



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance



National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse NRCF Webinar Series

Working with Fathers after Incarceration: Tips from Research and Practice

February 6, 2019

Presenter Responses to Additional Questions

Moderator:

- Nigel Vann, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRCF).

Presenters:

- Jocelyn Fontaine, Urban Institute, Washington DC
- Darin Goff, Strength in Families, Washington State Department of Corrections
- Daee McKnight, Family Reentry, Bridgeport, CT

This document addresses questions presented, but not fully addressed, during this NRCF Webinar. For questions addressed during the webinar, please refer to the Webinar Transcript. For more information contact NRCF via email at help@fatherhoodgov.info.

Submitted Questions:

Q: Do you have strategies for recruiting men in the community after incarceration?

- **RESPONSE FROM DARIN**
Since our program begins during incarceration, recruiting after incarceration is not something we do. Holding on to our participants after incarceration can be problematic though. We provide cell phones and have other post-release incentives, but find the best strategy is the rapport developed by the Case Manager prior to release.

Q: Are the Education and Employment Navigators employees of your Department of Corrections, or are they contracted employers?

- **RESPONSE FROM DARIN**
Although we have many important community partnerships and contracts that support our endeavors, the person in this position (currently just the one person) is an employee of the Department of Corrections.

Q: I think the ReFORM program is wonderful! Is there a program for women inmates?

- **RESPONSE FROM DARIN**
There is also a unit at the women's prison in Washington State (WCCW) that allows for babies to stay with their mothers: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWmfrpd-ohs>

Q: What does your program do to assist fathers with child support arrears?

- **RESPONSE FROM DAEE**
Local judges are able to forgive partial arrears based on completion of a community fatherhood program. Also, since

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

Toll-free: 877-4DAD411 (877-432-3411) | Fax: 703-934-3740 | Help@FatherhoodGov.info | www.fatherhood.gov

facebook.com/fatherhoodgov

[@fatherhoodgov](https://twitter.com/fatherhoodgov)

around July 2017, Connecticut has a progressive child support policy stipulating that when an individual is incarcerated for more than 30 days, the Department of Corrections notifies Child Support Enforcement and any child support orders are then automatically put on hold.

Q: Can you tell us the proportion of cases in which the Family Reentry program is successful in getting the co-parent engaged? Is this something that happens rarely or more often?

- **RESPONSE FROM DAEE**

We do have a female case manager who reaches out to the co-parent. She can talk with them, ascertain any needs, and offer referrals for various social services – however, so far, we have only been able to engage with a small number of co-parents.

Q: Do any of the presenters have anything to say about any conflicts between correctional staff/policies and the program staff/philosophy? Do rigid correctional policies get in the way of programming? What can you say about addressing this?

- **RESPONSE FROM DAEE**

There are definitely day-to-day operation issues, which can impact our class schedules. For instance, if there is a fight between inmates or other incidents fathers may not be able to come to class; other times, fathers may be delayed and not able to get out to come to class on time – our classes typically run for 90 minutes, but we can lose 30-40 minutes of that time some days. However, the deputy warden and other administrative staff have been very helpful in trying to alleviate these issues. There are certainly some officers who are resistant to the program because they don't buy-in to our approach of "Redemption, Reentry, Transition," but if we need to resolve any issues we are generally able to "go up the chain of command." And some of those who have been resistant do come around to appreciate the program over time when they see the level of interest in attending and impacts on behavior. So I would say, try and get the leadership and administrative staff on board first!

- **RESPONSE FROM DARIN**

Changing the culture in a correctional setting is very challenging. When establishing anything new, it is important to fit into the existing culture as you go. Be sure program staff know and follow all policies and procedures, are well-trained, respectful to correctional staff, and understand the mission of both the program and the facility. It is helpful to have some staff with a correctional background - there are staff with correctional experience that understand and are passionate about the value of reentry programs. Work with facility staff so they see you as helpful to them and their mission. Do not create extra work for them or be seen as a group that is opposing their mission and operations.

Q: Is there a service to provide mentorship for children of returning citizens; also, for the parent receiving the returning citizen?

- **RESPONSE FROM DAEE**

We have not provided this service for children of the young fathers (17-24 years old) I work with because none of them have had children old enough, but Family Reentry does have a Champions program that provides mentorship for children six and older. The program helps with homework, organizes cultural enrichment trips, and provides opportunities for other activities. For instance, we have one donor who owns property in the country with a lake; this has provided some great opportunities for inner-city kids to experience the countryside and learn to swim and jet ski. The program also provides back-to-school book bags and offers services and referrals for the mothers.

Q: We run a fatherhood project in Santa Cruz, California (the Papas program). We heard that the three largest barriers when exiting incarceration are housing, jobs, and transportation. However, we often encounter a major barrier when dads get sucked back into the old life, the old friends, the old neighborhoods, the old ways. What tips do you have to disrupt this process?

- **RESPONSE FROM DAEE**

This is definitely a major barrier for us too. It's particularly hard in working with younger fathers. We put our energy in to forming a strong connection with dads for 6 to 9 months before their release; if they buy-in then it greatly increases our chances of success. We are available for them after release, but if they don't talk to us or they start ducking our phone calls, we know they're talking with their friends. I tell them, "you don't have to hide from me, I'm going to accept you

unconditionally ... if you don't call me, how can I help you?" The key is often seeing them change their values during our pre-release services as this increases the chances that they will take positive steps after release. And we work very hard at getting them to buy into, and utilize, their positive support system.

- **RESPONSE FROM DARIN**

I find this true as well. A thorough review of a father's living situation prior to release is important. Not just the living address but every area where a returning participant will spend time (neighborhood, work, etc.). Sometimes a different location and situation is imperative to success. I find bringing in formerly incarcerated individuals to discuss their stories with participants is helpful, as is a good, experienced Case Manager.

Q: Some things may require a clear record in order to obtain a particular license or certification. Any tips on how to overcome that?

Q: As a case manager, I've found a huge barrier in driver's license restoration. How have you dealt with that?

- **RESPONSE FROM DAEE**

We work with local providers to help fathers receive OSHA 10-hour and OSHA 30-hour training that leads to construction certification. Some of these are free courses; if there is a charge we cover that. Another popular certification training is for forklift driving. If we send more than 1 or 2 fathers to that then there is a discounted fee.

In Connecticut, there is a \$175 restoration fee for suspended drivers' licenses. We are able to meet the fathers half-way on that if they can pay part of the fee – although first we have to make sure there are no outstanding tickets. Many of our young fathers never passed their drivers' test – they got suspended for driving without a license. In those cases, we can pay for them to take their test and participate in a required 8-hour drug and alcohol class.

- **RESPONSE FROM DARIN**

We work with the Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) and get driving abstracts months before release when necessary. The laws are what they are, but understanding a participant's challenges and working directly with DOL is helpful (our Case Managers do this).