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Office of Family Assistance



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Working with Fathers after Incarceration: Tips from Research and Practice Transcript

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Moderator:

- Nigel Vann, Product Lead, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse

Presenters:

- Darin Goff, Program Manager, Strength in Families, Washington State Department of Corrections
- Jocelyn Fontaine, Senior Research Fellow, Justice Policy Center, Urban Institute and Adjunct Assistant Professor, McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University
- Dae McKnight, Program Manager, Young Fathers Reentry Program, Family Reentry, Bridgeport, CT

Male operator: Good day, and welcome to the "Working with Fathers after Incarceration: Tips from Research and Practice" webinar. As a reminder, today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Nigel Vann. Please go ahead, sir.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, and welcome to our latest National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse webinar. As you see, today's topic is working with fathers after incarceration. If you've tuned in expecting to hear the voice of Kenneth Braswell, our director, I'm very sorry that he couldn't make it today. He had a conflict with another appointment, so you've got me as usual, I'm afraid. But I think we've got a great slate of presenters for you today, so let me just quickly walk you through what you're seeing on your screens, and then we're actually going to show you a short video.

As usual, this webinar is being recorded. A few weeks after the webinar, please come back to our website at fatherhood.gov/webinars, and you'll be able to hear the recording and see a transcript and all the presentation materials. If you want to download the presentation materials today, you can see in the downloadable resources box we have some [Urban Institute research reports](#) that our first presenter is going to be drawing on. You have a bio for each of the presenters. You have our helpful resources if you want to get more information on the topic, and you can also download a PDF of today's slides.

I see that you've all found our chat box and are saying hello to each other, and we certainly encourage you to share information in there. If you have a question for the presenters, please put it in the ask a question box in the bottom right-hand corner, and then we'll ask as many of those questions at the end as we can. As usual, if we don't have time for all the questions, we do post replies to other questions online when we post the other materials. In the bottom left-hand corner, you can see various web links for the Clearinghouse and each of the organizations that are joining us today.

Let me see here. I'll move us here. I'm going to give you a quick overview of the Clearinghouse, and then we're just going to show you a quick little video in case you haven't seen it. For those of you who are joining us for the first time, the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse is funded by the Office of Family Assistance, and John Allen of the Office of Family Assistance will join us. He's on the call now, but he'll join us at the end of the webinar just to share a few words.

We provide resources for fathers, fatherhood programs, researchers, and policy makers. You can find us at fatherhood.gov. If you haven't been on our website before, you can download our [toolkit](#). You can go to the [webinars](#) link to see information on all the

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One of the things we do ... Well, let me also draw your attention to an upcoming national conference that the Office of Family Assistance is putting on in conjunction with the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse. If you haven't received information on this yet, it's going to be in Nashville, Tennessee, June the 4th to 6th, and we will be supplying more registration information very soon.

Now, Enzo, if you could pull up this short video? The video you're about to see is our latest PSA from the ad council, and it's quite a touching video in terms of dads and daughters. Hopefully this won't take too long to come up. If it does, we'll skip it. Here we go.

Okay. Well, I hope you enjoyed that and I hope there's a few teary eyes in the room. That's one of my favorite PSAs that we've had in the recent past, so you can catch those on various programs on the TV, or hear radio ads as well.

Anyway, without further ado, let me move us forward to the heart of our conversation today. You're going to be hearing today from three very experienced presenters. We have Dr. Jocelyn Fontain from the Urban Institute. We have Darin Goff, who works with the Strength in Families program in Washington State. This is a Office of Family Assistance grant program, funded through the Washington Department of Corrections. Also, we have Mr. Daee McKnight from the Family Reentry program in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

As you'll see, when we get to the discussion session, we're actually going to be joined by two fathers. We have Robert Duggins from the Strength in Families program, and we were going to have Dontray Crawford from the Family Reentry program. Unfortunately, Dontray can't join us today, but we do have another father who's actually going to be calling in in about half an hour from his workplace I believe, and his name is Geraldo Hernandez. We'll be hearing from Geraldo and Robert when we get to that discussion session, so if you have questions for the fathers, please feel free to put those in as well.

With that, I'm going to ask Enzo to bring up our first poll question. We'll do that, and then I will introduce Jocelyn and we'll get going. If you could just briefly tell us which of the following best describes your experience working with fathers who have been incarcerated ... This is just to let the presenters have a sense of who's on the line. It's a little bit tricky as a presenter sometimes. We don't know who we're actually talking to. It's not like being in person. This helps us just a tad to understand that.

At the moment, it looks like the largest response so far is, "I work with fathers. Some have been incarcerated, but most have not." I think I would have probably put money on that one being the top one [inaudible] I had before.

Yeah. Then there's a good number also working mainly with fathers who are returning to the community and about an equal number who work mainly with children and families. That's very interesting, because that's incredibly important work. Okay, Enzo. Well, thank you very much. Thanks for your responses there.

Now, let me introduce Jocelyn. Jocelyn, as I've said, is the senior research fellow at the Justice Policy Center for the Urban Institute. She's also an adjunct assistant professor at the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University. Her research focuses on the evaluation of community-based crime reduction and reentry initiatives. She directs projects using quantitative and qualitative research methodologies with the goal of exploring the impact of community-based initiatives for individuals, families, and communities.

Before joining the Urban Institute, she worked on the Pew Charitable Trusts' Public Safety Performance Project and on violence and victimization issues for the Office of Research and Evaluation at the National Institute of Justice, which is part of the United States Department of Justice.

With that, I will give the time to Jocelyn. You can read her full bio and everybody else's if you download the presenter bios. Jocelyn, the time is yours.



Jocelyn Fontaine: Thank you very much for that, Nigel. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this webinar and share both what I and my colleagues have learned about working with fathers after incarceration and the importance of family-focused reentry services. I believe there is going to be a resource guide that will be provided, which will provide much more detail than I'm able to during my brief remarks, and I encourage you all to consult those resources, not only things that the Urban Institute has written, but the broader field that's focused on these issues. Reach out if you have any questions, either in this webinar or otherwise.

My presentation is guided by three main points, the first of which is on this first slide, is that there's a growing body of research that supports the importance of family-focused practices for incarcerated fathers. This includes practices and services that can be implemented during incarceration, and in incarceration I'm including prisons and jails, and also practices and services that can be administered in the immediate days and months that are following release from incarceration, otherwise known as the reentry period. However, and this is my second point, implementing family-focused practices in both correctional settings and community settings can be difficult for a myriad of reasons, some of which I'll cover in a minute.

Third is that there's limited research that points to specific best practices in this space, which can be frustrating to some who are looking for a specific curriculum or models, yet there are plenty of lessons on promising approaches that I'll talk about.

Let's get into this in a little bit more detail. As many of you know, the statistics here are startling. There's approximately 2.7 million children that have a parent currently serving time in a correctional facility, and that more than five million children have experienced parental incarceration in their lifetime. This of course is due to the large number of adults that are incarcerated in our country, and further, since we know that incarceration has a disproportionate impact on some groups and some communities, we know too that parental incarceration has a disproportionate impact on children and families with lower incomes and black and brown children. Parental incarceration is stressful and traumatic for children, and depending on their unique personal and family circumstances, can either contribute or create economic, residential, and social disruptions for children.

The period of incarceration can severely limit or inhibit parents' abilities to fulfill their familial responsibilities. During incarceration, father-child and father-family communication, contact, and engagement is difficult for several key reasons. What I've offered here is a list of some of the key reasons why contact and communication can be difficult during incarceration, but this list is not meant to be exhaustive, since we know that incarceration has a number of pretty significant consequences on children and families.

But what we've learned through our studies of families and discussions with various stakeholders is that communication, contact, and engagement can be difficult due to the correctional policies and practices that govern contact and communication, such as visiting policies and procedures that govern phone use, for example. The distance of facilities from where minor children and their families and caregivers live can limit contact because it's really far. We also know that phone calls and in-person visits can be cost-prohibitive to many families, which reduces their ability to engage with their family members during incarceration.

There's also feelings of shame and fear among incarcerated parents, their children, and their caregivers, which can limit contact. For example, some incarcerated parents feel shame in having their children and family members visit them while they're incarcerated, and we know that children and caregivers can also be fearful of coming into correctional facilities, since as is obvious, correctional institutions are not known for being family-friendly. This is including facilities that really try to be more inviting to children and families. They still are places that often can be fearful for children and families to come into.

There's also feelings of frustration, confusion, and anxiety navigating correctional institutions and their policies, such as how to get to and around the physical plant, the practices and policies that govern contact and communication. Some policies and some practices lack transparency in some instances, such as why are certain colors or clothes that can't be worn or come into the facility. This can be very confusing and frustrating for children and families and therefore hinder contact and communication between incarcerated parents and their loved ones.

In many ways, children and families are the hidden victims of incarceration. I think that this is changing, which is nice to see, but they still receive not nearly enough attention as they should. Parental incarceration, again depending on the personal and family circumstances, can have adverse impact on families through lost wages, the need to change residence, or changes in caregiver



arrangements or daily routines. It can also challenge healthy family functioning. It can also cause the loss of emotional and financial support for intimate partners, co-parents, caregivers, and other family members.

Generally, the point that I'm trying to make is that both children and family units are impacted by incarceration when they lose a loved one to incarceration, and therefore interventions and practices that are focused on families, rooted in the role and importance of families, cognizant of the children and families of incarcerated persons ... Interventions and practices have tremendous potential. They can repair and strengthen the relationship between children, families, and incarcerated individuals. They have the potential to mitigate the potentially harmful consequences of incarceration on families, and they can also facilitate the successful reentry of formerly incarcerated fathers once they return into the community.

Based on all of this, I am a strong advocate for recognizing that families should be viewed as partners or as stakeholders in the reentry process. They can make reentry programming more or less successful, the extent to which families are engaged and included as partners. Here, I'm referring or potentially advocating for a broad definition of family, where family includes the biological family members and children that I've mentioned, parents, siblings, romantic partners, but it can also include an individual's broader social support network that may include mentors, the faith community, and other friends. Family and context is important, whether narrowly or broadly defined, and program staff that are working with fathers who are in the community must have a realistic assessment of an individual's family and social support network, since family can really strengthen or undermine individuals' reentry.

A program that includes family and engages family as partners can include various different types of strategies, such as engaging families in the program planning process, understanding how programming can support the family unit, such as understanding how the timing, the location, or the types of program activities support the family. It can also include allowing family members to participate in some of the program activities and benefit from those activities directly, such as inviting family members to program activities or events, or providing limited case management services directly to family members.

It can also include leveraging family support for the individual, so using family support as a way to kind of get the formerly incarcerated person more engaged into services using the family potentially as a hook in that way. Family members can also be an ally to program staff, helping to keep the formerly incarcerated person on track, keeping them engaged. The family member can also be a person for the program staff to call if they're concerned where the returning person is ... where they are and whether they're staying on track. Overall, it's really critical to be thoughtful about family engagement and thinking about families as stakeholders and as partners, again, due to the central role that families play in the reentry process.

Since many of you are already working with fathers who have experienced incarceration, a lot of this is well known to you, but as an overview, upon return to the community, incarcerated persons rely pretty significantly on their family members for emotional and material support when they come home. This is in particular in the immediate months post-release. We know that families provide a ton of resources. Housing is one of them, and this is then despite their own resource limitations and service needs.

The reentry population often comes back to the community from incarceration with a range of needs, and this varies by person, but the key ones are housing, employment, education, skill-building services. There's also the need for mental health and substance abuse treatment, and then more basic or elemental needs, such as identification, transportation, clothing, and food. These services and needs are critical for a number of reasons, not least of which is due to their relationship to reentry success, that is, in keeping people from returning to incarceration. We know that the ability to tap into family, to engage with family and family support, is also related to reentry success.

Putting this at least together in a very short amount of time, hoping that I've laid out for you why all of this is important ... Here are just a very brief overview of some of the promising practices that we've seen, heard about, and read about that can support families and improve both parent-child contact and parent-family contact and communication during incarceration and in the community. These are some of the practices that can be implemented or conducted by both government agencies, such as sheriff's departments, jails, state departments of corrections, as well as community-based service-providing organizations who work jointly with or for those government agencies.



Some of the services that can be provided during incarceration, which I've listed to the left here of your slide, include coached telephone calls between parents and their children and family members, contact visits with family members, parenting relationship training and education curriculum, and family activity days where family can come into the facility and enjoy spending time with their incarcerated family members and engage in activities such as arts and crafts, family photos, or holiday parties.

In the community, some of the things that we've seen are practitioners helping caregivers and returning parents with childcare services, assistance with modifying child support arrangements, reducing child support obligations, offering family-focused case management services, and hosting support groups for returning parents, co-parents, and caregivers. I also want to mention that employment services are also super helpful for formerly incarcerated persons, and something that supports the entire family. When the incarcerated parent is getting income and working on employment, then they're better able to support their family members as well.

With these practices in mind, there's a couple of considerations that I'd also like for folks to know about. The first is that it's important to point out that there is ... Despite the promise of these practice and that a lot of these are, quite frankly, just no-brainers, we have a lack of evidence about which practices have meaningful impacts on parents, family members, and children that are involved in or affected by the practice. So there haven't been nearly enough rigorous evaluations of many of these practices for us to label them "evidence-based" or "best practices." We also know that families are complex and that not one practice that works for or is responsive to one family may work with all others.

It's also important to mention that the impact of a practice may be different depending on whether the focus is on the child, the family, or the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated adult outcome. Just one key example is that we know that parent-child visitation has generally been shown to improve parents' behavior in jails and prisons, but there's some research that indicates that visitation might be negative for children who are experiencing it.

Another consideration which can challenge the implementation of some of these activities is that practices need adequate space, resources, and funding, and so again, while all these things are no-brainers or sound pretty easy to implement, they can be difficult depending on resources and space, both in institutions and in community-based settings.

Another consideration is how to generate buy-in and potentially needing to change the culture among staff to support some of these services or activities. We've found that this can be a case with some correctional facilities not being as open to family-friendly or family-focused practices.

A final thing to mention is that implementing a new practice in pre-release versus post-release settings can present different advantages and drawbacks. For example, in pre-release settings or in correctional institutions, it's much easier to recruit parents into programming and support them in activities and keep them engaged, but it can be difficult in those settings to incorporate co-parents, caregivers, and children due to security clearances and other concerns.

Conversely, post-release community settings can make it easier for formerly incarcerated parents and their co-parents and families and children to participate in classes, activities, and to learn, support, and engage one another, but it can be much harder to maintain program engagement because of work, supervision requirements, or other time constraints that may take precedence over voluntary services.

The last slide here is just some other considerations, is that programs need to be flexible in meeting families where they are, recognizing that families are unique, and that what is responsive to some may not be responsive to others. It's also important to adapt to the changing needs of participants and family, knowing that their needs often change in the correctional setting versus the community setting, and then once formerly incarcerated persons are in the community and have reintegrated, their needs and interests may change over time.

It's important to build effective partnerships, so the very quick overview that I gave of both practices that can be implemented in correctional settings and those that can be implemented in community settings really require partnerships. No one agency can do it



alone, and at minimum it usually requires a partnership between a correctional facility and a community program. So it's important that there's effective, responsive, and partnerships that can enable those practices to be successful.

I've already mentioned it's important if a program can both leverage the opportunities that are present in institutional versus community settings, and use those things to build on one another. Finally, it's important to be collaborative, to work with community partners, and as necessary making mid-course corrections if things aren't working over time.

Thank you.

Nigel Vann: Thank you, Jocelyn. That was a tremendous presentation of an awful lot of information, and very succinctly put there. A lot of pearls of wisdom in there. For those of you who want to read more of Jocelyn's work, and there's a lot of it, you can download the [Urban Institute research reports](#) that is in the downloadable resources document.

I also wanted to draw your attention on the helpful resources document ... There's a helpful resources document and the Urban Institute one. On the helpful resources document, as we're calling it, we've got various resources there, including some Urban Institute ones. I wanted to draw your attention to a couple of ones from the Clearinghouse, actually. We had a couple of blogs last year in July and August that were dealing with this topic, and you can also go to our toolkit. There's a section in the toolkit for practitioners on working with incarcerated fathers.

With that, I'm going to introduce Mr. Darin Goff from the Department of Corrections in Washington State. Darin is a program manager there, as I mentioned before, with the Strength in Families program, which is a Office of Family Assistance grantee. Darin has been with the Department of Corrections in Washington for 30 years, and in that time he's supervised a wide range of departments and programs and developed several reentry and family reunification programs. He has been with the department's Strength in Families program since October 2016, and he's been the program manager of that program since last October.

Prior to this position, as part of his work at the state he worked at the Washington Corrections Center for Women for 13 years, and the Monroe Correctional Complex for 15 years. It's interesting that he started out doing more work with mothers and is now more focused on fathers. Also, a very interesting thing for me at least, as you'll see in his bio, Darin has also worked as a professional climbing guide and led expeditions to some of the world's largest mountains, so quite a man, Mr. Goff.

We're going to have a video of Darin's program. First of all, Darin, would you like just to introduce the video that we're going to see?

Darin Goff: Sure. We're actually sitting here right now at the same facility it was shot at. We have a lot of audiences that we want to speak to about our program, and it's just not everybody that actually can get inside of the walls of a prison and really where the rubber hits the road, with the guys that we're working with day-to-day. I just think that it gives a little more context to what we're doing. It is about a year or so old, a year and a half, and we're going to do a second version of this this spring, where we're going to at this point in the program be able to be interviewing some fathers who've been released and their family members. Whenever you're ready, Nigel.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Well, thank you very much for sharing that video with us, Darin. As I mentioned before, we will be hearing from one of the fathers in that program, Mr. Robert Duggins, later on. But now let me give the mic back to Darin. Take it away, Darin.

Darin Goff: Yeah. Thanks, Nigel. Appreciate that. Like it was mentioned earlier, we are a OFA grantee. The initial part of our program was just the build-up, but it is a community-centered program, which means we lean heavily on community partners, and the skill base is both pre- and post-release. Generally speaking, we start with the classes in here, which help develop father-child engagement skills and just healthy partnerships with any family member. Then we work to increase education and employment opportunities, where the ultimate vision is so any of our fathers can just go live safely at home and have a positive relationship with their family members and their kids, whatever that looks like. It may not mean that it's going to look like a white picket fence for everybody, but we're going to try to give them skills and help them along the way.



Part of the difficulty sometimes in prison is just building the nature of the program. I want to just take a quick minute to talk about ... We're here at Shelton in the state of Washington. All of our counties ... Any sentencing that goes on ... They all come through the reception center here at Shelton before the classification process begins, so to get guys into the program ... It's sometimes a lot of competition for court-mandated programming. The Department of Corrections has other mandated programming, so the screening process, just getting guys in, can sometimes be cumbersome, and of course meeting all the criteria of the grant.

But the transition planning actually begins really right from the get-go. Our first interaction with the guys ... We like to target them being about six to nine months out so we can fit all the classes in. Again, I mentioned some of the partners that we have. We engage immediately with, sometimes, if they want, with Alternative Solutions. That is a division of child support to see if they have any child support that they need help with. We can help with that. We also contract with Shepard and Associates, so any of their own situations which they might want to talk to a professional counselor about, or their families, or their kids ... So kind of boots on the ground, actually working with those things on the outside, even before they're at the door.

Video visits, I think visiting is a big deal. Not all of our facilities are located close to urban areas or where our participants live, so getting them paid video visits is a really big deal for some of the guys that have a tough time getting family members down to visit.

Our case manager navigators help. Sorry. I've lost my place. They help get access to the key services. Really, from the get-go our case managers try to sit down and meet with the participants in a strength-based approach, and find out what their actual needs are, and work with the partners in the community before they're ever out.

The curriculum that we use ... We have two curriculums. Parenting Inside Out was developed in the state of Oregon for their Department of Corrections. We use it. We don't teach guys how to parent. We give them the skills, and they decide what skills work best for their own family and for their own parenting style. Walking the Line is a communication class, really. I think one of the main things it teaches is how to understand yourself and how you relate to individuals.

Job readiness ... Typically we've utilized our community colleges for this piece, but they're phasing that out in Washington Department of Corrections, so we're actually putting in a supplemental class to be able to take on this part. But our navigators ... Not only do they come in and work with guys on resumes, cover letters, really assisting them to try to find their strengths and their skills and give them information on what's going on out there with the labor market ... Sometimes these guys just need somebody to believe in them. A lot of times they just haven't had anybody that's believed in them. They come and they say, "Well, I don't have any job skills. The only thing I ever did was sell drugs." It's like, "Well, let's step back and take a look at it." Sometimes even illegal activity cultivates things that can be transferable into a legal career, and so we try to take a look at what they have, work with them, get them connected when they get out into the community.

One of the things about our case managers I think is important to note is hiring the right people. Sometimes the culture in corrections can not be the friendliest to the reentry process, so I think hiring people who understand that process at least initially to get some credibility for the program inside different facilities is important, but to be able to sit down and not be judgemental and listen to somebody's story and build rapport with them from early on is really, really critical. Then I think the culture of those classrooms are important as well, to be able to be led by an instructor where guys aren't afraid to talk about some of their issues. Then you bring in a case manager who can really start to work on some issues out there, whether it's a family situation, or job, or whatever it is, even while the guys are still incarcerated, so that the same person that they're dealing with inside the facility is working with their family and their own unique situations on the outside. But it's definitely not a one-size-fits-all approach.

The role of the education employment navigator is ... I said earlier it's evolved a little bit since the beginning, since we don't necessarily have the classes that our community colleges were providing when we first began. It's important that we get all of our participants prepared with a resume and prepared to do job searches, but this position spends a lot of time in the community cultivating relationships with WorkSource, with ... I mean, just labor unions, all the things that ... We're pretty broad, so we're five counties. It's a lot of ground to cover, so relationships in those areas are just huge for us to be able to get guys help when they get out in the community. Our goal really is to have them be confident, be prepared, to have a résumé, and to have some idea what they're going to do when they get out.



But we also ... We don't pretend to know everything, so we like to bring in specialists. We bring in people who are from labor unions. We bring in people from Employment Security or WorkSource. We bring in a lot of different people into our facilities over the course of the time prior to release, to where they can help give knowledge to our participants.

Again, continuing on with the role of the education employment navigators, it's just a big piece of what we do. The timing of guys getting out ... Generally, we like to have them complete their classes and still have a few months prior to they get released, but the case management starts right at around six months so we can pass these guys off fairly well-prepared.

Again, continuing on with the role of the education employment navigators, it's just a big piece of what we do. The timing of guys getting out ... Generally, we like to have them complete their classes and still have a few months prior to they get released, but the case management starts right at around six months so we can pass these guys off fairly well-prepared.

Just in closing, it's complicated in what we do. It's complicated just in competing for the right guys that are fathers and are going to release to the counties and all the different mandated programming that the courts present, but we're starting to see a lot of results. I know we're going to have Mr. Duggins on here and he's going to talk about what he's done in the program to this point, but it's been really fun, so, Nigel...

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, Darin. We're getting quite a few questions already, so both you and Jocelyn have definitely sparked some interest here. I see quite a few people who are interested in the video, and you can see that we have posted the link to that in the chat box there, so if anyone wants to download that to show and view later, you can find it there.

Oh, and I did just want to say as well, one thing I've heard from both Darin and Jocelyn is just how important it is that if you want to do this work effectively, you've got to start pre-release, but then also have those strong partnerships in the community to help guys as they do return.

We'd best pull up our second poll question, and then I'll introduce our third presenter. If you could just tell us which of these you think is the biggest challenge faced by fathers as they come back from incarceration ...

You're resoundingly going for the first one, finding a job with decent wages. The next highest one is not having a good support system. I think as Jocelyn said in terms of [inaudible] a lot of these things are no-brainers, but we did just want to get all your input on this. Yeah. Thank you very much. We'll close that now.

Then let me introduce our final presenter. I'm going to bring up Mr. Dae Muhammad McKnight, who's the program manager for the Young Fathers reentry program at the Family Reentry Organization in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Dae has been with Family Reentry for nine years, and he helps offenders prepare for successful reentry. On release, he connects them to community mentors who are themselves successful ex-offenders. He's also worked as a violence prevention coordinator for the YMCA, served as a mentor for ex-offenders and local youth, and he coordinated gang awareness youth at risk workshops. He is himself a former offender who served 17 years on a 25-year sentence, which means he's very familiar with the obstacles that offenders face on release, and I'm sure has really ... Just from talking with him, I can see how he's been able to really connect with guys and help them on their journey.

Before the webinar, he actually shared with me that at the time he became incarcerated, he actually had a young daughter and his life partner was expecting their second child. He explained to me how that proved a catalyst for transition in his own life, so he's gone on from that to help many other young men make that same transition. Tell us all about it, Dae.

Dae McKnight: Yeah. Good afternoon. Yes. Can you hear me?

Nigel Vann: Yeah. You're loud and clear.

Dae McKnight: Good afternoon. Okay. Well, good afternoon to everyone, and it's an honor to be here to share some information that I hope may be useful to everyone. I just want to salute all the other presenters for a fine job, for talking about the information that we have before us.



Presently at Family Reentry, which is an organization that provides reentry services, fatherhood services, and services for children of incarcerated parents, and services for people who have been in the court system for intimate partner violence ... Family Reentry began very small in 1984 as a reentry support group at a men's halfway house in Bridgeport. The agency now provides intervention, reentry, and other various family services in eight judicial districts, two parole districts, and five prisons.

Four key points that Family Reentry operates under the premise of when working with returning citizens is it's important for long-term engagement and early engagement in terms of pre-release, as evidence-based information and research supports the successful reentry when the person is engaged 6-12 months prior to release. Creative employment solutions, creating those relationships with the private sector, mentoring support from successful ex-offenders, which is something that we've been very proud to implement within the reentry formulation, is to have successful ex-offenders involved as mentors to help guide others through the reentry process. In Connecticut after you're released, after three years if you're off parole and probation, they will allow you to go back in and participate and volunteer [inaudible] programs if you're employed by one. Then number four, involvement of the entire family heals, inspires, and sustains change. Very important to have an environment that promotes the holistic approach of getting the whole family involved.

This program in particular was a three-year grant for the Second Chance Mentoring Act, which was to serve young fathers from the ages of 18-24, providing them with fatherhood services, mentoring services, and also comprehensive reentry case management services. The goals were to strengthen family, enhance the quality of life for the children by enhancing the quality of life and educating and providing a successful reentry and resources for the parent as they leave incarceration and returning to the community. Then overall, attempting to reduce recidivism. According to the Yale study, Family Reentry's recidivism rate is half of that of the state, based on the clients that Family Reentry comes into contact with.

Client engagement pre-release ... In my observation, the most important part of client engagement in pre-release really has been in order to pique the client's interest, and this has been done by the approach [inaudible] by getting ex-offenders involved in the process. Myself being a person who was formerly incarcerated ... What I've learned from my personal experience and then my professional experience acting in this capacity, that it's very difficult to communicate with someone if you can't make the connection. It's just like having a telephone. The telephone's not going to work if you don't make the connection, so if you have information for someone, it's going to be hard to distribute that information to them if you don't make the connection.

So the connection is very important, and I think this is where the role of successful ex-offenders being involved in the reentry process is important, especially upon initial contact. This allows the person that you come into contact with to break down those barriers, those walls of resistance, where they're open to even receiving information based on the fact that ... Just seeing you and knowing your experience, that you provide them with some hope, some inspiration, and the possibility that they may be able to also implement change in their own lives. This is very important in order to get people to the contemplative stage of change, to begin even contemplating change, and then get them involved in the process.

Upon client engagement pre-release, naturally there's a intake criminogenic needs assessment. We use the LSIR, which is Level of Service Inventory, to determine what has to be done for the individual to help them design a treatment plan that they participate in. What are their reentry goals? What are their fatherhood goals? What does their reentry plan look like? This is all done based on the self-reporting tools that we use, the information that they elicit to us.

The first thing we tell them, because we know that a lot of the guys have been involved and in contact with the system ... Most of the cases it's not their first time, and they can be resistant to providing information, so we tell them it's just like going to the doctor. If your ankle is bothering you and I ask you what's wrong ... If I'm a doctor, I can't help you if you tell me that your elbows bother you. It's very important that you pinpoint what your issues are, and then we can design a treatment plan that can help you address those issues. So communication, once again, is very important.

Then there's a fatherhood curriculum that is implemented, and that's InsideOut Dad. Also 24/7 Dad, a hybrid that's created because of the age group. Then there's perpetual groups that go on until the client is released into the community, and then the client file is transferred to the case manager for development of the specified detailed reentry plan.



Client engagement post-release ... There's a number of things that take place. What we've noticed is that the clients that get out and they initiate contact with the team members and the mentor ... They seem to do better in the community because they initiated the contact. Just being quite frank with you, for the clients that we do have to chase down to continue the process of engagement post-release ... Unfortunately, some of those clients don't do well, but the good thing is that we noticed that it's very important with the initial contact. Once the client hits the community, it's very, very important. Those who have done that ... They seem to fare better.

Once we make contact with the client, whether we have to contact them or they contact us, we begin the process where they link back up with their mentor that they met in pre-release. It may be a host of things. Resume preparation, employment referrals to the private sector. We focus on basic needs. ID is very important. Birth certificate, social security card, job search attire. We may even, a couple of cases we have, those who were interested, we helped assist them with obtaining their license. We helped to pay for it. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA training. We get them involved with that. There's some that are offered for free. There's some that we pay for those gentlemen who are interested in going into construction, any building trade or anything of that nature. We have them registered with Selective Service, so then once they register with Selective Service there's grants that they can receive for vocational services. If they want to drive CDL, if they want to become a barber, they must be registered for Selective Service in order to obtain a Workers Investment Act grant, which is [inaudible] grant. We make referrals for adult education. We have a diaper bank for children.

Then most of all, we have a 24/7 support line where they can call any of the team members any time if they're going through some situations which ... We have had many that I can't ... There's not enough time to discuss over the webinar, but some gentlemen may call you at 12 o'clock, and they don't want to make a bad decision. That line is always open for one of us to answer. You'd be able to try to conduct an intervention and walk them through the process where they won't hurt themselves or hurt their family in the process by getting rearrested or something of that nature.

Then client engagement post-release. The peer mentors are heavily involved to help them navigate a successful reentry into the community. A lot of the gentlemen who are their mentors have experienced some of the reentry hurdles that you experience upon reentering the community. Those gentlemen help walk them through it. They help guide them through the process. They talk to them about a lot of things that these young men probably wouldn't talk to anyone else about. They develop a relationship pre-release. They have a trust in them, and it's very important going forward to have, once again, that support system.

The case management team make social service referrals for the co-parent or the primary caregiver, so there's also services provided for the co-parent to send out referrals for social services and things of that nature. The family participates in community cultural enrichment events for dads and families. Sometimes we have trips. On the holidays we do the present giveaway, the toy drive, and things of that nature, and we also have the family dinner with the dads and the children and the co-parent if they're still involved or they want to attend.

Client and co-parent participation in post-release fatherhood survey. Once we get near the end of the program, the clients stay on with kind of like a aftercare process, but we have them fill out the fatherhood survey to assess their fatherhood skills since they went through the program and compare that with the initial fatherhood skills survey that they took upon entrance into the program.

This is the contact information here on the screen. My email's provided, and Family Reentry. Once again, our logo is at the bottom. In closing, the only thing I want to say is that there's a narrative that isn't often told throughout reentry circles on a national level, and also in fatherhood/reentry circles, but I think that it is good to note that it is very important, and it's almost crucial to have people who were formerly incarcerated that are living successful, positive, productive lives involved in the reentry process, to be able to make the initial connection, communicate in order for the person to receive the services and receive even the information that would allow them to make a change in their life and give them hope and inspiration in their life. I think that story needs to be told more often, and I believe there's a lot of men and women around the country who are involved in this process, but it's just a story that is often not told.

I thank you and I hope the information I provided today was helpful to someone that's listening. Thank you, and have a great day.



Nigel Vann: Thanks, Daee. Yeah, that was great, and thanks for really emphasizing that at the end there, yeah.

We've now got a nice chunk of time, and I really appreciate the presenters keeping their presentations short. We put them on a tight leash this time, so we've got a bit more time to have this conversation over the final half hour here, really.

As I mentioned, we've been joined by Robert Duggins, who's at the program there with Darin. Do we also have Geraldo Hernandez on the line? Have you been able to join us yet, Geraldo?

Geraldo Hernandez: Yes, I'm here.

Nigel Vann: Great. Well, welcome, and I really appreciate. I believe you're calling from your workplace?

Geraldo Hernandez: Yes.

Nigel Vann: Wow. Well, I appreciate you taking the time. Thank you very much, sir.

What I'd like to do here is first of all just give Robert and Geraldo an opportunity just to introduce themselves, and tell us a little bit about their story. Then I've got quite a few questions that have already come in for Darin and Jocelyn. I've not looked at all the questions yet, and I'm sure there's more for Daee as well, so we probably won't be able to get through everything, but we'll do our best.

Having said that, if I could first of all ask, I think we've got the names wrong on the slide I'm looking at. It should be ... Geraldo is actually representing the Family Reentry program. Dontray, who is also with Family Reentry, was not able to make it today, so Geraldo has stepped in for him at the last minute. We appreciate that, Geraldo.

The father who is representing Strength in Families is Robert Duggins. Robert, I apologize that we haven't got your name on the screen here, but can I just start with you and ask you to tell us just a little bit about your story, how many children you have, what your relationship is like with the mother, and how did you get involved in this program?

Robert Duggins: Well, first, I want to say thank you guys for having me. My name is Robert Duggins. I have a nine-year-old little girl. Her name is Mackenzie. I don't have any contact with her mother. My family and I have full custody of my daughter. My daughter lives with my mom and dad. They are my co-parents.

I've been incarcerated in Washington State for almost seven years now. I've been involved in the Strength in Families program for about a year. I've completed the Walking the Line portion and the Parenting Inside Out. Right now, currently, I'm a peer mentor or teacher's assistant, assisting the program coordinator dealing with teaching classes and stuff like that. Yeah. I really enjoy this program and what it has to offer for us in Washington State. I was involved prior to this with a long-distance dads program, which was a peer-based class that was taught by offenders in Washington. Once that program became muted in Washington, Strength in Families stepped in and I've been involved with this as long as I've been in WCC, the institution that I'm currently in now.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Well, I certainly hope that you are able to return to the community soon. I know in talking with Darin that your date is coming up sometime this year.

Could you just say a little bit about what challenges you are anticipating and how you're feeling about the day when you actually get to get out of there?

Robert Duggins: Yeah. I release in December. I've been able to work with my program coordinator or navigators to tackle most of the problems that I'm going to be facing. A big thing that I see with people in Washington State is being able to deal with three different obstacles. Housing, transportation, and employment. With our program, there's a lot of focus on those three fields, because those are the biggest downfalls with people that are transitioning out of prison back into society.



For myself, I have a huge support network, not only with my family but with people that I've come in contact with throughout my time in DOC, so I have employment lined up for myself. While I was in prison I was able to get my AWS, my welding certifications, so that I can have a job lined up. Our program in Washington has different unions that are local throughout the state come down here and speak, and they can get you set up to get all your union dues paid for, get a step right into a job, pretty much, right when you get out.

Then with housing, as for myself, I don't have community custody when I release. So with Washington State, if you don't have community custody, you don't qualify for housing voucher programs, which is to be able to help you three months with rent and stuff like that with DOC transitional approved housing. I don't qualify for that, but my situation's different. Like I said, I have support. I have a home to go to when I get out, but if I didn't have that it would be a big barrier for myself, would be housing. But besides that, everything is looking up in the right direction.

I've had time to be able to create a transition plan so that I can have a written-down plan, pretty much, of what I need to do to make sure that my transition is successful. As long as my values reflect what my goals are, I should be able to accomplish each step, one at a time, so.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Well, we certainly wish you all the best. We'll have more questions for you before we're done, I'm sure, Robert. I encourage everybody to send in questions for either Robert or Geraldo, or a general question for what it's been like for them in this program.

Let me ask you, Geraldo, to do the same thing that Robert just did. If you could just tell us a little bit about yourself, your kids, relationship with the mother, and how you got involved in the program with Daee.

Geraldo Hernandez: Well, first off, let me start by saying thank you to everybody for having me on last minute. My name is Geraldo Hernandez. I have three-year-old twin boys. I came across the Family Reentry program as well as the GBAPP Teen Fatherhood program during my time I spent in Manson Youth Institute. It was at which time I met Daee, and he introduced me to what the program is about. He let me know the type of [inaudible] that they suggest. It was for me at the time just a weekly way to get out of my cell. The more that I attended the program, the more that I got into it, the more that I learned how to be a better person, a better father, and how to continue the skills that they're teaching me and apply them into the real-life world.

I was later then released on transitional supervision. Daee reached out to me immediately. He helped me every step of the way. They helped me get my life in order. They helped me pick up financially, helped with my kids [inaudible] gave me the most important advice that I feel that they gave me was the advice and emotional support, because as someone who was raised without a father, to have somebody else there constantly telling me, "Hey, I'm here to help you, whether it be you're stressed out and you need somebody to talk to, you need a ride to an interview, or you just want to hang out with somebody and get to unwind." They were there in all those ways, and to me that's the best type of help you can offer somebody who comes from a background with no emotional support.

I was then later intrigued in returning to school. Daee gave me a few options. They helped me on the best course of action to take. I later on enrolled myself in Porter and Chester Institute where I attended for nine months, taking up dental assisting. I was later hired straight from my externship site, which I am still here to this day. In the process of that, I also managed to get into a restaurant part-time. I worked my way up the ladder. I am currently also a sous-chef aside from a dental assistant.

Even so, to this day, even aside from all my success, I still get calls from Daee and from other mentors in the program checking up on me, making sure I'm okay, asking if I need any help. To this day, I call them personally, because I fell in love with the work that they do. I fell in love with the people who are in the program, and I wanted to give back. I still want to give back. I constantly call to see if there's any way I can help, anything I can do, because the program helped me out. It changed my life, and I can honestly say I would not be the man I am today without this program. So if I can help, I'm there. I just want to repay what was paid towards me and help others out and continue the cycle.

Nigel Vann: Well, I don't know if you're on the computer as well, Geraldo. Are you just calling in on the phone?



Geraldo Hernandez: Yes. I'm only over the phone. I'm currently at work.

Nigel Vann: Yeah. Well, let me just tell you that on the computer screen where we've been showing presenter slides and there's a chat box that the attendees ... There's about 200 people on the line here who are listening to you, and a lot of people are writing in here things like, "[inaudible]," "Very inspiring," "Awesome," "Congratulations," so you've certainly hit a nerve with the folk here. I wasn't watching when Robert was talking. I'm not sure what the chat was then, but, I was very touched by the fact that you used the word love there, because I've often, doing this work we'll often involve fathers in panel presentations to tell us about their experiences in the program, and I often ask guys, "What was the thing that really kept you involved in this program? What was it about this program that was special?" Invariably, people use the word love like you just did, because I think that's what guys get out of being in this kind of atmosphere where you are being totally supported in a way that may not have happened before, right? So, really appreciate you sharing that.

Let me circle back now to the presenters and ask a few of the questions that have been coming in, and then we'll get back to the dads for a few more comments. We really do have a lot of questions. I'm trying to digest them all here, so apologies if I take a while on this. But let me pose a couple of questions for Darin here. Somebody asked Darin if you give any incentives to stay engaged for the guys pre-release.

Darin Goff: Yeah. The video visits. That's one of the incentives that we get. Again, that's not for everybody, but prior to release, what we're really looking for is, to be quite honest, Nigel, we want their families and their kids to be the incentives, so we're really trying to cultivate an atmosphere where, you know, guys can go do a lot of things while they're in prison, some of them not very good. We want guys who want to put their families first. A lot of guys, maybe Mr. Duggins can even speak to this, will give up other paying jobs or working in industries and different things that might seem more meaningful, but they want to put their kids and their families first. We like to focus on that being the incentive.

Nigel Vann: Wow. Yeah, perhaps Robert would like to join in on that, then, yeah?

Robert Duggins: Yeah. I'm the only peer mentor for the institution that I'm at right now currently, but like what I say with a lot of the people. I challenge them, because in our program they offer. You can only miss two classes to be able to graduate the program, but I challenge everyone in the program to stay and not miss out on that, because in my vision or the relationship that I have with my child is that she deserves the opportunity for me to be there for her and to apply the things that I learn in this class into the relationship that we have.

The relationship with my daughter is amazing compared to what some people might see because I am incarcerated. My daughter and I still talk on the phone daily. I'm involved in parent-teacher conferences with her school. I talk to her dance instructors, my mom. The negative relationships that I created by becoming incarcerated have all changed to positive and healthy, supportive relationships because I applied the things that I learned in the class. Everyone around me, including the people that are incarcerated with me, feed off the energy that I'm able to provide, because they can see the positive change that's happening in my life, and slowly the things that happen in their lives, too.

Nigel Vann: Yeah, I think you said you've been inside. I'm sorry. Go ahead. Sorry.

Robert Duggins: Oh, I was saying it's an incentive in itself to be able to have people in your family and the peers around you be able to support the decisions that you make, because in prison, everything is judged by the actions that you create for yourself. So the actions that I carry with the relationship with my kid, everyone in prison sees that, and they all view it with different aspects, and it's actually pretty great.

Nigel Vann: Yeah. Wow. No, you're doing a great service for a lot of people by the sounds of things, yeah. I think you mentioned at the beginning that you've been inside for seven years, right? So how long did it take you to get to this point? Was it the program that really triggered this, or were you already starting to make some kind of personal transitions?



Robert Duggins: Well, like I said, the relationship with my kid has been an ongoing thing. Before Strength in Families, I was doing the long-distance dads program, which is pretty much a communication program on how I can maintain a relationship with my daughter through communicating over the phone and stuff. But once that was done, I was at a crossroads, so, like I said, I don't qualify for a lot of the transitional programs that are offered in Washington State because of the actions that I had when I first got incarcerated, but when I came into Strength in Families, I remember Darin came in and spoke, saying, "Oh, well, you're going to have to miss certain days of work," and here, working is our lifeline, so I was like, man, I've got to miss work to take these classes that I feel like I'm already pretty much a good dad. I was real hesitant and stand-offish, but once I broke down that barrier and got involved in this program, everything in my life has changed. Like this is my second incarceration. Throughout this whole time, it's been seven years, and once I started actually doing this program.

Like I said earlier, that if my values reflect my goals, my life is going to change, but my actions have to reflect my values at the same time. So, slowly learning how to prioritize what I valued was important in my life, helped me change, and this program that I'm taking now has been able to help me put all my values in order. The relationship with my daughter is at the top, so being able to work on that on a daily basis and being able to show people the results of that. It's inspiring for everybody that's involved in our program.

Nigel Vann: Yeah. Thank you very much, Robert, yeah.

A couple more quick questions for you, Darin, and then I've got a couple of questions for Jocelyn. You've been asked, "Is the program in all state institutions?" Let me ask you that first. Is the program in all institutions in the state? I believe it's in four or five of them, right?

Darin Goff: Right. It's in four, and we've got 11 facilities here, I think, men's facilities in the state. But I do have the ability to move guys from one prison to the other to get them in the program, which we do. It's just super complicated. There's just so many things going on. Mr. Duggins is, we were trying to recruit him. He was putting in for some other programs that may have got him out a little bit earlier, but because he didn't...I'm not going to go into all the details. It gets kind of deep. But because of our commitment to try to keep him in our program, we just went ahead and went on with it, so he went in a little bit earlier than most.

But we're in five counties where you release, so I mean, that's really the appropriate question to ask, because we're only right now in just a slice of the state of Washington. But if you're, say, on the east side of the mountain, if you're familiar with the geography of the state of Washington, and you're going to release to one of our counties and you qualify at the right time, it's likely that I could probably get them into one of our facilities and put them in the program. So more county than prison, I would say is really, right now those are the limitations.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Great. Somebody else has asked if the reform program is something that's national, so I can actually answer that, because I believe there are five programs around the country that have this Office of Family Assistance funding to do the actual reform program, although they all are slightly different.

Darin Goff: Correct.

Nigel Vann: There are other programs working in various facilities around the country, but it's not something that is everywhere by any means.

I also believe, Darin, that you have done this work with female inmates as well, right? Are there any current programs going on in Washington State.

Darin Goff: Yeah, there is. There's a lot of parenting-type programs. In fact, in the female facility, like the rest of the state, we have Parenting Inside Out, and that's the curriculum that we use as a component of our program, but they don't have the resources and all the staff that this program has.

I think one of the things, Nigel, that I just want to emphasize, is it is culture changing in terms of a prison when you establish some things, you get the right guys in. But then once you've had a few groups go through, the best marketing that you can have is word of mouth of the past participants telling some of their peers what they've gotten out of the program.

Nigel Vann: Interesting. Yeah. We find that in the community as well as inside, I think, but yeah. Okay.

A couple of questions for you, Jocelyn. Are you aware of any strategies that might help increase a custodial parent's willingness to participate in a family-oriented support program? I.e. the parent in the community. Any strategies to help them get involved?

Jocelyn Fontaine: Specific to custodial parents, or did you ... Can you say the question again? I'm sorry. Is it?

Nigel Vann: Yeah, the question was custodial parent. I think basically they're talking about family in the community.

Jocelyn Fontaine: Yeah. What I've seen is programs take a number of different strategies to try and increase family involvement. It can be as part of the ... It's core to the central program strategy in having some sort of curriculum or activity that's intended for families, so not just the formerly incarcerated person, but whoever their romantic or intimate partner is, or their co-parent, in doing some sort of healthy relationship or healthy marriage curriculum. I think one of the other presenters spoke to that as well, some relationship-building activities.

There's also, we've seen family activity days or special events in which the formerly incarcerated program participant is intended to bring somebody that's in their family to the activity, and it's focused on family engagement. We've seen programs do things for Fathers' Day. We've seen them do baby showers. I've seen sports outings, cook-outs, that sort of thing, which are intended, yeah, to facilitate more bonding for the family members together, dinners.

Usually programs are able to do that successfully when they are either paying for the entire activity, so paying for food, for dinner, facilitating transportation, either giving folks bus cards, or driving people, or bringing them to certain places. So usually there needs to be some sort of incentive that's involved in it, or food that's provided. We've seen childcare be provided in order to get co-parents to participate in activities. So yeah, we've seen some pretty promising strategies. Also, I think it's important to schedule whatever activities at a time that is most convenient for family members to participate.

I hope that answers the question.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Yeah. Thanks. Yeah. No, I think that was good, yeah, and we can also follow up in some written responses if we need to clarify anything. You'd also mentioned that the visitation in the correctional setting can be negative for some children. I'm just wondering, and there's been a few questions about this, if you can offer any tips to work around that. Is there any research that shows [inaudible]? Yeah. Go ahead. Yeah.

Jocelyn Fontaine: Yeah. What we've seen is ... Just full stop, correctional institutions are not very welcoming places, right? They weren't designed to be welcoming, period, but certainly not for children, particularly very young ones. What I'm going to say is really trying to minimize what can be stressful, but it doesn't make it not stressful at all or a happy experience, but it's really trying to mitigate the impact or the harm that the correctional environment and being there and feeling it. How that might feel to children?

What we've seen is program staff that either before a visit coach children and caregivers and parents about what's going to happen. I can't say that this has been evaluated as being impactful, but it's one of those, "This sounds like it's a smart thing to do." Anecdotal evidence suggests that. Program staff feel like it's a good thing, and children and families appreciate it as well. So just telling children and co-parents about what they're about to experience. Saying, "We're going to go here and this is what you can experience. You will have to remove this. You won't be able to take this into the facility. There may be dogs. We will then get on a bus. You'll only be able to touch your family member for X amount of time." Sort of just describing and explaining what the experience is going to be like we've heard has been a good practice.



Then also supporting the child and the caregiver or co-parent after the visit, so just trying to debrief with them about, "How was the experience? What are you feeling about that?" It's called a sort of, we've also seen practitioners do this for phone calls as well, to really just trying to help folks along and also providing debriefing services following, to try and allow people an outlet to talk about what they experienced and get them around any feelings, both positive or negative, that they're feeling, just to support them. So that's one thing that I can offer.

But on the other side, too, I mean, we've seen correctional facilities that are trying to make the space more family-friendly. I don't feel comfortable saying that there's prisons and jails and stuff that are totally welcoming to families and children, but they can be better. So having a wing of a visiting space be outfitted with toys and books and paintings, that sort of thing, that children have activities and outlets and stuff. That can be a good practice, and we're seeing more facilities that are doing that sort of thing.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Great. We've got a load of questions here. This has obviously been a very stimulating webinar, so I will ask the presenters to respond to the ones we haven't been able to get to.

Let me come back to you, Dae, for a couple of quick questions. Somebody is wondering who operates your 24/7 call line. Are they answered by the staff or by the peer mentors or by both?

Dae McKnight: The staff members. We have a job cell phone, so they're on 24/7. We answer them. Then the mentors, they have their own cell phones, which of course they provide the number to the mentees, and they're on 24/7. That's not something that's paid for by the agency as far as answering 24/7. That's just something that we all do because we feel committed to what we do and to the process.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Somebody else asked if the peer mentors are employees. Do they get paid?

Dae McKnight: No. The peer mentors, they do receive a stipend. They don't get a regular full-time pay check, but they do receive a stipend. But the hours that they put in is well above what the stipend they receive.

Nigel Vann: Yeah. I'm sure. Yeah.

Let me circle back to Geraldo. Somebody's asked what kind of support you had from your family before you were released, Geraldo. Could you talk about that a little bit?

Geraldo Hernandez: Well, as far as my family, I'm one of seven grandchildren who were raised by a already well over 50 grandmother. Both of my parents weren't really around, so besides my grandmother, I didn't really have much family support. I kind of had to carve my own way. That's one of the reasons why I became so fond of the program, because of all the financial and ... Well, not financial. My apologies. All the emotional support that they provided. To kind of build off of the question you asked Dae, there was never a time where I could not reach him or one of the other mentors. There was always some type of way where I can get in contact with them, so. But as far as my family support, I had little to none prior to the program.

Nigel Vann: Thank you. Yeah. I'm glad you've been able to make your way anyway then. Yeah. Let me just ask you finally, Geraldo, if you could give tips to other young men who are currently incarcerated, what would you advise them about preparing for their return?

Geraldo Hernandez: As far as preparing them to enter the real world, my best advice would be the same one that was given to me. Be patient. Stay focused. Everything will come in due time. As long as the focus is there and the hard work is being put in, the world is your canvas.

Nigel Vann: I like it. I like it. Yeah. Well, we are getting tight on time. I'm not sure if our Office of Family Assistance representative, John Allen, is still on the line. Are you there, John?

John Allen: Yes, I am.



Nigel Vann: Okay. Would you like to say a few words?

John Allen: Yes. I just want to thank everyone for attending this call. I want to thank the presenters so much for providing information to inform the field and build upon practice, which is so much the importance of these webinars. I want to thank the Clearinghouse for bringing up a great topic to really canvass our practice, research, and the fathers with the understanding of this practice around reentry, fathers for taking the time out to come out and provide your [inaudible] into ... Overcome the obstacles [inaudible]. Thank you very much, everyone, and especially to the presenters [inaudible 01:25:32] today's webinar. I really appreciate you providing [inaudible].

Nigel Vann: [inaudible]. Yeah. Thank you, John. I'd like to let everybody know that we are actually in the process of developing a virtual community. We're not there yet, but I think we're going to get there eventually. I'm sure we're going to get there eventually. One of the ideas of that is that we want to be able to continue these kind of conversations in a virtual space, so we will follow up with everybody who's on this webinar if and when we'll be able to get that going, which I think will be sometime this summer. I see that there's a lot of interest here. We will ask the presenters to respond to questions that we've not been able to get to. They'll be posted probably in the next month, and you can come back to our website at fatherhood.gov/webinars and see that.

I would just like to give the presenters one chance, and the fathers, to leave us with just one final thought. It's got to be very quick, because we are overtime. Let me start with Darin. Have you got any one-sentence bit of wisdom that you'd like to close with?

Darin Goff: It's complicated work. I would say that that's one thing to always remember. Not one situation is ever the same. I like to tell our guys, it's just ... Prepare for the unexpected. Have contingency plans, and you're likely to be successful if you work hard.

Nigel Vann: Thank you. I'll come back to you, Robert. Jocelyn, a word of wisdom for us?

Jocelyn Fontaine: Sure. This isn't intended as a disagreement of what the folks just said, but there's also the need for systemic reform. I appreciate the comments about individual men who are returning working hard and trying as best as they could in staying focused, but there's also the need for reform of policy and practice among systems that are really critical to supporting fathers and their families, so I don't want us to take our eye off of that ball too. Thank you.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much. Yeah. One of the questions that we didn't get to that I will ask you all to respond to in writing is concerning how you deal with the attitudes and policies of various correctional institutions in terms of getting these programs going. We didn't have time to talk about that.

Dae, a final word.

Dae McKnight: Yes. Thank you again, Nigel, and also the listening audience for having me. I just want to say to any formerly incarcerated people that are on the line, it's very important to know that you're very important. You're someone's father. You're someone's mother. That child really needs you present in their life. I just want to say going forward and making decisions, please think about outcome, and just play the tape forward. Always fast forward the tape before you make a decision, and continue to stay solid and consistent in your children's life. That's it. Thank you.

Nigel Vann: Thank you very much, and I thank all the presenters one more time. You did a fantastic job. I particularly want to thank Robert and Geraldo for joining us and sharing their words, and I do want to give each of them just a chance to leave us with one more thought, so Geraldo, and then I'll come back to Robert for the final comment.

Geraldo Hernandez: I just want to say thank you for giving me the time and opportunity to share my story with you. Hopefully it inspires somebody else going forward and it changes their life for the better. I appreciate all the work that all of you guys do for people like me and people in our situation, and any way that I can help progress programs like this so that they can continue to help others, I am more than willing to. Thank you very much for all the work you guys do. You are the key.



Nigel Vann: Okay. Thank you, Geraldo. Robert, you get the final word, and again, I apologize that your name wasn't on the slide before this, but it will be when we post them for real.

Robert Duggins: All right. Thank you guys. Thank you for having me, inviting me to do this. I really appreciate it. Thank you guys for all the work that you guys put in. You guys are giving me and my daughter a big service. You guys are helping me gain the tools to be the father that my daughter deserves to have in her life, and I appreciate all the work you guys are doing.

Nigel Vann: Okay. Well, thank you. Thank everybody. Again, I encourage you all to check back at our website, fatherhood.gov/webinars in the next four to six weeks, and you'll be able to see all the materials from this. You'll be able to listen to the webinar again if you want to. You can see the transcript, and while you've still got your screen on, you can still download the slides and the other resources from the box that you're seeing.

I appreciate your time today. I'm sorry we went a little bit over, but I think you'll agree with me it was well worth hearing from everybody. You will receive an evaluation link. Please complete that to help us continue to make these webinars good and meet your needs.

I wish everybody a good day. Thank you very much. Goodbye.

Operator: Thank you. That does conclude today's teleconference. We do appreciate your participation. You may now disconnect.