

The Oregon Accountability Model

Children and Families Component

The Oregon Accountability Model encompasses the simultaneous, coordinated and efficient implementation of many Department of Corrections initiatives and projects that provide a foundation for inmates to lead successful lives upon release.

The Oregon Accountability Model has six components. Each of these components stands on its own as a project or a part of the Oregon Department of Corrections' organization and culture. However, woven together these six separate components form a stronger fiber that strengthens the department's ability to hold inmates/offenders accountable for their actions and DOC staff accountable for achieving the mission and vision of the department.

The Children and Families Component of the Oregon Accountability Model

Research indicates that inmates with strong family ties and support networks are more likely to succeed upon release and that children of incarcerated parents are five to six times more likely to become incarcerated than are their peers. In an effort to apply this research to Oregon, the department has committed to changing current business practices and policies that may hinder family contact and parent/child bonding. The department is exploring and implementing programs and activities that encourage productive relationships between families and inmates.

Children of Incarcerated Parents Project

The department leads a statewide partnership called The Children of Incarcerated Parents Project. This project looks at the criminal justice system as a whole—arrest, jail, sentencing, prison, and reentry—and develops recommendations that support children during every step of the process.

With the combined efforts of the department's internal committees and The Children of Incarcerated Parents Project, the department is providing opportunities for children and families to remain informed and connected to their incarcerated parent/family member.

Parenting Program

Phase 1: Parenting Classes

Uses the best research-based parenting practices available, the Oregon Social Learning Center and the department jointly developed a comprehensive parenting curriculum for inmates. The 12-week curriculum teaches inmates how to be effective parents, both from prison and upon release.

Phase 2: Therapeutic Visiting

Upon successful completion of Phase 1, a limited number of approved inmates may participate in Phase 2. Phase 2 is also a 12-week course that allows inmates the opportunity to participate in several therapeutic visits with their children and their caregivers, accompanied by a family therapist. During the supervised visits, inmates work on specific skills learned in Phase 1 (e.g., limit-setting and positive reinforcement) and receive feedback from the family therapist.

Early Head Start

The Department of Corrections and Community Action Head Start of Washington County joined forces to provide inmate mothers an opportunity to practice their parenting skills and bond with their children. The Early Head Start Program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF) serves eight children from birth until age four. The children spend three and a half hours, twice a week, in the facility becoming part of a play-group and receiving both health and mental health services. The mothers and the children's caregivers participate in parenting classes and spend time parenting the children.

Even Start

The department has the first Even Start Family Literacy program in a prison (CCCF) in the nation. The program facilitates family bonding and improves parenting skills while addressing the literacy needs of both mother and child. It serves up to 50 inmate mothers and 80 children. In addition to bi-monthly meetings, the children receive home visits from an on-staff family advocate who works with school personnel and other community agencies to ensure their needs are being met while their parent is incarcerated. Inmate mothers are required to attend debriefing sessions following each meeting with their children as well as be enrolled in or on the waiting list for Parent Education classes.

Orientations to the Oregon Department of Corrections

For several years DOC has partnered with a group dedicated to helping family members manage the loss of having a loved one in prison. This group is called Oregon CURE which stands for Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants. CURE members are primarily people who have loved ones in prison. They understand the range of difficulties encountered by families and friends when a loved one is incarcerated, and they can provide information and support.

Visiting Policy Review

In looking for ways to improve communication and bonding between inmates and their families, the department's rules, policies, and procedures regarding visiting, phones, and mail are being examined.

To maximize positive family interaction during visiting hours, members of the Children of Incarcerated Parents Project and inmates from the parent education classes have developed recommendations for improving the visiting area. Some of these recommendations include allowing more games, books, and craft projects — creating opportunities for inmates to have more meaningful visits with their children.

Orientation to Community Supervision

The orientation to community supervision is much like the orientation to the Oregon Department of Corrections, but instead is delivered just prior to an inmate's release to his/her family and friends. The orientation provides information regarding success and support during parole and post-prison supervision.

The Oregon Accountability Model

The ultimate goal of the Oregon Accountability Model is to improve public safety. The model ties together many concurrent and interrelated efforts of the department and its partners into a cohesive strategy to reduce recidivism and influence inmates to become productive citizens.