
- Ask your teen to explain the situation to you. Letting your teen know that you are interested in hearing his/her side of the story may help your teen to get out some of their anger regarding the situation. However, it is important, after listening to his/her side of the story, to let them know that no matter the situation, physical aggression is not an appropriate action.
- Evaluate the way in which your child sees you deal with your problems. If your child sees that you deal with things that are bothering you by resorting to physical aggression, they may be mirroring your behavior. This may require that you change the way in which you deal with your own expression of anger.
- Again, in addition to any punishment given by the school, the teen should be punished via non-physical means at home, Things such as extra chores or grounding may be useful depending on your teen's individual situation and lifestyle.
Scenario Cards #2
Lesson Plan #9: "What to Say"

#1: You are talking on the phone one night with your 8-year-old son. You are talking about what he did in school that day, what chores Mom made him do, and then he asks you a question that you were not prepared for—“Dad, where are you?”. He goes on to tell you that Mom told him that you were away for work, but then he heard Grandma tell someone that you were away at school. He worries about you, and he does not know what to think. **What do you say?**

#2: Your 10-year-old daughter has come to visit you, and the two of you are having a nice conversation about her life back at home. You then notice that she has begun to get very quiet. When you ask her what is wrong, she replies, “Dad, why are you here?”. **What do you say?**

#3: You are reading a letter that your son has recently written you. In this letter, your son tells you that he can’t wait for you to come home, and then he asks, “Dad, when will you come home?”. You know that you will be talking to him that night on the phone, and you know that he will want an answer to his question. **What do you say?**

#4: You and your daughter are visiting in the prison visiting room. You notice that she is very quiet, and that she is constantly looking around at everything in the room. There are prison guards and several other people in the room, and you know that something is bothering her. You ask her what is wrong, and she looks at you and asks, “Dad, are you okay here?”. **What do you say?**
Instructor Sheet for Scenario Cards #2
Lesson #9: “What to Say…”

Scenario #1: You are talking on the phone one night with your 8-year-old son. You are talking about what he did in school that day, what chores Mom made him do, and then he asks you a question that you were not prepared for—“Dad, where are you?”. He goes on to tell you that Mom told him that you were away for work, but then he heard Grandma tell someone that you were away at school. He worries about you, and he does not know what to think. What do you say?

- Telling children the truth about their parent’s situation is usually in the best interest of the child.
- Sometimes adults think that they are helping the children by “shielding them” from the truth. Caregivers and parents may tell children that their parent is away at school, in the hospital, or away for work, but most often, children figure out that these stories are no true.
- Children often feel betrayed once they realize that their parent is really in prison and that they have been lied to about the situation.
- When telling the children where the parent actually is, it may be okay to tell them not to tell anyone. This is a decision that should be made on a case-to-case basis.

Scenario #2: Your 10-year-old daughter has come to visit you, and the two of you are having a nice conversation about her life back at home. You then notice that she has begun to get very quiet. When you ask her what is wrong, she replies, “Dad, why are you here?” What do you say?

- Remember the truth is most likely easier to take than what the children imagine on their own. Children may see images of crime and prison on television, and young children can have a hard time believing that what they see on television is not reality.
Children do understand that there are rules, and if you break rules, you are typically punished.

Young children only require simple explanations of the criminal activity that put you in prison. Saying things like, “Daddy took something that wasn’t his” makes the offense understandable to young children and does not need to be elaborated on any further.

Older children will want more details. They may be angry or frightened, and it is best to tell them the truth, even if you fear that they may reject you.

This is not typically a time to proclaim your innocence to your children. For young children, they may fear that the law is arbitrary and that any of their loved ones could be taken away at any time. For older children, this may result in a general disregard for authority, especially legal authority.

Scenario #3: You are reading a letter that your son has recently written you. In this letter, your son tells you that he can’t wait for you to come home, and then he asks, “Dad, when will you come home?” You know that you will be talking to him that night on the phone, and you know that he will want an answer to his question. What do you say?

In the early part of the legal process, you may not know how long you will be gone. In this case, children are better off hearing “I don’t know”.

Using words like “Soon” or “Before you know it” can be extremely detrimental to children. When the child believes that you are coming home “soon”, he/she will be devastated when you do not fulfill your promise.

It is natural to want to console your child, but in this case it is best to tell them the truth.

Older children can handle hearing a number answer like, “Four years” or “Eleven months”. Younger children usually understand better if you relate the time to holidays or other dates that they understand. Saying things like, “I’ll be home after two more Christmas” may be better than giving an actual time. Also, actual time periods (i.e. five years, ten years, etc.) may seem longer to children than they actually are, so these answers are not often effective.
Scenario #4: You and your daughter are visiting in the prison visiting room. You notice that she is very quiet, and that she is constantly looking around at everything in the room. There are prison guards and several other people in the room, and you know that something is bothering her. You ask her what is wrong, and she looks at you and asks, “Dad, are you okay here?” What do you say?

- Prison is not a good place, and you should not try to console children by trying to convince them that prison is a good place.
- Children often feel like they are leaving their parent in a bad place, and they often feel depressed or sad after visits.
- Children want to be reassured that their parent is okay, and you can do this without glorifying the prison experience. Telling them that you are warm, you have a nice bed, and you are eating regularly can help the child understand that you are “okay” where you are. In the same sentence, you should also tell them that prison is not a good place to be because you can’t do the things you want to do—especially spend time with them.
- It is not necessary to tell children all of the bad stories about prison. This will only scare children and cause them to worry about you, though you may be trying to persuade them not to follow your path.
Homework #1
“Active Parenting”

Name:_____________

Do you think that is important that you are involved in your kids’ lives? How do you think that it makes your kids feel when you want to be a part of their lives? Try to think of some ways that you could do more with your kids while you are in jail and once you are out.

Write down your answers on this sheet
Homework #2
“Kids: Birth-5 Years”

Name:_____________

What do you think kids are doing from the time that they are born until they are 5 years old? In what ways do you think kids grow in the first five years? If you have older kids, what do you remember about your kids at this age?

Write down your answers on this sheet
Homework #3
“Kids: 6-12 Years”

Name: ______________

What do you think kids are doing from the time that they are 6 years old until the time they are 12 years old? In what ways do you think kids grow from ages 6 to 12? If you have older kids, what do you remember about your kids at this age?

Write down your answers on this sheet
Homework #4  
“Teenagers”

**Name:**

What do you think kids are doing from the time that they are 13 years old until the time they are 18 years old? In what ways do you think kids grow from ages 13 to 18? If you have older kids, what do you remember about your kids at this age? What do you remember about yourself at this age?

Write down your answers on this sheet.
Homework #5
"School & Homework"

Name: __________

What was the hardest thing for you while you were in school? How important was school to your parents? Were there certain people or things in your life that hurt your schoolwork? What would have helped you do better in school?

Write down your answers on this sheet.
Homework #6
"Discipline"

Name:_____________

What did your parents do when you broke the rules? How did it make you feel? What do you do when your kids break the rules? How does it make them feel? How do you feel when you punish your kids?

Write down your answers on this sheet
Homework #7
“When I can’t see you…”

Name: ____________

Many dads in jail do not get visits from their kids. Even dads that do get to see their kids do not get to see them a lot. This is why you need to think of other ways to keep in touch with your kids.

How do you think you can keep in touch with your kids?

Write down some ideas on this paper.
Homework #8
“What will they ask me?”

Name:_______________

When you talk to your kids, what questions do you think that they have? Try to imagine yourself as being the same age as your kids and think about what they know about your time in jail. Write down any questions that you think your kids might want to ask you on this paper.
Homework #9
“We Need to Talk”

Name:________________

Where are your kids staying when you are in jail? Who takes care of them? Do you think that it is important to talk to this person? What kind of things should you talk about?

Write down your answers to these questions on this sheet.
NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The following is a questionnaire containing suggested question that should administered to several incarcerated fathers at the correctional institution where this program will later be implemented in order to assess the needs of the population that would be involved in the parenting program for incarcerated fathers:

1. How many children do you have? What are the ages of your children?
2. How often do you have contact with your child/children?
3. How do you feel about sharing problems in a large or small group setting? Do you think that sharing someone who shares his/her problems is showing a weakness?
4. Would you be interested in participating in a parenting program for incarcerated fathers if it were to be administered at your institution? Why?
5. What would you like to learn/explore in such a program?
Are you interested in learning about fatherhood and parenting?
Want to know how to keep in contact with your kids?

Join our program!
“Fathering for Life”

Topics
Child Development,
Discipline,
School & Homework,
Communicating with Kids,
Visiting with Kids,
and Other Topics!

Wednesday nights from 7-9pm for 9 weeks

Eligibility: Fathers of any age who are interested in learning more about parenting, both while incarcerated and once released. Must have been convicted of a non-violent crime and cannot have any record of crimes against children.

Want to get involved? Contact (Social Worker or Equivalent Personnel name here) for more information.
PROGRAM EVALUATION PLAN

This program should be evaluated on two different levels, which require two different types of evaluation. The first of these two types of evaluation is a more immediate and personal evaluation of the information obtained and usefulness of the program as told by participants. The second type of evaluation would be an administrative level, an evaluation of whether or not the long-term goal of the overall curriculum and program was achieved. Both evaluations are outlined below.

I. Evaluation by Participants

• A pre-test and post-test would be administered to all participants in order to evaluate whether or not the program has increased their parenting skills in several areas.

• A focus group of five participants, randomly selected from the participants that completed the program, “Fathering for Life” would be chosen to participate in the evaluation process. If any man refuses to be involved in the evaluation process, another participant would be randomly chosen.

• This focus group would be evaluated within one week of the final meeting of the program, and then again six months after completion of the program. This is to first understand the initial impact of the program, and then to understand if the lessons from the program are retained and utilized by the men in their everyday lives. Both meetings of this focus group would include the same questions and would be similar in general format. If a man is released from prison before the second meeting of the focus group, that man can be replaced with another member from that particular session of the program.

• The focus group would take place inside of the prison, in possibly the same room in which the program was administered or in a similar room away from other inmates. A guard would be asked to stand outside of the view of the participants, in order to ensure that the men would feel comfortable expressing their feelings and experiences.
• The focus groups would be led by two social service workers not associated with
the men or the program so as to ensure that the evaluations come back without
bias. Two workers would be required in order to ensure that all information is
collected thoroughly and as accurately as possible.
• The focus group evaluation process would proceed as follows:
  1. As men sit in a semi-circle facing the two administrators, one
     administrator would read the following statement:

     Good evening. I am ________, and I am here to talk with you in
     order to get some feedback on the program, “Fathering for Life”,
     which you all you have recently completed. We are hoping to
     understand what you have learned, what you liked about the program,
     and what you think should be included or left out of this program when
     it is administered in the future. I assume that we will be together for
     about one hour. I would like to tape record what you have to say
     about the program so that I can use your comments and suggestions to
     improve the program for the future. None of the comments that you
     make will be tied to you personally and your name will not be
     mentioned in my report.

     I would also like to introduce ________. He/she will be helping
     me to take notes during this meeting and helping me in evaluating the
     usefulness of this program.*

  2. After all men have agreed that they are comfortable with the preceding
     statement, one administrator would begin to ask the following
     questions:

     (Notes would be taken by both administrators and questions may be
     explained by the administrators if the participants express confusion)

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*Guidance for this statement obtained from the following: DeBord, K. (n.d.).
on February 20, 2004.
• Do you feel that this program has helped you to be a better parent to your children? How and in what ways?
• Do you feel that you have more information about the stages of growth that children go through at different ages?
• Do you feel that you have a better understanding of different ways that you can be a parent to your children? Did you learn useful way of helping children in do well in school? Did you learn useful discipline techniques?
• Do you think that you have a better understanding of the importance of you remaining an active father during your incarceration? After you are released?
• Do you feel that this program helped you to come up with useful and effective ways of communicating with your children?
• Have you been communicating with your child more since you entered this program? Is it easier for you to communicate with your children?
• Do you feel that you are better able to communicate with your children’s caregiver(s)?
• Did the homework assignments help you to think about the issues that were to be discussed in the next lesson?
• What do you feel should be added to this program? What aspects of the program do you feel should not be included in the program in the future?
• What were your overall impressions of the program?

3. After all questions are answered completely, the participants would be thanked for their participation and would be released back into the care of the guard.

4. Once the information was collected, all answer would be analyzed and recommendations for future programs would be given to the program
administrators, appropriate staff members of the prison in which the program was instituted, and any organization involved in funding the program.

II. Evaluation by Prison Social Workers or Equivalent Staff

This section of the evaluation hopes to evaluate the overall goal of this program and its curriculum. In this evaluation, prison social workers (or equivalent staff members) would track the participants in order to see if overall recidivism rates are reduced in those who have completed the program in comparison to those men who did not get involved in this program. This section of the evaluation should also track the criminal activity of any of the children of the men who completed this program, if the staff members have access to this information. This information would be useful in evaluating whether or not the man’s participation in the program is related to lower rates of criminal activity for their children. This would be an ongoing evaluation, and periodically the information obtained would be complied and reported to the administrators of the program, appropriate staff members of the prison facility in which the program was instituted, and any organization involved in funding the program.