

**The National Council on Crime and Delinquency's  
Evaluation of the Project Development of  
National Institute of Corrections/Child Welfare  
League of America's  
Planning and Intervention Sites  
Funded to Address the Needs of Children of  
Incarcerated Parents**

Final Report

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## **Executive Summary**

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) was contracted by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of program development for demonstration sites funded by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). The grantees were to develop projects that would address the needs of children of incarcerated parents. There were ten demonstration sites, four of which received 18 month planning grants, and six of which received three year grants to implement their intervention programs. The goal of the evaluation was to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in developing and implementing programs that address the needs of children of incarcerated parents.

NCCD did not evaluate the impact of the services; this evaluation focused on program development. NCCD evaluated whether: (1) the sites developed and implemented their programs as planned, (2) they served their target population, and (3) if the programs were sustainable. Each intervention site defined implementation goals and established objectives and activities to develop and implement their programs. Data were gathered from matrices and progress reports (reflective of the Empowerment Evaluation method), site visits, and interviews. The Empowerment Evaluation model provided the sites the opportunity to review and determine if they should modify their objectives throughout the process. This method also allowed for staff to participate in their demonstration site's evaluation.

Through a series of individual case studies, this report outlines the three year activities involved in the implementation and development of each intervention programs. The case studies summarize the unique background information of each site,

outline the program goals and objectives, and highlight activities and outcomes accomplished. Additionally, each case study discusses the factors that facilitated their implementation process as well as the challenges faced, including how sites addressed their challenges. As a result of using the Empowerment Evaluation method to obtain ongoing information from the intervention sites, the issues that need to be addressed when working with children and families affected by incarceration were identified. These issues are described below along with suggestions about the minimal components that should be incorporated to develop and implement successful intervention programs.

- **Planning:** The needs of the target population and the resources available in the community must be assessed before implementation of programs. In addition, programs must secure space to provide services, hire and train staff, and develop relationships for access to the target population.
- **Collaboration:** Programs must collaborate and build partnerships with other organizations that can help them with the process of implementing services. They must also continue engaging the community and stakeholders about the issues facing children of incarcerated parents. In order to develop support, it is helpful to identify contact liaisons at the facilities, participate in trainings to incorporate rules of facilities/schools in programming, and provide information about program and services. In order to get support from other agencies and the community, sites raised awareness and disseminated information through: newsletters, articles, colloquiums, focus/training groups, ongoing presentations to many groups, television broadcasting, and summits. Such events also helped them

become aware of the available resources and helped them to build relationships with other agencies that could complement their services.

- **Target population:** The target population should be clearly defined and plans for how to identify, recruit, and enroll clients should be determined. Programs should plan strategies to motivate the target population to participate as well as allocate resources and additional time for this. Providing incentives for participation appear to work.
- **Viable services:** Programs should conduct needs assessments to determine the needs of their target populations and of the services that are available in their community. In order to be successful, programs must be able to make connections between the two.
- **Staff:** In order to operate effectively, not only is sufficient staff necessary, but staff must also be competent and possess quality skills for working with the children and families affected by incarceration. As in most endeavors, experience is important. It appears that the level of skill understanding the issues of trust and challenges of families affected by parental incarceration may be correlated with the length of time that staff worked with children as well as length of time that staff had worked specifically with children of incarcerated parents.
- **Financial sustainability:** Programs must continually search for diverse resources (including federal government, state and local governments, and foundations) in order to maintain and/or expand level of services. Sustainability also aids in the retention of staff.

Intervention programs that address the needs of children of incarcerated parents require effective program development. Clearly, the components involved in the development of programs are multi-faceted. NCCD conducted this research in order to provide important information to individuals and entities considering developing programs. The information garnered from these ten demonstration sites provide the basis for important lessons that have been learned and that should be considered for development of future programs.

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## Introduction

*The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) conducted a process and outcome evaluation of program and project development of the demonstration sites funded by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). The goals of the evaluation were to explore and address the needs of children of incarcerated parents as part of the federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners. Specifically the NCCD evaluation sought to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in continuing or developing, as well as implementing, programs that address the needs of children of incarcerated parents. The following report outlines the three year activities involved in the implementation and development of projects/programs that provide services to children of incarcerated parents, followed by a discussion regarding lessons learned.*

*There are few evaluations that offer information that can be used to develop comprehensive approaches to program development to address the needs of children of incarcerated parents. With the increasing number of children so impacted, it is critical to begin to develop a research-based framework that can guide the development of future interventions. Using the experiences of demonstration sites, this evaluation: (1) provides feedback to the target sites that can be used to assist them in their program implementation, (2) assists other organizations that are considering developing programs that work with this target population so that they can be better informed about the challenges and issues to consider when designing a program for providing services to children of incarcerated parents and/or families, (3) provides information about “best practices” for addressing some of these challenges and issues, and (4) provides information that can inform funders and policymakers who can potentially fund this*

*important work. Most importantly, this evaluation highlights the common issues that need to be addressed when working with children and families affected by incarceration. Further, it suggests the minimal components that should be incorporated in order to develop and implement successful intervention programs.*

## **Challenges Faced by Children of Incarcerated Parents**

At present over 1.2 million people are incarcerated in state and federal prison and approximately 600,000 will be released this year. The majority of these people have children. Although women comprise a relatively small proportion of the incarcerated population, their numbers are growing rapidly. In fact, the percentage of women represented in the system is increasing faster than the percentage of men (Beck, 2000). The majority of these men and women are also parents leaving behind minor children. This rise in incarceration has led to an increased need for understanding of the challenges faced by children of incarcerated parents.

Certainly, the incarceration of either parent poses a significant risk to a child's development, but the incarceration of mothers may be particularly destructive. The dramatic increase in incarcerated women almost always directly affects children. It is estimated that between 70% and 80% of female inmates have dependent children at the time of their incarceration (Greenfield & Snell, 1999; Watterson, 1996). Although there are many more children with fathers in prison than mothers, incarcerated mothers are more frequently the primary caregivers (Seymour, 2001) and are more likely to have been living with their children at the time of their incarceration (Mumola, 2000). When a child's mother is incarcerated, that child is more likely to be placed with relatives or enter the foster care system (Krisberg & Temin, 2001; Travis, Waul, & Solomon, 2002). Less

than 40% of fathers in state prisons and less than half of those in federal prisons lived with their children in the months before their arrest. In contrast, 60% of mothers in state prisons and 73% of mothers in federal prisons lived with their children preceding their arrest (Mumola, 2000).

The literature on successful interventions for children of incarcerated parents is scant. However, given what is known about the needs of this population (i.e. high risk circumstances, few sources of support particularly for shifts in family structure, lack of contact with incarcerated parent, financial barriers), there are a few components that do seem salient. First, programs that appear to be the most promising are those that are flexible enough to account for the needs of individual families (Bernfeld, 2001). Second, successful interventions will likely provide multiple services (Dressel, Porterfield, & Barnhill, 1998). Children of incarcerated parents are some of our nation's most at-risk individuals and face incredible obstacles including poverty, environments in which violence and substance abuse are prevalent, few educational opportunities, and home lives characterized by traumatic disruptions. As a result, these children are in need of a variety of services simultaneously (Bernfeld, 2001; Dressel, Porterfield, & Barnhill, 1998; Young & Smith, 2000). Third, programs that provide services to children and their caregivers or parents have the best opportunity to create lasting change (Young & Smith, 2000). Fourth, programs that facilitate appropriate contact between children and their incarcerated parents are important. There is evidence which shows that the importance of regular, healthy contact between incarcerated parents and their children can ameliorate children's negative outcomes (Hess, 1987; Morton & Williams, 1998; Young & Smith, 2000).

There are several types of programming for children of prisoners including corrections-based, community-setting/alternatives to incarceration programs, community-based programming, and child welfare-based programs. As part of a *Family to Family Initiative*, the Annie E. Casey Foundation conducted needs assessments in Maryland, New York, and Alabama to learn more about the service needs and challenges faced by staff working with children of incarcerated parents as well as to examine the overlap between children in the child welfare system and parents in the correctional systems. The findings reveal that workers from both the child welfare and corrections system face challenges in working with these families; interventions can be guided and/or limited by attitudes and interpretations of staff working with children/families; failure to collaborate for services such as transitional support services waste resources in both systems; there is not adequate support for incarcerated parents; there is great need for stable living arrangements for children and resources to deal with the trauma they experience while their parent is away; productive visitation is inhibited by numerous obstacles; and reunification barriers and lack of services for women leaving corrections make successful transitions difficult. With the awareness of these needs and conditions, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has made suggestions for how to effectively intervene. These include: conducting regular collaborative case conferences and coordinating the delivery of services, developing manuals and providing cross training, aiding mothers through providing information/education for planning, providing access to legal counsel; improving conditions of visitation rooms by making them more child-friendly and by providing transportation; and reducing the trauma suffered by the children by training police and adults that come in contact with them, training parents on child development,

supporting caregivers, providing counseling to children at every stage of their separation. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002).

## **Overview of National Institute of Corrections Initiative**

Children of incarcerated parents face extraordinary challenging life circumstances and are one of our nation's most at-risk populations. Many of these children live in poverty and are exposed to substance use and criminal behaviors prior to the incarceration of a parent. The parent's arrest and incarceration can bring about additional chaos and instability for the child. This combination of factors puts these children at heightened risk of a host of difficulties including behavior problems, school failure, and juvenile delinquency. Today, there are more than 2 million children whose parents are incarcerated either in federal or state prisons or in local jails. Over the last 10 years, the number of children whose parents are incarcerated has increased by 50% (Mumola, 2000). Recognizing this growing national issue, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) funded ten demonstration sites located throughout the country to explore and address the needs of children of incarcerated parents. There were five solicitation areas including funding for: a Federal Resource Center; four planning awards; two sites working with children of prisoners living in a high crime/high incarceration community; two sites working with children with parents in prison; and two sites working with parents in jail. The latter six demonstration sites, also known as intervention sites, received grants to implement their programs/projects. The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) was funded to create and operate the Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners (Resource Center). The goal of the Resource Center is to improve

the quality of information that is available regarding children with incarcerated parents, as well as to develop resources that will help create better outcomes for families separated by incarceration. The Center's activities include collecting and disseminating information, providing training and technical assistance, and increasing awareness among the many disciplines and service systems that work with families and children of incarcerated parents. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) was contracted by CWLA to develop and implement an evaluation of the demonstration sites. Initially, the goal was to complete impact and process evaluations. However, due to the small number of sites, the short evaluation period, and the variability among the sites, the goal shifted from an outcome evaluation of the impact of the intervention to conducting a process and outcome evaluation about the issues regarding project development. This report focuses on developing an understanding of the processes involved in continuing or developing, as well as implementing programs that work for children of incarcerated parents.

### **Planning Sites**

Components for effective intervention include: the ability to provide multiple services, account for needs of individual families, and provide services to children and caregivers or parents (Bernfeld, 2001; Dressel, Porterfield, & Barnhill, 1998; Young & Smith, 2000). Before successful intervention can take place, however, there is a need for a coordinated process of comprehensive planning between local communities, child welfare agencies, police, and correctional agencies. NIC awarded four 18 month planning grants. The grantees were: 1) Memphis Shelby Crime Commission (Memphis, Tennessee); 2) PB&J Family Services (Albuquerque, New Mexico); 3) Pima Prevention

Partnership (Tucson, Arizona); and 4) Let's Start/Mothers and Children Together (St. Louis, Missouri). The grantees were charged with developing a plan for addressing the needs of children of incarcerated parents in their communities. The following information is based on the final reports submitted to the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) by the planning sites.

*Memphis Children Locked Out (Memphis, TN)*

The Memphis Children Locked Out, formerly called the Memphis Plan for Children of Prisoners Planning Team, worked to “create a community-wide coordinated plan to intervene in the lives of children with imprisoned parents, in ways that would mitigate the risk factors in their lives and help them build resilience and the ability to become successful adults.” The Memphis Children Locked Out final report (2004) indicates that they convened a broad-based planning team that was committed to coordinate the development of a comprehensive plan for the identification of children, assessment of need, and delivery of services to children of incarcerated parents. This included children whose parents were formerly incarcerated at the Shelby County Jail or the Shelby County Division of Corrections. More specifically, the objectives of the planning team were to: 1) identify and include incarcerated parents, caretakers, service providers and children with incarcerated parents in the planning process; 2) collect and assess data regarding the nature and extent of the problems and levels of risk and protective factors associated with children of prisoners in the Memphis/Shelby County; 3) develop an understanding of the current criminal justice system, including policies and procedures related to children of prisoners; 4) develop an inventory of available resources

and existing prevention, early intervention and resilience building programs and services in the area that were suitable for children of prisoners; 5) identify gaps in services; 6) develop a protocol for identifying children of prisoners; 7) develop a system for improving/establishing communication and information sharing among agencies, programs, and services; 8) coordinate and strengthen existing programs and services; 9) improve and/or assure access to existing programs and services; 10) identify “best practices” and assess their suitability to fill gaps in existing services; 11) conduct a process evaluation; and 12) complete a final project report that would summarize the evaluation, project plan, timeline for implementation, and plan for funding.

#### *Activities Accomplished/Lessons Learned*

The planning team was comprised of representatives from various sectors. The team began in the eighth month of the project to undertake the process of developing an approach to identify children of incarcerated parents, address their needs, and deliver services. The planning team organized four focus groups that included inmates from the Shelby Commission Division of Corrections who wanted to participate, as well as other participants including: caretakers, service providers, and children. There were a total of 60 participants. In the ninth month of planning, eleven focus groups were conducted with incarcerated parents, paroled parents, parents on probation, caretakers, children of prisoners, and correctional staff. The objective was to collect and assess data regarding the nature and extent of problems associated with children of prisoners in Memphis/Shelby County. In addition, a survey instrument was created and conducted with inmates. There was a 75% response rate. A public dialogue about children of



incarcerated parents for service providers, faith-based community organizations, and educators was also conducted.

Informational materials were developed and distributed to planning team members to develop a better understanding of the current criminal justice system; specifically the policies and procedures that relate to children of prisoners. Additionally, criminal justice personnel made presentations before members of the planning team. The planning team created an inventory of existing programs and services in the local area that were suitable to children of prisoners. This was accomplished by gathering resource directories, and conducting telephone surveys and/or site visits of select programs. A report that analyzed and summarized the gaps in services and strategy options for a coordinated, comprehensive plan was also disseminated. As a result, a strategic plan with both short and long term goals was developed in the last month of funding.

A written protocol for the identification of children of prisoners and a formal communication/information system were not developed as planned. In addition, a strategic plan document which delineated a plan for assuring access for services was also not developed and distributed. Still pending is a summary of their internal evaluation, as well as the timeline for implementation and plan for funding. However, an Executive Committee to provide leadership for the implementation of the strategic plan has been formed to continue working beyond the NIC funding.

#### *Future Plans*

Subsequent to the funding for the planning process, a visitation program and a child-friendly visitation room were built at the Shelby County Division of Corrections. Applications for funding to implement the strategic plan have been submitted to several

agencies (including Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth).

### *Lessons Learned*

- Because of funding constraints and resistance from various segments of the community, a comprehensive plan must be implemented on an incremental basis.
- Information sharing systems are long-term strategies that require significant planning, cooperation, and funding.
- An implementation phase should immediately follow the planning stage in order to maximize the momentum created by the process.
- CWLA's Resource Center aids the planning process (consensus building, information dissemination, and collaboration building) by providing a source of information, consultation, and credibility.

### *Let's Start Children and Mothers & Children Together (St. Louis, MO)*

This collaborative planning team, consisting primarily of two groups in St. Louis, Missouri (*Let's Start* and *Mothers & Children Together*), was charged with developing a comprehensive plan for children of prisoners over an 18-month period. Other partners and anchor organizations of the collaborative planning team included: private/non-profits, state agencies, city agencies, and caregivers. The goal of the planning process was to provide leadership to a collaborative partnership in order to develop a plan to address gaps in services to children of prisoners. Specific issues to be addressed, as reported in the NIC Cooperative Agreement Summary, included: infrequent visitation due to the location of prisons, designated visiting times, and economic factors experienced by

caregivers; depriving an inmate of a visit from the children as a disciplinary measure; treatment centers that provide services to parents and children; coordinated transportation for children to visit their incarcerated parent; training staff at St. Louis Public Schools and the Division of Family Services to address the impact on children of separation, trauma, and stigmatization of parental incarceration; training service providers about Federal and state laws on child custody that affect incarcerated parents; improving interagency communication; case management of service delivery to ensure comprehensive wrap-around services; and, a community awareness campaign regarding issues children face when primary parent is incarcerated.

*Activities Accomplished/Lessons Learned*

According to the process evaluation conducted by Abram for M&CT (2003), the collaborative planning team was divided into four subgroups to further define specific planning objectives and develop detailed implementation plans. These subgroups were responsible for addressing specific goals and initiatives including: identification and tracking process for children; family reunification/transition services (for incarcerated women, children, and caregivers); researching and recommending intervention services for children, funding and respite for caregivers, coordinating communication between agencies; and supporting and enhancing the connection between children and their parent during incarceration. The program director developed the collaborative plan that was based on the planning team and subgroup discussions.

The planning team members were surveyed by the St. Louis University School of Social Service faculty 16 months into the project regarding their assessment of project tasks/activities completion, and who was also contracted to evaluate the collaborative

planning process. Findings indicated that approximately 50% of the respondents felt that the development of a plan to fill gaps of services that would result in comprehensive, wraparound services for children and caretakers, was completed or almost completed. Most respondents assessed activities such as designing a plan to address agency confidentiality policies that create barriers, designing a transportation plan for children and caretakers for visiting incarcerated parents, and designing a plan for coordinated communication between agencies, to be completed or partially completed. Most respondents (73%) indicated that they were not aware of the progress, or that there was little or no progress, towards designing and implementing a timeline for service delivery. They also expressed similar opinions regarding the lack of progress for developing a strategy to secure funding after federal funding was no longer available. Other challenges included inconsistent attendance at collaborative planning team meetings and no funding for implementation.

On the issue of future funding, staff members of *Mothers and Children Together* provided evidence that four grant applications had been submitted and that other potential sources for funding had been identified. Progress was made towards the objective of a public awareness campaign and included the Symposium on Children of Prisoners, held on March 14, 2003, which consisted of eight breakout sessions and 140 people in attendance. The goal of the symposium was to provide collaborators and the general public with information about the issues facing children of incarcerated parents and the services available. It also offered opportunities for people to get involved by helping to respond to the needs of children of incarcerated parents and/or to help secure funding to implement the collaboration plan. In addition, *Mothers and Children Together* staff co-

sponsored and helped facilitate the NIC videoconference on June 18, 2003, “Children of Prisoners: Children of Promise.” Staff also made a presentation to all supervisory staff at the Missouri Department of Corrections women’s facility and plan to regularly make presentations to all new intakes at the Women’s Eastern Reception Facility on parental rights and child custody issues. The findings of the process evaluation indicated that some planning team members lacked an understanding of how the planning process was connected to the entire project. Some of this lack of understanding was due in part to a lack of communication regarding progress on some tasks/activities. The following suggestions for improving the planning process were provided by team members to the evaluators:

- Procedures and responsibilities for planning by the members should be clarified.
- Productivity and reporting of progress should be increased.
- Attendance, commitment, and representation should be confirmed.
- Maintain paid staff by securing funding.

*PB&J Family Services (Albuquerque, NM)*

The goal of PB&J Family Service’s Planning Committee for Children of Prisoners (Working Group) was to develop the beginning of a structure for a case management system for children of prisoners. Objectives of this planning grant included: 1) gathering data to inform system development; 2) providing information and a forum for improving services for children of prisoners; 3) designing a case management system with specific goals including identification, coordination of services, and case management support; 4) designing a counseling and parent training program; 5)

designing an aftercare program to assist with reintegration (e.g., employment and housing); and, 6) development of program evaluation criteria to measure effectiveness of planning process and case management program.

#### *Activities Accomplished*

According to PB&J's process evaluation report to NIC (2003), the planning committee, primarily an existing group of state policymakers that were concerned about children of prisoners, met monthly to plan and gather information, and ultimately draft a structure for a case management system. They worked with state and community agencies to create the system. In order to gather data on children with incarcerated parents, PB&J Family Services conducted five focus groups with inmates (men and women); interviewed detained youth who are parents; surveyed 150 men and 120 women as they entered prison, about the circumstances and needs of their children; and conducted 46 interviews around the state with caretakers caring for 127 children whose parents were incarcerated. A summary of results of information was presented to two New Mexico state legislative committees and distributed to legislators. As a result, a state law was enacted that established a task force to focus on developing services for children of incarcerated parents. Additionally, PB&J is working with the Medicaid Bureau, as well as coordinating with state agencies, to connect children to existing services. Presentations regarding the outcomes were made at a New Mexico juvenile justice conference - "Call to Action: Juvenile Justice in New Mexico" - and at a Child Welfare League of America conference.

Modules for a potential case management system that addressed the identification of children, coordination of statewide services, and support for community non-profit

organizations were created as a result of the planning work. The potential system outlined: the issues, favorable and unfavorable factors of the process, responsibilities of members, and required action steps for full implementation.

### *Lessons Learned*

- Many changes in a complex system need to be made, one program cannot “fix” the problems.
- Currently, there is no existing central point of contact. Few children receive services from already existing programs and an improved case management system could really help.
- Schools have yet to focus on the issues of children of incarcerated parents. Closer relationships with school districts and Department of Education need to be developed.
- There is a lack of community services statewide, particularly in rural and frontier areas.
- Identification of children before their parents go to prison is a critical step.
- Development of policies and procedures that support family contact within prisons are challenging because prison and DOC staff are not trained on gender-responsive services, and generally do not see parenting or parent-friendly policies as an important issue.
- Prisoners do not always have positive relationships with their families.
- Funding for aftercare programs and alternatives to incarceration is limited.

### *Future Plans*

- Continue to disseminate research findings;

- Continue to work with state agencies to develop programs that address specific needs, including services that already exist; and,
- Develop community services.

#### *Pima Prevention Partnership (Tucson, AZ)*

The Children of Prisoners Planning Project's (Pima Prevention Partnership's planning team's) goal was to develop a comprehensive plan through a collaborative process for the delivery of services to children under 6 years old of incarcerated parents in Pima County, Tucson, Arizona. Objectives of this planning grant included: 1) developing a management team; 2) restructuring the existing Juvenile Services Coordinating Council Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents to meet project goals and objectives; 3) developing a comprehensive needs assessment; 4) presenting preliminary research findings and facilitating a process of input from a broad audience by hosting a regional conference; and, 5) developing an Action Agenda.

#### *Activities Accomplished/Lessons Learned*

As indicated in Pima Prevention Partnership's final report to NIC (2003), the project management team (including the project director, project manager, internal evaluator, and two chairpersons from the Juvenile Services Coordinating Council (JSCC)), was formed to oversee the planning process. The project management plan called for a collaborative team, therefore, members of the already existing JSCC Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents and representatives from other organizations that directly or indirectly support or serve children of incarcerated parents were invited to participate on the planning team (Working Group). A total of 35 organizations were



represented in the Working Group, including: schools, law enforcement, child welfare agencies, court systems, medical and behavior health, family services, prison advocates, and faith-based organizations. As the planning process developed, attendance increased from 67 attendees in the early part of the project, to 98 attendees at mid-stage, and up to 127 attendees at the conclusion of the project.

A comprehensive needs assessment report was developed based on collection of data regarding available programs and services, program observation, correctional policies, literature review, and “best practices research.” In addition, Working Group members conducted 60 structured interviews with law enforcement, courts, child welfare agencies, correctional facilities, mental health providers, social service agencies, and faith-based organizations. Also, three focus groups were conducted with parents who currently were, or had been, incarcerated and with caregivers of children of prisoners. As a result, a preliminary report, “Crisis for Children, Preliminary Needs Assessment,” was reprinted four times, and a total of 460 copies were distributed. Additionally, a brochure of available services for children of prisoners in Tucson, created with the Pima Community College, was distributed throughout Pima County. To further their objectives, the planning group hosted a regional conference to put regional and statewide attention on the issue of children of prisoners in June 2002 with 240 people in attendance. Eight task groups were formed to brainstorm ideas for implementation and impact to improve services for children of prisoners, where each group leader would participate with the Working Group to develop an action agenda over a three month period. The proposed recommendations report, “Action Agenda for Children of Prisoners in Pima County, Arizona, Draft of Recommendations,” was presented at a local stakeholders

conference in January 2003. The report provided information regarding the planning process; identified gaps in services for children of prisoners and their caregivers; outlined the process of “arrest to incarceration” in Pima County; and included recommendations for changes to the system, policies, as well as expansion of services. Produced in January 2003, it was widely distributed to conference participants, including state and local officials, service providers, school representatives, Working Group members, and other interested parties.

Members of the Working and Task Force groups were administered a participant satisfaction survey by their internal evaluator to measure the quality of the meetings and collaboration process. Of the 11 completed surveys that were returned, most respondents felt that the decisions made were reflective of the whole group and that the process of the groups was kept on track regarding the larger goals of the project. Some respondents indicated they wanted next action steps to be clearer.

#### Lessons Learned:

- The readiness of the JSCC Working Group helped facilitate the project’s success because much of the groundwork around the issues of children of incarcerated parents had already been initiated.
- Effective organizing and facilitation skills of influential community members on the Management Team helped to recruit other stakeholders and to have effective meetings.
- It is important to engage school representatives and to make planning meeting times work for participants. Conflict between work schedules and culture of

school staff and those who work in other fields poses challenges to comprehensive community collaboration.

- Making project participants aware of the objectives of the project and expectations of their roles helps issues of commitment, including an understanding and preparation of next steps.

### **Intervention Sites**

The intervention sites received three year grant awards from NIC to serve as demonstration sites to provide a full range of services for children of incarcerated parents. The goal of evaluation was to determine the factors that assisted or hindered program development of these sites, in order to identify promising intervention approaches. Because of the variability between sites, as well as the small number of sites, each intervention site was treated as a case study to assist in gathering information regarding the “hows” and “whys” of program development. The sites that received funding and provided intervention services under the funding category of Children of Prisoners Living in High Crime/High Incarceration Communities were: New Jersey Association on Correction: Future Links Program (Jersey City, New Jersey) and National Center for Children and Families: Family Ties Project (Washington, D.C.). Sites that provided services under funding for Children with Parents in Prison were: Families in Crisis, Inc.: *YES* Program (Hartford, Connecticut) and Center for Youth and Families: Family Matters Program (Little Rock, Arkansas). The sites that provided services to children under the category of Parents in Jail were: Catholic Community Services: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project (Juneau, Alaska) and Community Works: ROOTS Program, (San Francisco, California).

## **NCCD Evaluation Overview**

The initial goals of the evaluation were to administer process and outcome evaluations of the projects regarding the services provided to the children and the impact of the services on the child. The first year's evaluation report indicated several factors that made these types of evaluations difficult, if not impossible. Some of these factors were: (1) the short duration of the grant period, (2) the lack of data, (3) variation of services and program design across sites, and (4) the small number of funded programs. Consequently, a decision was made by CWLA and NCCD in March 2003 (Year 2), to change the focus of the evaluations from an evaluation of outcome/impact of the children to an evaluation of the program/project development across sites. NCCD chose a flexible method of assisting sites in their program evaluations known as Empowerment Evaluation (Fetterman, 2001). Empowerment Evaluation continued to serve as the guiding method behind NCCD's technical assistance to the overall process evaluation. The method provides for the programs to be a part of and to gain ongoing information from the evaluation.

### **Goals and Objectives of Evaluation**

The goals of this evaluation effort were to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in continuing, or developing, as well as implementing programs that work with children of incarcerated parents.

The objectives of the evaluations were to:

- Gather and analyze process data
  - These data were gathered using:

- the Empowerment model,
  - site visits, and
  - interviews.
- Gather and analyze outcome data
  - These data were gathered using:
    - the Empowerment model,
    - site visits, and
    - interviews.
- Document challenges and successes of programs.
- Report lessons learned by programs providing services to children of incarcerated parents.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the common program implementation goals established by the sites?
  - a. Do they vary based upon whether the program/project was new or was pre-existing prior to the NIC funding?
2. Is there a correlation between (a) how well the programs adhered to their established goals, objectives, strategies, and activities and (b) how successful they were in implementing their program?
3. What were some common challenges faced by the sites?
4. How were the common challenges addressed?
5. What were some unique challenges faced by the sites?
6. How were the unique challenges addressed?

7. Are there “best practices” that can be derived from the study? If so, what are they?
8. Are there factors that challenge the implementation of the project? If so, what are they?
9. What factors appear to be correlated with the sustainability of the projects?

### **Methodology/Strategies**

The Empowerment model uses qualitative and quantitative evaluation techniques to facilitate program improvements, and provides useful information to the site regarding their progress, and indicates if revisions to their implementation plan may be needed. The projects personnel were trained to complete the Empowerment matrices in Year 1. NCCD worked with each site to understand the change in focus of the evaluation and, where necessary, to assist them in revising their matrices. The matrices reflect start up, early implementation, and mid-implementation periods. In most cases, these periods coincide with Years 1, 2, and 3 of funding, respectively.

NCCD’s strategies for accomplishing the evaluation consisted of: conducting site visits; collecting and analyzing data from matrices, progress reports, and indicators/documentation; as well as, conducting follow-up telephone conferences and providing technical assistance to sites with regard to NCCD’s evaluation. The Empowerment matrices and the site progress reports served as the primary sources of data collection. The matrices included information regarding: program development goals, objectives, activities, and expected outcomes. They also included indicators

established by the sites that inform the status of each objective and are directly linked to the progress reports. The progress reports were prepared and provided by the sites to NCCD to document the level of achievement for each of the sites' objectives. The reports also included information regarding challenges faced and strategies used to overcome obstacles, whether the site was ready to move into their self- established next stage, as well as, issues regarding sustainability.

### *Site visits*

Site visits were an important part of our process for gathering information. Meeting with staff in the environment of their projects was crucial. We visited the sites, met with staff to get a sense of the qualitative aspects of each program, and, when possible, toured their facilities and/or observed several project activities.

The objectives of site visits in Year 2 and Year 3 were to:

- Acquaint site personnel with NCCD staff conducting the evaluation.
- Discuss the refocus of the evaluation from outcome to project development.
- Review the Empowerment Evaluation model.
- Review latest matrices and progress reports provided by the site to NCCD and to discuss update.
- Gather information regarding pre-and mid-stage implementation of programs.
- Discuss objectives/activities related to future program development
- Discuss future reporting process.
- Provide technical assistance related to NCCD's evaluation.

Some of the areas of discussion during the visits included:

1. Prior to receiving funding, what was the impetus of the grantee to provide services to children of incarcerated parents?
2. For sites that began with similar or existing projects, how did the NIC funding assist them? Did the funding have an impact on program operations, including mission, goals, and objectives?
3. For sites that developed new projects with the funding, what role did the money play in the program development?
4. What factors, forces, and influences affected the development of programming for children of incarcerated parents?
5. How did the program development/design evolve each year of funding?
6. What were some of the lessons learned? What kinds of linkages either helped or hindered program development?
7. What were some of the challenges faced by sites working to implement their programs (including staffing, finances, stakeholders and collaborations, program linkages, environment, resources, target population/families)?
8. What were the overall impressions of the project's development? Did they feel they met their expected outcomes? What challenges did they face? Were they unexpected or predicted? How did they address them?
9. Were the project's successes and support predicted? How were they successful in their project development? What had they wished they'd known at the outset of the project/program?
10. What were some of your lessons learned in the following areas?



- Planning
- Recruitment
- Direct Service (children/incarcerated parents/caregivers)
- Staffing
- Community Engagement/collaborations
- Environment (Support/Buy-in)

11. Project Sustainability: Will the project continue after NIC funding? What are the future plans?

***Ongoing Technical Assistance***

NCCD provided technical assistance to the sites only as it was related to the evaluation process. The goal was to increase their understanding and comfort level in the evaluation process so that they could provide the data to NCCD. NCCD did the following:

- Maintained relationships with sites through email and telephone.
- Conducted follow-up and conference calls with program staff to review information and answer questions.
- Collected program level data that describes processes involved in developing or implementing programs through updated matrices and progress reports submitted by the sites to NCCD.

**NCCD Activities Accomplished**

In Year 1, NCCD chose the Empowerment Evaluation approach designed to allow sites to help themselves by using a form of self-evaluation and reflection in order to

improve their programs (Fetterman, 2001). Our goal was to train sites to use the matrices, collect their identified data, and provide technical assistance as needed. In addition, we collected outcome data. Each site outlined their goals and objectives and expected outcomes, clearly laying out activities that needed to be undertaken, by whom and by when. This type of evaluation/matrix allowed sites to make changes to objectives as needed, and to identify and submit evidence required to document progress toward their goals. However, the Empowerment Evaluation method still allows for an independent evaluation.

In March 2003, a decision was made by CWLA and NCCD (Year 2), to change the focus of the evaluations from an evaluation of outcome/impact to an evaluation of the program/project development across sites. An amendment reflecting the new terms of the contract between NCCD and CWLA was signed in September 2003, at which point NCCD began to implement the changes in the evaluation. It should be noted that the change in the evaluation focus did not impact the grantees' administration and implementation of their projects. NCCD conducted site visits with the *YES* Program (Hartford, Connecticut), Family Ties Program (Washington, D.C.), and with Future Links Program (Jersey City, New Jersey). NCCD held conference calls with the remaining sites, Catholic Community Services (Juneau, Alaska), Roots Program (San Francisco, California), and with Family Matters (Little Rock, Arkansas) to discuss issues noted above.

In Year 3, NCCD conducted the final site visits and conducted follow-up calls with all sites regarding their progress and documentation. Additionally, NCCD presented preliminary findings to the CWLA Children of Prisoners Federal Resource Center

Advisory Board Meeting in February 2004. In preparation for the final report, NCCD began to analyze and discuss data collected from the sites.

### **Challenges Faced by NCCD**

In the first year, conducting an outcome evaluation was a challenge because of the short duration of the grant period, the lack of data, the small number of sites, and the variation of services and program design across sites. This was addressed in Year 2 when the evaluation focus shifted to evaluation of program development in order to increase our knowledge in the field about what is required to work with children and families separated by parental incarceration. Another challenge was that the demonstration projects were located throughout the country from as far west as Alaska to as far east as Connecticut and Washington, D.C. NCCD had to work around different time zones in order to communicate telephonically. We also experienced some apprehension and lack of understanding from some program staff regarding empowerment evaluation and the shift. Many program staff had not previously been involved in their own evaluations. They felt we were judging their progress. We had to gain program staff trust so that they would share information regarding challenges and lessons learned. Another challenge for the evaluation was collecting ongoing information from a designated staff person at each site. Many sites were stretched to or beyond their capacity with few funding resources. We found that some staff were required to assume the responsibility of more than one position under the parent organization. However, we were able to schedule conference calls in advance to allow staff to plan accordingly. Finally, it was a challenge to explain to people that NCCD could only provide technical assistance regarding the process

evaluation components as opposed to technical assistance regarding the programmatic content of the subject matter.

### **NCCD Data Collection-Empowerment Evaluation Model Overview**

NCCD collected data using the Empowerment Evaluation method. This method allows for staff to participate in their demonstration site's evaluation. Some of the benefits of Empowerment Evaluation include:

- Staff that are implementing the program are enabled to learn from the process and take action to improve their programs through self-evaluation and reflection.
- Staff are able to define their own indicators of success and timeframes that are realistic. For example, staff were asked to outline the objectives and planned activities for each phase of development (i.e., start-up, early implementation, and implementation). Staff indicated their expected outcomes, indicators that would document progress, and included a timeframe for completion of each activity for each phase of development.
- Changes to objectives and activities can occur which can be reflective of lessons learned, unanticipated developments, challenges, skills, etc.
- Allows programs to conduct their own internal evaluations to get feedback from clients regarding satisfaction with services provided and or to develop internal methods of collecting useful data.

The data collected by NCCD was used to better understand the program implementation process of each site. Case studies were developed for each intervention site to provide detailed information regarding their three year activities, the challenges

they experienced and how they were addressed, factors that facilitated and/or hindered program development, as well as, their lessons learned.

## **Case Studies**

The following section chronicles the Year 3 activities involved in the implementation and development of each intervention site's projects/programs to provide services to children of incarcerated parents. These intervention sites employ several components of effective practices for working with children of incarcerated parents. While some have shared goals and strategies, each site also offers unique contributions to understanding the work with children of incarcerated parents and the families represented by these sites. The case study approach was selected because of the many variabilities among the sites, as discussed earlier. Further, it would be inappropriate to compare sites to each other given their unique program components.

The case study approach will summarize the evolvment of each program, including initial stage of development, its impetus for providing services, and unique background information. Each case study will also outline the program goals and objectives, highlighting activities and outcomes accomplished. Additionally, each case study will discuss factors that facilitated their implementation process as well as the challenges faced, including how sites addressed their challenges. The information gathered for each case study is reflective of program matrices, progress reports, indicators of progress, and communications with staff.

Funding Category: Children of Prisoners Living in High Crime/High Incarceration  
Communities

**CASE STUDY 1: National Center for Children and Families, Family Ties Program  
(Washington, D.C.)**

**Background:**

The Family Ties Program (FTP) is a part of the parent organization: National Center for Children and Families (NCCF). Although FTP began in 2001, NCCF programs have been operating since 1914. NCCF has various locations in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

While operating under the parent organization, NCCF, staff observed a hidden group of children who were impacted by parental incarceration. These children were being served under the parent organization in areas such as therapeutic foster care, school-based projects, and through services provided to women whose partners were incarcerated. The data indicated a large number of children were affected by parental incarceration. This information was shared with a public agency that services the needs of a group of youth charged with delinquent acts, many of whom were also impacted by parental incarceration. Attention to this group of children led to the development of the Family Ties Project and thus, was the impetus to provide services to children of incarcerated parents prior to receiving funding from NIC.

FTP serves as a referral base within the parent organization to provide services for children of incarcerated parents. The goal is to establish and effectively implement a collaborative, inter-agency design for the systemic delivery of services to children ages 6-

12 who reside in a high crime community and who are at-risk for or exposed to parental incarceration. The program is designed to serve children in the District of Columbia's Wards 7 and 8 (eastern half of the city). These high crime areas have a high rate of child abuse, child neglect, and infant mortality. In addition, the community experiences high rates of drug abuse, juvenile crime, and residents who are in prison or under correctional supervision. The Black population in Washington, D.C. is approximately 60%, and Black children account for 75% of the child population in D.C. However, Black men represent more than 90% of the prison population. This overrepresentation impacts their children and families.

### **Objectives and Activities Accomplished**

Funding from NIC helped support the planning stages of developing a program that was already working with the target families to serve children living in a high crime community, who are at risk for or exposed to parental incarceration. In the first year, a collaborative partnership of 17 public and private sector leaders and faith-based organizations was established. In addition, five consumer consultants were recruited (including four caregivers and one ex-offender). As a result, three subcommittees were formed (Symposium Planning, Resource Development, and Program Refinement/Evaluation) to assist in the development of FTP. Early in the planning stages, FTP identified and established a contract with an external program evaluator. The evaluation consultant created instruments such as intake forms, exit forms, and caregiver and youth satisfaction surveys that were approved by the CWLA IRB for their internal process evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The IRB refers to the Institutional Review Board of CWLA that is charged with reviewing procedures and documents used in collecting information from children and families to ensure that privacy and

In the second half of the first year, the Program Refinement and Evaluation Subcommittee held monthly meetings to define eligibility criteria for the target population; create job descriptions and hire a child assessment specialist. They also identified service providers and service gaps that served as the basis for a resource directory and reviewed articles to identify best practice models. In addition, an assessment instrument and focus group questionnaires were finalized. These instruments would later be used to collect information from families that were referred for assessment. Simultaneously, the Resource Development Subcommittee met during the full monthly partnership meetings to review and explore strategies for resource development and sustainability.

The Symposium Committee held a strategic pre planning meeting to discuss logistics of the symposium. This included: identifying a location for the symposium, designing sessions, identifying and inviting presenters and guests, developing a budget, and preparing public relations material for the symposium. The end of Year 1 culminated with a colloquium entitled, “Parental Incarceration: Economic, Moral and Social Fallout for Urban African American Children and Youth.” The colloquium was attended by 75 people including: service providers, community leaders, foundations, and local and federal government representatives. The goals of the colloquium were to raise policymaker and professional awareness of the growing number of children affected by incarceration and about their challenges and needs for services and supports. Baseline information from the first year of the project was presented to expand stakeholder investment for the following two years of implementation. The information from the colloquium was used to draft a position paper regarding the services to children exposed

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confidentiality of information is maintained. Additionally, the IRB protects the rights and welfare of research subjects.



to high levels of crime and parental incarceration, with implications for resource development and community awareness.

The second year of funding focused on the recruitment and assessment of children from the target population. Staff contacted schools, community-based organizations, and churches with information packets to enroll children. Assessments and service plans were completed for each child. These individualized case plans/service plans included referrals for family services such as: family and individual therapy, mentoring, tutoring, summer programming, clothing, hygiene, school supplies, and related needs. To date, there have been 152 children and 71 families served by FTP.

After interviewing children, families, representatives from partner agencies, and researching community resources, service gaps were identified. Service needs included: mentoring and support groups, mental health services, structured activities, transportation, education assistance, and tutoring. As a result, a printed resource guide was developed and distributed to all families to connect them with available services.

In addition, the information gained from partner agencies and advisory groups proved helpful in service delivery as well as for resource development and community education planning. To get feedback, a survey was developed and used to interview partner agencies about their needs. Most people who responded agreed that the partnership throughout the planning year met their organization's expectations and felt that they accomplished the goals of the first year.

Program staff continued exploring resources and sustainability as well as submitting letters of inquiry for funding opportunities. In order to keep engaging the community, several presentations were conducted that provided an overview of

assessment data, knowledge acquired throughout the planning process, and recommendations from the colloquium. This information was analyzed and presented at several conferences in the local area as well as through more than one published series of three articles for the Metro Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (NASW).

### **Challenges and how addressed**

In Year 1, it was planned to conduct assessment of families to develop a plan for connecting families with services. However, this proved difficult when staff identified immediate services needed for families. This issue was addressed by providing immediate services to families earlier than anticipated in the development process. This change, gave staff an opportunity to learn more about the population and include the knowledge in program development. Another challenge that was presented to staff was initial resistance from the target groups about sharing their individual circumstances. This was addressed by offering an initial stipend of fifty dollars to participate in the assessment process. Another challenge faced by the FTP was not having the community resources to provide the most highly requested service (mentoring). This was addressed through a continued effort to identify available intensive services for children and also by applying for additional mentoring grants.

### **Factors that facilitated the implementation process**

- The colloquium, “Our City Under Siege: Overcoming the Hidden Costs of Incarceration on Urban Childhood” helped begin the conversation about the needs of children and helped to bring partners together.

- The National Center for Children and Families (Parent organization) had credibility for providing services to families and relationships which helped make inroads with partners.
- Program staff had knowledge of the multiplicity of problems faced by families and children through previous work with other programs of the parent organization. Focus groups and work with parents (as informal resources) helped to better inform staff through a variety of input.
- The development of a 65 page resource guide that includes emergency housing assistance, mental health/health services, job preparation/placement, mentoring, educational services, support groups, utility assistance, recreational activities, food banks, and clothes closets helped connect families with available resources early in the process.

#### **Factor that may have impeded program development**

- Funding was an issue that led to not having enough staff to do the amount/quality of outreach in the community, including attending many community meetings.

#### **Lessons Learned**

- When children are served, there must be a parallel process of resources for caregivers and families. There are multiple layers of problems and needs for children and caregivers (many of whom are older and financially challenged). It is important to build support for referral services such as housing and financial assistance for the caregivers.

- Additional staffing, particularly a child assessment specialist, is needed to provide services to a large target population.
- Community partnerships have recognized the significance of informing the community and increasing policymaker and professional awareness about the issues. Because of this, staff will continue to look for opportunities to make presentations.

### **Future plans**

FTP has received a no-cost extension from NIC to continue to provide multiple services (e.g., caregiver support groups, parenting group) through June 2005. The staff will continue ongoing research for new funding opportunities. As of the writing of this report, there are two outstanding proposals submitted to foundations to expand services that will include therapeutic support groups at public schools in Wards 7 and 8. Participation in these support groups is expected to produce an increase in self-esteem, self confidence, and self control outcomes for the 30 children of incarcerated parents. It is the goal of staff to institutionalize the Program to be a resource for children and families affected by incarceration in the D.C. area. Plans include involving the clients and parents in planning for what services should be offered by FTP to best serve their needs. FTP will work with a local child advocacy organization to develop strategies for reaching out to the community and plans to present the third year data to the original colloquium audience of service providers, community leaders, foundations, and local and federal government representatives.

## **CASE STUDY 2: New Jersey Association on Correction, Future Links Project (Jersey City, NJ).**

### **Background**

The New Jersey Association on Correction (NJAC) is a nonprofit organization that has been in existence for 40 years. The NJAC has residential programs as well as out-client programs that serve adults, juveniles, ex-offenders, victims of crime, and people living with HIV. In addition, NJAC has two residential recovery programs that serve mothers with children under age 5, as well as two domestic violence shelters that house mothers with children of any age. Future Links is a new project, primarily an after-school program working with different ages through group interventions. The program serves the Jersey City, New Jersey (Hudson County) area while the main office of the NJAC is located in Trenton, New Jersey.

Jersey City is the second largest city in New Jersey and has the third highest crime rate of the state. It is demographically and culturally diverse. It is estimated that there are more than 4,000 children in Hudson County with an incarcerated parent in the state prison system or county jail. Prior to the development of Future Links, there were no specialized services offered to children of incarcerated parents in Jersey City. While serving the needs of many adults, NJAC realized that the needs of many of their children were not being met. NJAC sought funding to develop a program for the children. Specifically, they wanted to develop a program that would be a natural extension of their work and that would provide services to children of incarcerated parents.

The NJAC had worked many years with families impacted by incarceration, but this would mark the first time a program was centered around children of incarcerated

parents. The goal of Future Links is to mitigate the risk factors for children, particularly those with incarcerated parents, who live in a high crime area in Jersey City. The program was housed in an urban residential area and provided services in an after-school setting for the children. While some of the participating children did not have incarcerated parents, they were all members of the high crime community.

### **Objectives and Activities Accomplished**

In the first year of development, program staff secured a site for service delivery (offering 1,075 square feet of space which belonged to the Friends of Lifers). The executive director of Friends of Lifers was a member of the NJAC board who had strong credibility in Jersey City. The goal was to outreach to children between the ages of 6-10 who resided in Jersey City in order to reduce the cycle of intergenerational incarceration and to mitigate the detrimental effects of living in a high crime community. Two full time case managers were hired to help recruit youth into the program, market the program in the community, and provide case management services to children and their caregivers. Additionally, necessary equipment, furniture and program supplies were purchased. Administrative and program staff reached out to service providers and schools to market the program and recruit a target group of youth by distributing program flyers, attending meetings, making contact with local elementary school social workers. Outreach to local families was done by distributing flyers at local stores, laundromats, welfare office, and announcing the program in a local newspaper. Staff also held an open house to introduce the program to the community parents and other service providers. Within three months of initiating recruitment, the group component of the program had reached capacity.

During this time, forms were also designed to gather information to work with and evaluate the changes in children that participated in Future Links.

In the second year of funding, enrolled youth completed intake paperwork through interviews and were organized into different activity groups by age. Group activities were planned and implemented. Groups were held four days a week and consisted of curriculum-based groups (e.g., conflict resolution, assertive communication, peer pressure, problem solving, decision making). Additionally, age appropriate prevention/educational activities were conducted with each group. Staff acknowledged that it could be beneficial to have had a separate group for children to be free to discuss issues of parental incarceration with other children experiencing similar issues, but it would have been difficult to confidentially separate youth from the original group of peers.

Future Links assumed expenses such as providing snacks for all participants and covering the costs of field trip activities. One unanticipated challenge was that program staff were uncomfortable driving a large van. This challenge was addressed by providing training to staff and by using a smaller agency van, if possible, when smaller groups were attending a field trip, or by planning trips that were closer to the program when the larger van was required. There were educational field trips (to museums, science center, and new library) as well as cultural field trips (to the art center, symphony, and local community). Staff acknowledged that many children did not know much about their city and some had never been outside their communities.

The Future Links grant required that the program provide services to children living in a high risk area affected by incarceration. It was a further objective of Future

Links to identify youth with an incarcerated parent in order to provide case management services and caregiver support groups to affected families. Youth that had an incarcerated parent were identified at intake, through a referral source or later through disclosures made during group sessions. There were not as many youth with incarcerated parents as expected, and developing relationships with caretakers of those children who were affected by incarceration proved difficult in the first year of programming.

By the third year of implementation, eight families with at least one incarcerated parent were enrolled in case management services. Program staff would privately discuss the case management services with the caretaker and obtain their consent to participate as well as to conduct a family assessment. The original goal was to provide services to 24 children of incarcerated parents and their families. The initial plan was that program staff along with the mental health consultant would meet with the caretaker and children at least monthly to develop a case plan with the family, and to connect families with community resources. However, many caretakers did not embrace the idea of being personally involved with the program either because it was not a priority for them or they felt overwhelmed. However, they did support the program concept and the fact that services were being provided to the children.

By this time, Future Links had established partnerships with a dance studio, computer lab, local health center, and local YMCA and Board of Education for after-school programs. Additionally, mental health resources at the local clinic were identified by staff. Another objective of Future Links was to facilitate, when appropriate, contact between children in case management and their incarcerated parent. The goal of this objective was for children to increase the level of contact with their incarcerated parent.



To do this, the program staff and the mental health consultant worked with caretakers to talk about the potential benefits of contact in order to minimize apprehension. They also worked individually with the children when appropriate to write or call incarcerated parents. Additionally, mental health counseling related to parental incarceration was available to families. Staff were also available to help address barriers to visitation. In Year 3, weekly trips to the local prison and county jails were available during the summer months. During the school season, weekend trips to visit incarcerated parents were coordinated.

Another objective of the third year of implementation was to develop and facilitate caretaker support groups. First, staff conducted caretaker focus groups to learn about the types of support needed in order to develop ways to meet their needs on a monthly basis. The peer support group was marketed to families participating in case management services, with incentives for participation. In order to make inroads with the caretakers, gift certificates to be used at stores around the community were given in exchange for their participation.

### **Challenges and how addressed**

One of the challenges for Future Links has been the issue of having space to operate the program. They have moved three times since the project was developed. First, Future Links was housed with the Friends of Lifers, an informal organization that pursued entrepreneurship in the community. Future Links then moved to a new space provided by the Urban League, but their pre-lease agreement was never made officially permanent. To address this issue, Future Links secured a permanent location housed within a newly built community center. The center provided several community services

where staff could continue to network and cross-referral with other programs. The locations were within blocks of one another, and while staff and children needed to get used to the new spaces, it did not affect retention of the children from the neighborhood.

Future Links experienced staff turnover and training issues. In the first year, two case managers were hired, but one left after five months. The senior case manager was consistent for the first two years of the program, but the replacement case manager resigned, leaving the position vacant in Year 3 for two months. The senior case manager resigned in the beginning of Year 3, and a staff person was promoted from another NJAC program to replace her. Also, a qualified mental health consultant could not be hired for the designated wage/hours. This issue was addressed by hiring a current full-time NJAC (internal) employee in Year 3 to serve as the mental health consultant, and her hours were in addition to her current position.

While NJAC had several programs throughout New Jersey, they had no programs in Jersey City. However, staff attended local meetings and participated in public community education activities. They established new relationships with the local community, including developing a solid relationship with the Board of Education. In regards to training and supporting remote staff, the NJAC had to address the staff logistics related to interoffice communications as well as supervision. They did not want program remote staff to feel isolated from the agency. This was addressed by providing cross-training to staff regarding working with the prison and with caretakers as well as providing support.

Staff also experienced resistance from caretakers. Caretaker support groups began in the third year of implementation with a small group of participants. Many caretakers

had other responsibilities and did not give these types of meetings a high priority. Staff used incentives such as gift certificates and planning day trips for caretakers and children to attend. Additionally, staff searched for ways to continue conversations and educate caretakers to change beliefs/attitudes in order for children to benefit from services and to have a relationship with their incarcerated parent. Staff found that using a child centered approach worked best for ensuring support from the caregivers.

The home-based case management component for families affected by incarceration has been a challenge. While it was anticipated that having culturally competent staff of the same race as target families would make it easier to connect with the families to provide home-based services, this remained a challenge. There were no home visits conducted. Instead, families used staff as a source for referrals and to provide advocacy on their behalf at the program office. Caretakers did not want staff inside their homes or near their neighborhoods because of the stigma attached. While staff had planned and implemented using incentives for caretakers to participate in support groups, there were few incentives built in for caretakers to participate in intensive case management and goal planning. Even some children who participated in the program, preferred to be dropped off around the corner rather than in front of their homes. This challenge was addressed by redesigning the office space with partitions for private counseling space so that families could participate in available case management services onsite.

### **Factors that facilitated the implementation process for Future Links**

- The NJAC (parent organization) is a recognized organization within the corrections community and has established access to facilities. The existence of these prior relationships and access, helped staff coordinate visiting trips for the children.
- There was a concurrent local political movement and support for reconnecting incarcerated mothers with their children.

### **Factors that may have impeded program development**

- Securing permanent space was a factor in the development process. Staff moved offices (and space for children to meet) three times until they secured permanent space. Staff wished they would have had a permanent home from the beginning for the children.
- In the early implementation process, there were many staffing changes in addition to difficulty in securing a qualified/professional mental health consultant willing to do the required work for the designated wage/hours.
- IRB approval held up initial enrollment of youth.
- Case management services were expected to be provided for 24 children of incarcerated parents. However, not as many enrolled children had incarcerated parents as anticipated (11 children). This number may have been greater if youth who had ever been affected by parental incarceration were tracked.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Signing a lease for space ensured stability to the program.

- Because it was a new program in an unfamiliar community, staff should have anticipated more planning resources for the early stages of the grant in order to stabilize the program.
- Gathering input from the clients of services is very important.
- Some families that receive services are not convinced of the benefits of maintaining a relationship with the incarcerated parent. Some families are not willing to participate in all of the available services.
- Staff need to plan for incentives and other strategies to conduct support groups for caretakers who do not prioritize these activities or who do not have time.
- Services must be culturally appropriate, sensitive, and delivered in a non-judgmental manner. Staff must also have training and skills to initiate conversations about difficult and sensitive issues in non-threatening ways.

### **Future Plans**

The NJAC will move Future Links staff to other comparable positions within the parent organization if funding is not sustained. Staff will continue to look for additional funding in order to continue the program and expand, if possible.

### Funding Category: Children with Parents in Prison

### **CASE STUDY 3: Families in Crisis, Inc.: The *YES* Program (Hartford, CT)**

#### **Background**

Families in Crisis, Inc. (FIC), founded in 1977, provides counseling and support services to offenders and their families. Services include but are not limited to

counseling, family reunification programs, domestic violence offender intervention services, life skills training, visitor transportation, children's prevention programs, and parenting programs. Services are provided at correctional facilities, superior courts, alternatives to incarceration programs, agency offices, and in client communities and homes.

Prior to receiving funding from NIC, services were being provided to families with the hope that intervention efforts would impact their children. Staff learned that while serving families, they were predominately serving children, and many times, all the children of an incarcerated parent. The agency wanted to directly focus on providing services to the children of incarcerated parents through an after-school program.

The Youth Enrichment Services (*YES*) Program, under FIC, is a collaborative effort to address the special problems and needs of children of prisoners in Hartford, Connecticut. Initial support from the United Way helped the program open its first *YES* model site in 1998. Children enrolled in the *YES* Program receive case management and participate in child stabilization activities that include: tutoring, counseling, and recreational activities. The *YES* Program also provides services to the community family/caregiver, facilitates contact between the child and their incarcerated parent, and assists families with reunification plans.

### **Objectives and Activities Accomplished**

The NIC grant helped to expand the services that were already being offered and allowed FIC to fully develop their service model at two locations. The *YES* Program was able to secure a lease for a second site in the north part of Hartford, Connecticut,

increasing the ability to serve more children and families. Prior to funding, the *YES* Program provided services to 26 children; with new funding they have been able to provide services to 55 children and their families annually.

Some of the unmet needs that were identified early, including: transportation, staffing, and resources, were addressed with the help of NIC funding. The *YES* staff learned the importance of establishing a relationship with correctional facilities in order to gain access to incarcerated parents. With NIC funding, the *YES* Program was able to employ a full-time child care coordinator, part-time driver, and a family therapist. Additionally, the funding allowed the *YES* Program to coordinate and train undergraduate interdisciplinary college students in the community (e.g., University of Connecticut, Central Connecticut State University, St. Josephs College, and Manchester Community College) to serve as volunteer mentors/tutors in their program.

After the first year of implementation, there were changes in the definition of eligibility criteria for children. Staff learned that many of the children were “fatherless” prior to the incarceration of their male parent. For this reason, the *YES* Program chose to focus case management services on children who had an existing relationship with their incarcerated parent as well as with families where the parent/caregiver in the community wanted the relationship with the incarcerated parent to continue.

By the second year of implementation, the *YES* Program was operating at full capacity. A comprehensive summer program was developed which included: a daily schedule, cultural and recreational activities, camp referrals and placement, counseling, and case management for each family. Weekly peer support/social building groups were held for children as well as field trips and recreational arts and crafts projects. College

students provided one-on-one tutorial services for each child in the *YES* Program at the computer labs located at each site. Program counselors designed educational programs for students based on areas of greatest need (as identified by their school teachers). Counselors also monitored school progress on a quarterly basis, both for behavior as well as academics.

Parent education sessions were available and were provided to eight parents who requested assistance in learning new skills to interact with school personnel. Program counselors provided support for parents by attending school meetings with them, explaining school policies, and helping them learn how to advocate for their children. Newsletters were also distributed to families regarding community resources available. In addition, home visits were conducted by a family therapist with the caretakers to assess and address economic and emotional needs in order to improve quality of life. Staff also met with incarcerated parents as necessary to assist with reunification issues and with parent/child matters. During the third year of implementation, the *YES* Program had served 55 children, 37 community caregivers, and 28 incarcerated parents.

Collaborations with other agencies helped to provide direct services including mentoring for each child (Big Brothers Big Sisters, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Hartford), basic food and household products for families (Foodshare, Inc.), and access to correctional facilities (Connecticut Department of Corrections).

### **Challenges and how addressed**

One of the challenges faced by the *YES* Program was that incarcerated parents were located throughout many different correctional facilities in Connecticut. Staff could



not deliver parenting classes in every correctional facility or have direct contact with every parent because there were not enough resources. Therefore, incarcerated parents were informed periodically of their child's progress in the program. Staff worked with the DOC to place offender parents in the same security levels, when possible. Additionally, staff relied on each facility to prioritize available programming such as: parenting groups and substance abuse education for the identified incarcerated parents.

There were also ongoing challenges regarding the time involved in recruiting children for the program. Staff learned that the recruitment process needs to begin early, allocating time to track down families in the community and market the program. During the first two years, only one of three referrals entered the *YES* Program. In the third year, this challenge was alleviated by working with a mentoring program and recruiting eligible children from other FIC programs. Additionally, staff also recruited children directly from prisoners. This information, however, required much legwork, including tracking down the caregiver, when many times the contact information was incorrect.

Another challenge was adequate staffing. At the beginning of the Program, the initial compensation package was not attractive enough to recruit and retain qualified staff. This was addressed by providing a competitive, compensation/benefits package and hiring a more qualified, mature, masters level staff person. Staff were also required to receive 40 hours of annual training. Staff received program orientation training, first aid and CPR training, mandated reporting training, management techniques, and issue related training including: adolescent development, domestic violence, and parent incarceration and effects on children.

### **Factors that facilitated implementation**

- National attention on children of incarcerated parents trickled down to state level making it easier to promote the program and to get funding for services.
- The availability of federal and local mentoring grants enabled each child in the *YES* program to be matched with a mentor without a long waiting time.
- Focus groups with parents had been conducted which helped identify and address the needs of children of incarcerated parents.

### **Factors that impeded implementation**

- The *YES* program did not have adequate staffing at the beginning of the program. This was addressed by hiring a more qualified, mature, masters level staff person for a competitive, compensation/benefits package.
- Connecticut has numerous correctional facilities with many different security levels. Because fathers whose children were in the program were not able to be in one prison, it was costly to provide services to all fathers located throughout the state. Coordinating transportation and working with limited resources impeded the ability to facilitate services to all the prisons.
- The lack of funding for operational support was another factor that impeded development. United Way, one of the Program's major funders, cut programming support by 16%. Currently, FIC is working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to fund the program through a state contract. However, DCF is experiencing internal issues that include frequent turnover and transitional changes which are affecting the decision making process. FIC has submitted

letters of support for programming from child advocates, the Mayor, and the Department of Corrections to assist with funding from DCF.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Recruiting children and building good relationships with collaboration partners requires a lot of resources and time.
- In order to be more effective, staff should possess child behavioral management skills, be culturally competent in order to engage and work with parents, and understand parenting and prison issues. In addition, staff should have previous experience managing program operations, and academically and socially able to supervise volunteers. Good staff stabilize programs.
- Volunteers need to be recruited, screened, and trained. Volunteers tend to require more time and resources from staff. However, when volunteers/tutors are appropriately supervised, they can be very effective. Volunteers should be screened for their ability to interact with children and level of cultural competence.
- Operating intensive, effective programs for children of incarcerated parents can be expensive, but offer much more quality services for the families served.

### **Future Plans**

If the *YES* Program is not funded, it is probable that services will be downsized and only provided at one site—preferably the satellite office in the north end of Hartford. FIC’s Board has made a strong commitment to continue to raise operating support. To

date, financial support is pending from the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) for FIC to provide contractual services to the target population. Staff are also working on securing a grant to work with a community based organization to provide services for mothers in prison. They are also looking for matching funds to secure additional mentoring grants.

#### **CASE STUDY 4: Centers for Youth and Families: Family Matters Program (Little Rock, AR)**

##### **Background**

The Family Matters Program (Family Matters) is a modification of the original Family Matters I Program that began in 1994-95. The Center for Youth and Families (CYF) administers a parenting from prison educational program as well as an *Even Start Family Literacy and Family Services* for prisoners and their families. Family Matters operates under the auspices of the Parent Center, a division within CYF, which has been in existence for over 20 years. Today, Family Matters recruits mothers from the prison program at the McPherson Maximum Security Unit for Women and provides services to their children and caregivers who live in Central Arkansas. The Family Matters model incorporates components of multi-systemic therapy and assertive community treatment at the service delivery level.

In 1994, Family Matters was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation to conduct a needs assessment for the families they were serving. The needs assessment confirmed that incarcerated mothers needed support for their families. Clients would ask Family

Matters staff to visit with their children and caregivers. Between 1997 and 2000, Family Matters had served 75 families. Staff were seeing children in clinical groups and billing Medicaid for providing the services. Additionally, Family Matters was also serving relatives of the children, showing that the impact of incarceration extends beyond the children themselves. There was no funding for the period between 2000 and 2001, but services to children of Family Matters clients continued on a part-time, volunteer basis. The Family Matters Program sought NIC funding in order to continue providing services to families.

For NIC funding, Family Matters made a decision to focus only on incarcerated women/mothers and to create a model of services based on a theory of change. They believed that children are more traumatically affected when separated from their mothers and recognized the need to make policy changes consistent with supporting incarcerated mothers. One of the goals was to develop and implement model legislation to better serve incarcerated mothers and their families. To this end, Family Matters was instrumental in helping to pass *1% to Prevent legislation* in 2003 that ensured 1% of the Department of Corrections budget would be given to community service providers that serve children of prisoners and their families.

The reincarnated version of Family Matters is more comprehensive in nature and includes the incarcerated mother component. The first two Family Matters programs had focused on the child and caregivers alone. The goals of Family Matters were to continue to stabilize the family and to intervene early so that children would not become involved in the juvenile justice system. In addition to parenting classes with mothers in prison, the program facilitates monthly children's groups by developmental ages as well as monthly

caregiver groups which discuss issues such as stress management and resources, self-empowerment skills, trauma reduction in children, reunification issues, and related issues. Other services of Family Matters include: training for law enforcement and child service workers, public awareness campaigning, and facilitating support groups for mothers released from prison.

In Arkansas, children of Pulaski County live in the most populated county, located in the center of a rural state. The majority of residents in Pulaski County are White (64%). African Americans represent 31.9% and Latinos represent 2.4% of the population. However, non-Whites represent more than 50% of the correctional population. Family Matters services are first come, first serve, for as long as needed, and are most frequently used by African American families. As families begin to sustain themselves, they will not be dropped from the Program although services may be lessened.

### **Objectives and Activities Accomplished**

In the first few months of funding, two full-time family advocates and a part-time administrative assistant were hired and trained. The trainings included: the Family Matters model of service, working with children of prisoners, understanding family dynamics, understanding human service and criminal justice systems, and working with relative caregivers. In order to recruit and enroll families, staff discussed the benefits of participating in Family Matters with mothers in the already established parenting group at the prison. Simultaneously, staff developed enrollment forms, consent forms, outcome measures, assessment forms, and service plan templates to be used with families.

Initial service delivery for new families began within three months of receiving the NIC grant. Implementation of the program model, including facilitation of caregiver support groups, children's groups, and the parenting program, were in full progress in the first funding year for 15 families. Family Matters partnered with Arkansas Voices for Children to provide space to deliver the children's groups and caregiver support groups. By the end of Year 1, changes were made to enrollment forms so that information about all members of the family could be included in the assessment. Also, the length of time to complete a comprehensive assessment by the family advocate was extended to 60 days in order to address the issues of trust and of building of relationships prior to assessment.

Through working with the families and learning more about their needs, new objectives for Year 2 were added. These included training community groups that impacted families such as: child welfare workers, law enforcement, public assistance workers, and school personnel. Additional services were also added to better address the needs of families. These included: finding medical and dental care for newly released mothers, increasing art classes for children during the summer, having a week-long summer camp for the children, and adding a food pantry and clothing room for the families. With the help of volunteers, transportation to the McPherson Institute for Women, located approximately 90 miles away, was arranged twice a month for children to visit with their mothers.

One of the major Program findings was that women released from prison faced many legal hurdles such as bankruptcies, termination of parental rights, children in foster care, and outstanding warrants. This was addressed by hiring a legal advocate in Year 3 to help women as they were released from prison. Clearly, extensive services for

caretakers of children whose mothers were incarcerated were also needed (e.g., crisis support, assistance with public assistance programs, information regarding child welfare policies such as kinship foster care, including legal advocacy, strategies for managing children's emotional and behavioral problems, mental health counseling for children, family reintegration planning for mothers returning from prison, child care assistance, and support for housing needs).

The third year of implementation focused on continuing to find services for the families, creating more statewide partners through presentations to communities, nonprofits, and faith-based groups; and by presenting information at the state judiciary conference. Family Matters successfully engaged the public through their community television show and several presentations, including the Parent Educators Conference, Regional Headstart Conference, and the Centerforce Summit in San Francisco. Family Matters also contributed to the annual Mothers in Prison, Children in Crisis event which was held for the 10th year. *Mothers in Prison, Children in Crisis*, a Family Matters documentary, aired on 61 PBS stations since September 2001 and was also picked up by the American Broadcasters to be aired on satellite television. Community awareness and promotion of the children's corner at the prison has helped to get toys and books donated.

### **Challenges and how addressed**

Family Matters' relationship with DOC was at its best in 1991 when the warden was a strong supporter of the services offered to incarcerated mothers. Since then, there have been five administrative changes at McPherson Institute for Women, including resignations and operation changes resulting from being a privatized facility to a state facility. The issue of embracing the project and gaining support/buy-in is a challenge and



is highly dependent on personalities and political forces. To address this challenge, the program director spent more time nurturing the relationship with the corrections administration by keeping them informed of the project and supporting them in their work.

Staff also faced challenges with the dynamics of the children groups when trying to maintain developmentally appropriate groups. For example, there were several children under the age of 8, but only one male and the rest were female. There were only two children who were older than 14 years old, and coincidentally they were sisters. Staff worked towards a better balance between age groups.

Another challenge was that many families disliked participating in outcome measure related assessments. These were completed through an interview process and many times, clients did not keep appointments. Staff were working to revise practices and procedures to increase participation.

In Year 2, highly competent staff with social work backgrounds and specialization in housing assistance resigned because of job security issues. The Parent Center gave Family Matters staff who did not have the adequate skills to work with the target population, so Family Matters had to recruit and hire new staff. In Year 3, a new case manager was hired and, according to the program director, offered a refreshing perspective.

There is an ongoing challenge working with systems that have competing or incompatible goals. Staff were trained about how the child welfare and criminal justice system work and searched for efforts that could improve systems for the children of prisoners. In addition, it has been challenging to sustain partnerships with funding.

Family Matters has formed semi-partnerships, particularly with the building of partners statewide. However, the issue regarding competition for money needs to be overcome.

### **Factors that facilitated implementation**

- The Parent Center and former Family Matters Program had over 10 years of experience with the target populations.
- There was a long standing and good working relationships with corrections, child welfare, law enforcement, and many community agencies.
- The Family Matters model of services had been previously piloted. Over time, staff made improvements and added services.
- Staff had knowledge of working with target populations, including a host of information collected from focus groups and surveys regarding the needs of children, caretakers, and incarcerated mothers.
- Partnerships with legal services, food pantry, clothing, and transportation to the prison helped provide the services more easily.
- Family Matters has received good support and publicity.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Time is an important component of the services. Many families participated in Family Matters services for all three years of implementation, indicating that interventions must be both intensive and extensive in order to help sustain families.

- The issue of hiring is very important. Staff need to be willing to be mindful of biases. Staff also need to have the ability to connect with families and children.
- It is important to train case managers and build cultural sensitivity into program design. It is also important to be prepared for staff to seek other job opportunities as grant comes to an end. The Family Matters project director found that social workers, developmentalists, and psychologists seem best prepared to work with these families. Staff who are able to view families in non-judgmental ways and not distance the imprisoned parent and/or family are important to the success of the quality of services provided.
- Family Matters experimented with non-traditional case management and service delivery including the team approach and other forms of documentation. The lesson learned was that some case managers will identify better with particular cases, and therefore the program now delegates individual cases to each case manager and uses regular progress notes, in addition to the team approach for staff support and cross training
- Because it is important to gain the trust of families and for the family and the advocate to agree on the family goals, advocates are encouraged to be more relational than professional to reduce barriers (us vs. them). Availability of staff also provides a reassurance factor for families.
- It is important that services are provided in the community rather than in the office. Family Matters staff spent 60% of their time in the field.
- Staff found that the best approach is to provide services from the child development perspective. In addition, when having children's groups, staff need

to be aware that the concerns and responses of children are developmentally connected and groups must be developmentally appropriate.

- Services for caregivers need to be intensified. The issues regarding trust and pride also need to be understood.
- It is beneficial for caregivers to experience “down time” without the kids.
- For it’s next re-creation, Family Matters will provide two independent parenting groups for incarcerated mothers based on their sentencing periods. This is based on the realization that it is difficult to mix groups when some mothers will be released in the near future and others are in prison for life. The issues of these mothers, caregivers and children are different, including the conversations, emotional reactions, degree of hope, and family planning.
- Many different programs for children of incarcerated parents may not be necessary. It may be a good idea to experiment with including other children in groups to avoid issues of labeling and separation.
- Programs for parents after release from prison are very critical and need to be sustained.

### **Future Plans**

The Parent Center strongly supports the growth and development of the Family Matters Program. They have acquired new, independent office space for the operation of their program. The goal remains to secure more funding to sustain Family Matters as a comprehensive family strengthening model. Family Matters is hoping for appropriation dollars from the state to continue to provide visitation and services for mothers, children, and caregivers. If resources are available, they would also like to provide more outings

and cultural events for the caregivers to participate while providing transportation and child care for the children.

Until then, Family Matters families may continue to be served, if they choose/qualify under other funding that has been received. This includes the federal Health and Human Services (HHS) mentoring grant for children ages 5-15 that will provide services in 33% of counties across the state. Some families may be able to be served under the already existing *Even Start Family Literacy* prison-based program for children under 8 years old who have an incarcerated parent pursuing a GED, vocational education, or college education. Children in Family Matters ages 15-18 years can work with the *Arkansas Voices Advisory Council for Children of Prisoners* to participate in school outreach, facilitating peer led support groups and by conducting public awareness activities. Some of the caregivers have been encouraged to become VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) workers and are compensated to serve other caregivers through support groups. Currently, there is good momentum across the state where many groups are calling on the Program director to provide technical assistance, including an increase by faith-based groups.

Family Matters is venturing to develop the *Designing Women Project* where formerly incarcerated mothers returning home will be trained by upscale designers in seamstress education. The designer will oversee the design patterns and quality of fabric to make dresses, but it is anticipated that the women will market and sell their dresses online. The strategic plan for the future also includes development of a collaborative reunification center for mothers to receive job training and family development assistance post-release from prison. Family Matters has received a no-cost extension from NIC to

continue their internal evaluation and to maintain contact with families for additional services.

Funding Category: Children with Parents in Jail

**CASE STUDY 5: Catholic Community Services: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project (Juneau and Anchorage, AK)**

**Background**

Catholic Community Services (CCS) has provided comprehensive child and family resource programs to families for over 30 years. These include: Family Resource Center, Teen Family Center, Daycare Assistance, Child Advocacy, and Family Reunification and Preservation. The Family Resource Center, a collaborative effort with St. Vincent de Paul's Transitional Housing Operation, had been in operation for six years prior to NIC funding. CCS was asked by Alaska's former administration to add a new component of services that would focus on working with children of incarcerated parents (a population that was not being recognized). This suggestion derived from the fact that a significant portion of the families CCS was serving had a child with an incarcerated parent. The goal of CCS' Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) Project is to work collaboratively with other groups to develop a state model that will help reduce trauma, stigma, and stress associated with separation. Services are intended to enhance opportunities for youth. The model was to be piloted in several different areas of the state in the last two years, providing services to children with parents in state prison, jails, and/or halfway houses.

NIC funding enabled CCS to plan for the identification of affected families and to expand case management services. CCS proposed to develop and implement three sites statewide by the second year of funding. The goals and objectives of services were adapted to best address the needs of the new population being served (e.g., incarcerated parents). Compared to the lower 48 states, Alaska has a high alcohol abuse and dependence rate. Specifically, Alaska has the highest alcohol related death rate (11% compared to 5% nationally), and alcohol is implicated in 83% of child abuse investigations and 60% of domestic violence reports. Alaska also has the highest incidence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in the nation that is four times the national average (Alaska Division of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, 2004).

The CIP Project was created to serve Alaskan families affected by incarceration of a parent and to enhance the opportunities for positive life experiences and outcomes for children whose parents experience incarceration. In order to best serve the target population, staff needed to address some of the issues in Alaska that include: sexual assault, high rates of domestic violence against women, and a boom/bust seasonal economy. Approximately 85% of Alaska native children were disproportionately represented in the systems. Staff have observed a link of multigenerational abuse and violence for Alaska Natives. In many cases, it begins with early initiation of sexual assault of children by family members which then leads to substance abuse activity by the children into their adulthood. Mothers who abuse alcohol may have children born with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). FAS has been shown to cause mental retardation and a host of other symptoms which may impact children's behavior, and lead to juvenile justice system and/or recurring involvement in the systems.

## **Objectives and Activities Accomplished**

In the first planning year, space was secured in the capital city, Juneau, at the Family Resource Center, located within a transitional housing center. Program staff were recruited and hired. Early in the process, potential collaborative partners were identified and presentations about the project were made to staff at children's service agencies, corrections, and to community leaders. Because of the disconnect between policy and practice, CCS brought children, incarcerated parents, and caregivers to the table with corrections, police, religious leaders, native leaders, parents, and teachers to a statewide summit to increase information and communication between the groups/multi-disciplines. Over 100 people participated in the two day learning and plan development process.

One of the objectives of the first year was to define a method for identifying incarcerated parents and families. CIP staff met with the Office of Children's Services (OCS) and local agencies regarding what information should be shared, how, and with whom for the referral process. The staff team collaborated with law enforcement and corrections to identify children at intake. In order to facilitate early assistance to children, it was planned to add new questions to the intake protocols used during the booking process regarding whether inmates have children. This objective was not achieved as expected, and while the CIP Project waited for law enforcement to make referrals, they were receiving referrals mainly from inmates themselves, but also from schools, the housing authority, Office of Children's Services (OCS), and from judges. The CIP coordinator indicated that she would have planned for alternative ways to identify children earlier in the process, had they known that collecting the information from corrections would have been so challenging.



In Year 1, staff interviewed parents, adult children of prisoners, and service providers to develop a needs and services assessment of Alaskan agencies and families. A draft tool was used for the collection of data to identify the needs of the target population, as well as the strengths and deficits of the current system. In most cases, parents and caregivers affected by incarceration have less than optimum reading capabilities, many times English is a second language, which makes sharing of information through written materials a challenge. Another finding revealed that the location/distance of the incarcerated parents and geographic challenges were factors that made visitation prohibitive for the target population. This finding is coupled with the perception by families that living in Juneau, Alaska, means it is more difficult to move to another location to be closer to a correctional facility.

The Juneau site began to provide parent support groups at the Lemon Creek Correctional Facility (a maximum security and multi-level security facility) and Gastineau Human Services Halfway House in Year 1. Newsletters were developed and disseminated to interested agencies and individuals in order to facilitate communication and information regarding issues of children of incarcerated parents. Staff were granted access in the correctional facilities to film the incarcerated parents sending personal messages to their children. CIP staff developed a manual that showed other social service agencies how to work with their local correctional facilities so that they may also be able to film video greeting cards to distribute to children of incarcerated parents across Alaska. Another innovative project that was implemented for the children of incarcerated parents was the Back to School project. The students received a package of school supplies and a letter from their incarcerated parent.

The second year of funding focused on expanding services in Juneau and on recruiting and hiring staff for the additional sites as proposed. Because of reductions in state funds from the Department of Education (DOE) and geographic challenges, CCS was only able to hire a staff person for a second site: Hiland Mountain/Meadow Creek Correctional Center. This site is a medium security facility in Eagle River, outside of Anchorage, Alaska. After securing office space at the facility and training staff, prison personnel were identified to participate in activities. Both sites: Juneau and Eagle River began providing services such as: parenting classes, parent support groups, support groups for parents in the halfway house, case management, and child visitation assistance. At the Hiland Mountain facility, there were playgroups for children and incarcerated mothers, as well as a Read to Your Child book program where mothers were given a book to read and share with their child. In Juneau, a family friendly visitation room was created at the halfway house.

The staff learned the protocols of the corrections facilities and received clearance to operate within facilities. There is much variability between the Alaska sites in terms of type of facilities, rules with administration, on-site/off-site location of staff, as well as variability between communities where the facilities are housed. For example, in Juneau, there is limited access to other cities and people, because you can only travel by plane or boat. Anchorage is a much larger city with a military influence and more access to people. Staff in Juneau had more flexibility inside the prisons whereas staff at the Anchorage correctional complex had to follow protocol/rules for movement.

The third pilot site: Anchorage Correctional Complex was implemented in Year 3. This site provides educational services to incarcerated fathers in a short-term facility.

Many of the clients transition to Eagle River or Juneau, allowing for family services to continue. Services that are available to incarcerated parents who provide caretaker information to staff include: service referral, advocacy, helping families understand incarceration, and visitation assistance.

The CIP Project continued to provide services to incarcerated parents, primary care providers, and to children through the three sites supported by the Juneau office. During the summer, there was a Champion Kids Camp for 38 children throughout southeast Alaska that was staffed through a collaboration of nonprofit organizations and the school district. CIP staff also continued to provide community education to local children's services agencies regarding the challenges facing children of incarcerated parents. In Year 3, there were 37 public presentations regarding the issues of the population and support needed.

### **Challenges and how addressed**

One of the main challenges that CIP staff faced was gaining access to corrections and their target population. The staff experienced resistance from corrections regarding family planning activities. The former social service agency had not been successful with corrections. To address this, CIP staff agreed to go through corrections training. Motivating parents and caregivers to enroll and participate in services were also challenges. Staff looked for individual ways to reach each family.

The ability and legality of data collection at the time of intake was in question during Year 1. It had been planned to implement the questions about family demographics (i.e., children) of persons during the booking process. Funding was appropriated to implement the questions to the law enforcement booking process. While

the question was implemented, law enforcement officers were not required to collect the information because there were many technical problems experienced with the web-based software system. This challenge was addressed by identifying families during programming through self-referrals and through other agencies, as opposed to during the booking process.

Another challenge faced by CIP staff was the realization that foster care parents do not receive training about how to deal with children of incarcerated parents. To address this, staff developed an easy to read handbook to help address some of their questions. Also, confidentiality rights sometimes prevent staff from getting help for children, so the focus of case management was changed. Some families had multiple workers and duplication of services, while others had none. The demand exceeded services available and the political environment was not supportive of the need for additional services. This deficit was addressed by educating others who work with children and by focusing case management efforts and services on children who had no workers on their behalf.

### **Factors that facilitated the implementation process**

- The political environment was receptive to the issues of children of incarcerated parents. The summit held in 2000 was widely embraced at a time when Alaska was experiencing one of its highest budget years. Additionally, there was legislation appropriation of \$50,000 to include protocol questions for the identification of children of incarcerated parents in the booking process. Also, having good contact with the commissioner helped to further the relationship with

corrections, helping to involve corrections officers in educating the community about the criminal justice process.

- Involvement and collaboration with an agency that provides transitional housing provided an opportunity to identify and offer additional services to families facing incarceration.
- Although there are very few mental health staff in the Alaska communities, most staff know each other and are able to refer to one another for additional resources.
- Program staff have a strong ideology about working with families and about child development, knowing the importance of establishing rapport, developing trust, and using an honest approach with clear expectations. In addition, staff received training by ASSET trainers regarding honoring diverse traditions and incorporating the cultural norms of Alaska in working with children. Cultural norms include: strong community support for children, extended families, traditional practices, importance of personal contact, and storytelling.

### **Factors that may have impeded program development**

- The lack of matching funds and challenges of completing state paperwork, impacted the speed at which the additional two pilot sites were implemented. This resulted in re-evaluation of planned activities and the implementation of the second site in Year 2 and a changed location for the third site in Year 3.
- Changes to Alaska's state administration in Year 2 changed the focus of the Program to include more education. Because the new administration believes most social programs have failed, many programs such as sex offender and substance abuse treatment were reduced. Staff developed ways for reconnecting,

re-educating, and reintegrating staff from the new administration about CIP program services. Another related issue was the high turnover rate of staff in social services and having to reconnect with new staff.

- The education administration was not a strong collaborator. Staff were not able to conduct presentations about children of incarcerated parents during in-service training, because the subject was not a priority.
- Geographic challenges impacted the ability to fill the position at the Bethel site (third planned pilot site). This site is located in the interior of Alaska, a place that is hard to access and where no one wants to work/live. Also, the great geographic distances that may separate offenders and families made it difficult to facilitate visitation or contact.
- Staff could not help children that lived in the “village authority” without violating confidentiality even when the incarcerated parents signed a release. Village people/town caregivers were not trusting of outsiders, and were very overprotective of the children. This is based on the history of children being removed from the home. Villagers chose to take care of affected children in their own small town without outside services.

### **Lessons Learned:**

- Each pilot site has unique challenges. It is very important to work closely with corrections staff at each site during the start up and early implementation phases of the projects. Remote CIP staff need to stay connected for moral support and debriefing.

- Even with resistance from corrections staff who feel that children should not visit incarcerated parents, there are several advocates of the program within the correctional administration at all sites. Having an identified point person at each facility, generally a probation officer that reports directly to the superintendent, to receive, review, and distribute information regarding resources for parents is helpful to ensure continued access.

### **Future Plans**

Future plans for the CIP Project in Alaska include making progress in the school system by providing in-service training for teachers. Staff would like to educate teachers about the effects of incarceration on children. Handbooks for parents, caretakers, and teachers have been created with a focus to help answer questions regarding children of incarcerated parents. It is anticipated that these small handbooks will be published and distributed by schools, children's services agencies, and a monthly newsletter. The Read to Your Child book program is currently being implemented at the Anchorage Correctional Facility and at the Gastineu Halfway House in Juneau, Alaska. It is also planned to facilitate the summer camp again in southeast Alaska, and to do an expanded version of the camp in the interior of Alaska where children from all of the sites may be able to participate. CCS plans to collaborate with faith-based organizations, church camps, and other agencies in order to implement successful camps.

In regards to sustainability, Catholic Community Services has received a federal mentoring grant for children of incarcerated parents as well as a Strengthening Families and Marriages grant which would require additional components in the parenting curriculum, but could otherwise help to serve families affected by incarceration. There

are plans to hire a new part-time staff person to assist with service delivery. The Department of Corrections is helping CCS secure funding to keep CIP program staff at their facilities.

## **CASE STUDY 6: Community Works, ROOTS Program (San Francisco, CA)**

### **Background**

Community Works is a nonprofit organization that was started in 1992 as an extension of the work already being done with the San Francisco County Jail Arts Program since the 1970's. It provides positive cultural and educational interventions in jails as well as parenting classes and other programs for ex-offenders in the community. Community Works began working with offenders and ex-offenders and has expanded to providing art therapy, violence prevention, and public awareness services for at-risk youth in the Bay area.

Prior to receiving funding, Community Works was working to implement more programs in the schools with at-risk youth and realized the need for programs for children whose parents were incarcerated. In working with some of these youth through programs in schools, staff saw the trauma children experienced when their parents were incarcerated. The organization believed that working with this important population was a logical extension of what they were already doing, so they decided to seek NIC funding with the goal of connecting with parents in jails and their children in the community.

With NIC funding, the ROOTS Program was developed as a school-based program to support the capacity of children of incarcerated parents as well as a program to improve the skills of both custodial parents/guardians and parents incarcerated in the



San Francisco Jail. The program's goal was to assess identified children of jail inmates and provide music therapy and crisis intervention to impact their lives. Music therapy can positively affect physical, psychological, and social functioning. Additionally, arts and educational programming including cultural interventions and field trips helped to create positive experiences for the children ages 9-14. Community Works also planned to provide annual training for deputies, caregivers, and service providers concerning the tools needed to outreach to children of incarcerated parents in more positive and effective ways.

Additional funding for ROOTS was received from the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF) as well as a TANF grant through the Mayor's office of Criminal Justice to provide more intensive services. The ROOTS Program collaborated with Visitacion Valley Middle School and McKinley Elementary Schools, both schools in neighborhoods that are plagued by violence. The planning staff had assumed that a significant number of parents incarcerated in the local jail would have children in the Visitacion Valley school district. While some incarcerated parents had children from this area of San Francisco, their children were either younger or older than the 9-14 target ages. Furthermore, most of the incarcerated parents had children that did not live in the district where ROOTS had established collaborations to provide services. This resulted in recruiting and identifying children who were impacted by incarceration through the target schools themselves. Children were identified by counselors, teachers, or by self-referral.

## **Objectives and Activities Accomplished**

In the first year of implementation, twenty-five students were recruited from Visitacion Valley Middle School. Early in the school year, the group of students met twice a week in an after-school program, which later increased to meeting three times a week towards the end of that school year. A smaller, during school hours program was implemented for five elementary school students at McKinley Elementary School, which would increase to six students by Year 3. Two program facilitators (an expressive arts therapist and a case manager) provided services such as: music therapy, group work, and field trips. In the second year, after-school program services at the middle school were increased to five times a week because of the need for more intense services. A new drama component and a two week summer camp were added. Students and teachers referred more students to the ROOTS Program, increasing the number of participating middle schools students from 25 in Year 1 to 35 students in Year 2. Staffing increased from two facilitators in Year 1 to three in Year 2 (adding a second after-school expressive arts facilitator) to help with the increase of students. Because there was little contact between children and their incarcerated parents, the job description of the case manager was more appropriately redefined to be a youth advocate in the community. The youth advocate had a general presence in the community, providing direct intervention and support for court hearings. The advocate also facilitated the weekly parent education classes for men and women incarcerated at the local San Francisco jail.

By the third year of implementation, the ROOTS program had secured office space at the middle school and hired a full-time school case manager with a social work background to provide case management and drop-in or weekly individual counseling

services to students. In Year 3, the middle school program was serving 40 students, of which 22 were male and 18 were female, between the ages 12-15. Eighty eight percent of these participants were African American or African American/multicultural and most had either a father, brother, or uncle incarcerated. Weekly, individual counseling was provided to 12 students during school hours. The case manager helped to connect with the caregivers of the children enrolled in ROOTS in Year 3. Thirty intake interviews were conducted with parents/guardians. Although progress was made with parents, services for caregivers took a longer time to implement than planned. A trained peer group facilitator was hired to conduct weekly support groups with the parents, of which 10 caregivers participated. ROOTS also hosted family community dinners twice a semester, and provided child care for caregivers who wished to participate.

The ROOTS program received high satisfaction with services ratings. The principal of the middle school was very supportive of the project and believed that students who had not cared about school before, were showing more success through “better attendance, better grades, and better attitudes.” Additionally, the ROOTS Program was recognized by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for drastically lessening the social and behavioral problems of the youth served. At the end of the school year, students received certificates for completion of the program and incentive money based on their participation and behavior.

Staff received training throughout implementation of the ROOTS Program. In Year 1, staff received training from the Sheriff’s Department on jail rules and regulations and attended the CWLA national conference. In Year 2, staff received training on supporting children of incarcerated parents and on youth development. In Year 3, staff

received training in child abuse and mandated reporting, ADHD and positive discipline, parent advocacy, youth development, alliance building, and awareness training regarding violence in the southeast sector of San Francisco. They also attended conferences on Children of Incarcerated Parents, Gangs in San Francisco, Juvenile Justice in San Francisco, and the CWLA yearly conference in Washington, D.C. Staff received ongoing in-service training on record keeping and data collection from the director of Community Works and the internal evaluator.

### **Challenges and how addressed**

The objective regarding recruiting children at school from information provided by parents incarcerated at the local jail was a challenge as parents served short sentences and children were difficult to track down. This was addressed by recruiting children from the identified high crime school district whose families were impacted by incarceration. This included students who had uncles and/or siblings who were incarcerated. Many of the parents of the enrolled students were incarcerated in the California state prison system. The ROOTS program continued to provide parenting classes at the local jail, though the classes were not for the parents of the children they were working with.

Visitacion Valley is a very dangerous and poor community in San Francisco where several violent murders have occurred. Many of the children from the middle school live in this area, in housing projects and/or nearby Bay View Hunter's Point area. Staff had to counter the message of violence from the community with new messages of conflict resolution and non-violence. Additionally, staff transported many of the children home after school to ensure their safety.

The challenges of providing services in a school setting were addressed by learning to integrate the school culture, policies and procedures with the goals of the ROOTS Program. Additionally, ROOTS staff learned to work with and interact with teachers and staff at the school.

### **Factors that facilitated implementation**

- Collaboration and relationships with schools has increased. Both the middle school and elementary school are very supportive of ROOTS. Other schools, particularly the elementary feeder school and other middle schools have invited ROOTS to provide services to their students.
- There is a strong relationship with the San Francisco Sheriffs Department (SFSD). Community Works is the fiscal agent for their arts programming in the jail. Also, SFSD is open to transitional and educational programs that are innovative.
- Students embraced the focus of the project and advocated for the program to their peers and to school officials.

### **Factors that impeded development of the ROOTS Program**

- The short length of time parents had been in jail limited the staff's ability to match parents with youth and to engage parent inmates with their children. ROOTS was invited to implement project at schools where children of incarcerated parents had been identified.
- Involvement of parents in school based intervention was difficult and there were no formal intakes because parents were in state prison. However, contact with

caregivers of children who had an incarcerated family member increased by the third year.

### **Lessons Learned**

- It is important to develop relationships with school officials/teachers.
- It is difficult to discuss the issue of parental incarceration even when it is a common condition among the group.
- Children need increased/intense services. Qualified social workers should be hired to work with children and families.
- Hire a trained adult peer group facilitator for parenting education/support groups.
- Middle school is a hard target population. Students need a lot of structured/organized activities. Small groups are preferred.
- It took four years of programming to establish trust with students and their caregivers.
- When providing school programming, an onsite full-time school liaison is important. It is also very important to learn the in-school counseling procedures in order to co-exist with school officials.
- Staff should develop a program culture. There needs to be consistency among staff with regards to rules and interventions. Staff should receive continuous training to develop a philosophical core belief system so that all staff providing direct service are consistent.
- Full-time staff that receive benefits appear to be more effective than part-time staff.

- The program manager position has been important in the coordination and program development process.
- Students and school staff should be engaged in the ongoing development of the project, so that it is responsive to their needs.

**Future Plans:**

In the last year of NIC funding, there was a two day staff planning retreat to regroup and refocus for the coming school year. A decision was made to utilize funding to provide services for the following school year rather than for a summer camp in Year 3. The retreat focused on discussing what it means to be a child of an incarcerated parent and to develop a core belief system for the ROOTS program. It will also be important to continue to look for ways to engage parents and address the issues of parental distrust of social services.

The ROOTS program will continue to provide comprehensive, after school services at Visitacion Valley Middle School. With the help of additional funding from the DCYF and several foundations, the program will also be expanding into one of the feeder high schools, Balboa High. There will be a seventh period educational elective course/curriculum available for students who have been impacted by incarceration, including students whose siblings are incarcerated. The history of incarceration will be studied. The after school curriculum will have two tracks: theatre and a speaker's bureau. Theatre students will participate in a serious theatre performance about the impact of incarceration on children of incarcerated parents. Students involved in the speaker's bureau will make public presentations about the impact of incarceration on their communities, families, and their own lives.

## **Board Interviews**

The Resource Center for Children of Prisoners Advisory Group (the Advisory Board) consisted of members with various backgrounds and expertise in the areas related to working with children of incarcerated parents. Representatives from select nonprofit organizations, corrections, health and human services, and children and family services participated on the advisory board as well as academicians, consultants, and former incarcerated parents.

### **Background**

Because of the expertise apparent on the advisory board and direct relationship of many board members to their programs, NCCD decided to interview board members about their experiences and lessons learned working with children and/or families affected by incarceration. This information is valuable to the evaluation because it can add to the context already discussed by the demonstration sites. Further, it helps reaffirm similarities and/or highlight certain differences that have been experienced when implementing programs. It also offers possible suggestions for working with children and families affected by incarceration.

There were three members of the advisory board who voluntarily participated in the 30-45 minute interview. All members had an opportunity to review the questions prior to scheduling an interview. Of the people who did not participate, several felt that many of the questions were not relevant to their experiences, especially when they were



not part of the development process of their organizations/programs. Others simply chose not to participate. A sample of the questionnaire is attached to the Appendix.

Of the three people who responded, all of them had worked with their nonprofit organizations for a minimum of 10 and up to 16 years. These three people served a variety of roles within their organizations including: executive director, vice chair, consultant, program director, and volunteer. Their organizations had been in operation for 16 years, 30 years, and 94 years, respectively. The target clients of the organizations for which these advisory board members provided information about included: children, caregivers and families, incarcerated parents, and other community-based organizations. The settings services were provided in varied from inside prisons/jails, home-based care, and schools to alternative programs and onsite community locations. Specific services that were provided to address the needs of children and/or families affected by parental incarceration included:

- Support services, legal education/services, after-school programs, mentoring, summer camps, parenting education, reunification programs, and transitional services;
- Advocacy for use of research based screening assessments for mental health/substance abuse; and
- Alternatives to incarceration such as: case management services, drug treatment, and halfway houses.

## **Findings**

The interview questionnaire consisted of questions related to experiences, challenges, and lessons learned in various areas of program implementation. These areas

of implementation included: identification and recruitment of target population, recruitment/retention of staff, direct service provisions, development/maintenance of collaborations, community awareness building, and program sustainability.

*Program Development: Influencing Factors, Addressing Challenges, and Pitfalls to Avoid*

In regards to overall program development, respondents were asked to provide an example of a challenge or obstacle that needed to be addressed in order to fulfill the goals of the organization. Responses included: gaining access to clients; working with corrections (including relationships, personalities, consistency, and access); and, addressing the deep stigma attached to incarceration. Strategies used to overcome these challenges and obstacles included involving ex-offenders, children, and caregiver groups at every level of the work and planning; bringing stakeholders to the table to talk about the issues, and creating a strategic plan that does not debate the rules, but rather, incorporates building relationships at every level, and shows commitment to providing services. Respondents were asked to discuss pitfalls that can hinder program development. In their experiences, these pitfalls can include:

- jurisdictional turf;
- lack of funding or no mandate for the issues;
- staff burnout;
- focusing too much on theory and not maximizing enough on the assets of ex-offenders;
- not building relationships with corrections; and,

- failure to include the target population on the board/steering committee to help create or implement the program.

*Lessons Learned: Direct Service*

- The impact of incarceration on each child is individualized. When directly serving children, their feelings of safety and worries about incarceration must be addressed as well as that of their siblings. The age and development of each child is important. Staff should protect children from further exploitation. Agencies need to be prepared to work with the impact on children after sharing stories, especially if recorded, or using them to raise money.
- Resources should be set aside to provide transportation to caregivers.
- Stabilize program and staff by limiting the number of transitory people.
- Children need to see their mothers in places of authority. It is important to create opportunities where mothers can have more knowledge about their children. Sending letters to show incarcerated mothers how to ask questions of their children in order to have good conversations with them can be very positive.
- Use the research behind what motivates women when working with female offenders in order to quickly get them back on their feet.

*Lessons Learned: Recruitment/Retention of Staff*

- In order to sustain a family focused movement, re-assessment of staff for corrections is needed, including recruiting staff with social work or social science training backgrounds. These backgrounds help to better engage and motivate

clients. Training manuals and procedures should also be updated to reflect a child development perspective.

- Transitory staff should be limited. Impose a two year commitment for staff who will be providing direct services. Staff needs “soul” in order to be able to work with groups. It is important to take the time in the initial hiring process to find the appropriate staff.
- Recruit staff with training regarding children and prisoners specifically. Provide training to mentors or seek mentors with related specialized experiences.

*Lessons Learned: Developing Collaborations*

- Partner with organizations that have the same commitment and/or mission to the target population and that can provide an opportunity to expand services.
- Work with child-friendly organizations.
- Potential partner organizations need to address their issues regarding crime and punishment as well as provide staff training.
- Seek organizations with credibility in the neighborhood in order to help build community support/buy-in.
- It is good practice to develop collaborations with organizations that have diverse, experienced board members with rehabilitative backgrounds or a personal interest/stake in the issues.
- It is always helpful to collaborate with organizations that have fundraising experience or that can provide technical assistance.

*Lessons Learned: Community Awareness/Buy-in*

- There is a great need for training regarding reducing community-wide barriers.
- When statewide legislation can help fund localized programs, the value of the program is recognized, which helps to set the structure and cooperation from other partners.
- Meeting with top officials is important in order to receive invitations to make presentations at related annual trainings, conferences, and workshops. It can also help build support for conducting focus groups. However, if relationships already exist with staff from inside these agencies, they can be used to leverage support from top administrators.
- Build coalitions with other groups, including public institutions that can impact lives.
- Involve formerly incarcerated parents, children, and caregivers to share their thoughts and experiences. It is important to allow space to talk about fears, crime, and violence. Creating scenarios and/or role playing that address the culture of violence with community groups can help bring better understanding to the issues.
- Seek experienced people, with expertise about the specific audience, to facilitate trainings. It is important that the facilitator not only understands what the audience is capable of hearing and “how”, but also that they are able to verbalize what the utility for the audience can be (including having respect and understanding for the nature of their work and backgrounds).

- Staff should be careful when working with schools. Schools are a breeding ground for labeling and stigmatization when children are separated for “special programs.”

### *Suggestions for Building Sustainability*

- It is best to be flexible, yet strategic about seeking funding to sustain programming. Seek funding from a variety of sources including: private donors, foundations, and even from fundraising.
- Raise money for endowment. That way, there can be a legacy for programming to continue.
- Build affordable coalitions that address a specific need which have funding categories attached to them (e.g., health care, housing).

### **Similarities and Differences**

In the previous section of the report, we highlighted the lessons learned by the demonstration sites in areas of program development. There were several areas that have been consistent throughout the evaluation and have also been reaffirmed by the experiences and responses of members of the advisory board. This section will briefly provide a comparison of information from the organizations funded by the NIC grant with the organizations represented by the surveyed Advisory Board members.

In regards to providing direct services to children, all of the sites reported that it is important for children to participate in groups by their developmental stages. As for caregivers, many sites commented on the importance of providing transportation as well

as a variety of other needed resources. At sites where incarcerated parents were served, all participants mentioned the importance of parent education classes and of getting information to parents. In terms of recruitment and retention of staff, demonstration sites also shared the importance of investing time to hire and train the appropriate staff. The backgrounds of staff that were found most effective for working with families included: social work, child development, and trained facilitators. One of the board respondents surveyed felt it was important to limit transitory staff which may be a good suggestion for the many sites that experienced staff turnover. At least one site expressed the need for staff to have the training and skills, including cultural competency, to be able to initiate conversations about difficult and sensitive issues in ways that are not judgmental or threatening. One survey respondent added that staff should have previous specific training related to children and prisoners. In regards to the lessons learned for developing collaborations, survey respondents focused more on the mission and values of other organizations (e.g., child friendliness, credibility in the community, and diverse boards) to partner with. In this area, demonstration sites noted the importance of developing relationships with other agencies to help them deliver services including corrections, schools, child welfare agencies, legal resources, and housing. When asked about the lessons learned that could help build community awareness and make community trainings more useful, survey respondents talked about the importance of making presentations at annual conferences, building coalitions, carefully choosing training facilitators that can effectively engage the audience, and involving the formerly incarcerated parents, children, and caregivers to share their experiences. In their experience with building community awareness, demonstration sites suggested the

importance of looking for opportunities to make presentations at conferences, in the community, to corrections, law enforcement, child welfare, and many others. One of the sites was able to secure legislative funding, which created more support around the state. And finally, the issue of sustainability tended to revolve around ongoing efforts to secure funding from a variety of sources in order to continue to provide services.

## **Summary of Findings**

### *The Development/Implementation Process*

The steps involved in the program development and implementation process of addressing the needs of children of incarcerated parents are wide-ranging. The planning process includes assessing the needs of the target population and examining the available resources in the community. Implementation of intervention programs are more complex than the planning process because they require the successful coordination of multiple components. They may include partnering with organizations that can help expand support services to children, caregivers, and/or incarcerated parents. The process further includes providing direct services such as: after-school activities, children's groups, tutoring, counseling, family assessment/case management, visitation, support groups, and services for caregivers. Other components of these programs required working with corrections to provide parenting classes, support groups, establishing family friendly policies to enhance visitation at the facilities, and at the very least, building support for the distribution of information to incarcerated parents. Implementation of these intervention programs required appropriate staffing, training, and support from their parent organizations. Furthermore, they required staff to engage in a variety of activities



including: participating in meetings, conducting trainings, facilitating focus groups, and hosting/attending conferences in order to build community awareness. The issues related to children affected by incarceration needed to be shared among their communities, with professional agencies/organizations, and with policy makers. And finally, the implementation process is not complete without the ongoing search for funding to continue to provide services.

*Development: Planning Sites*

The four planning sites: 1) Memphis Shelby Crime Commission (Memphis, TN); 2) PB&J Family Services (Albuquerque, NM); 3) Pima Prevention Partnership (Tucson, AZ); and 4) Let's Start/Mothers and Children Together (St. Louis, MO) were engaged in an 18-month planning process centered around developing collaborative processes and community-wide coordinated plans to provide services to children of incarcerated parents. For many, this meant coordinating the use of existing services as well as defining new, appropriate services that would be needed. Findings suggest that while the environment to provide services to children of incarcerated parents may be becoming more supportive, there are still many areas that need to be addressed. Some of these include:

- Information sharing systems and development of a process to identify children before parents are incarcerated.
- Improved case management systems to help connect children of incarcerated parents with services from already existing programs.
- Having schools focus on the issues of children of incarcerated parents.

- Availability of community services, particularly in the rural and frontier areas.
- Buy-in from the corrections community regarding the importance of parenting classes and family friendly policies.
- Training for corrections staff, including gender-responsive services.
- Limited funding for aftercare programs and alternatives to incarceration for offenders.

Other findings regarding effective planning were shared by the planning sites. For example, it was suggested that in order to facilitate planning, influential community members who can assist in facilitating meetings should be included and that meeting times should be diversified in order that school representatives and community members may be able to participate. Clarification of the objectives of the project and the expectations for those who participate in the planning process can also facilitate the process. For example, participants of the St. Louis, MO planning team indicated that participants should be informed of the progress of the team, and that attendance and commitment of participants should be confirmed to enhance the process.

Other factors to consider during the planning phase are the inevitable funding constraints and possible resistance from various segments of the community. However, having access to a resource center aids the planning process (consensus building, information dissemination and collaboration building) by providing a source of information, consultation, and credibility. Ideally, an implementation phase should immediately follow the planning stage in order to maximize the momentum created by the process. After completion of the 18 month planning phase, these planning sites sought additional funding to begin implementation of service delivery in their communities.

### *Development: Intervention Sites*

In comparison to the planning sites, the six intervention sites: 1) New Jersey Association on Corrections: Future Links Program, (Jersey City, NJ), 2) National Center for Children and Families: Family Ties Project (Washington, D.C.), 3) Families in Crisis, Inc.: YES Program (Hartford, CT), 4) Center for Youth and Families: Family Matters Program (Little Rock, AR), 5) Catholic Community Services: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project (Juneau, AK), and 6) Community Works: ROOTS Program (San Francisco, CA) had already assessed the needs and resources of their communities and had received funding to establish and implement their programs. The grants provided intervention sites with funding for three years to fully develop, begin, and implement their programs. The common program implementation goals of the intervention sites were to establish and implement collaborative programs to address the needs of children of incarcerated parents by providing various services to mitigate risk factors and promote the emotional, social, and physical health of children. For all intervention sites, direct service goals extended to the children's caregivers. For programs that were existing prior to NIC funding, services also extended to the incarcerated parents.

### *Implementation: Intervention Sites*

The implementation processes of each of the intervention sites were summarized in case studies. The case studies included sections such as: the background/history of the programs, stage of development, goals, objectives, and activities accomplished. The case studies also highlighted the challenges they experienced and how they were addressed, factors that facilitated and/or hindered program development, as well as, their lessons

learned. NCCD developed the following research questions to better understand the issues related to project development:

1. What are the common program implementation goals established by the sites?
  - a. Do they vary based upon whether the program/project was new or was pre-existing prior to the NIC funding?
2. Does there appear to be a correlation between (a) how well the programs adhered to their established goals, objectives, strategies, and activities and (b) how successful they were in implementing their program?
3. What were some common challenges faced by the sites?
4. How were the common challenges addressed?
5. What were some unique challenges faced by the sites?
6. How were the unique challenges addressed?
7. Are there “best practices” that can be derived from the study? If so, what are they?
8. Are there factors that challenge the implementation of the project?
9. What factors appear to be correlated with the sustainability of the projects?

### **Stage of Development: Intervention Sites**

At initial funding, the intervention sites were in varied stages of development. For example, the Family Matters Program (Little Rock, AR) had already been providing services to children and families affected by parental incarceration for several years and began the implementation process almost at mid-stage whereas, other programs such as Future Links (Jersey City, NJ), Family Ties (Washington, DC), and Catholic Community Services’ Children of Incarcerated Parents Project (Juneau/Anchorage, AK) were

developing and implementing their programs for the first time. The other sites, *YES* Program (Hartford, CT) and *ROOTS* Program (San Francisco, CA) had the resources in place to begin expanding their programs.

### **Objectives and Activities Accomplished**

NCCD collected information from progress reports, site visits, and interviews with program staff to determine how successful the sites were at adhering to their established goals, objectives, and activities. The extent to which sites had developed and implemented their programs was determined by the following criteria: 1) whether the program was developed and in operation, 2) whether they served their target population, and 3) whether the program was sustainable\*. In addition to this information, NCCD asked program staff at the sites whether they felt they met their objectives as established. The chart on the following page describes outcome related information for each site:

**Table 1: Intervention Sites: Outcomes Related to Project Development**

	<b>Implementation Goal(s)</b>	<b>Was the program developed and implemented?</b>	<b>Did the program serve the target population?</b>	<b>Who did the program serve?</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 1</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 2</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 3</b>	<b>Sustainability* Is future funding in place?</b>
<p><b>The YES Program</b> Families In Crisis, Inc.  (Hartford, CT)</p>	<p>To implement a collaborative community based program with key stakeholders to successfully address the special problems and needs of children of prisoners.</p> <p>To provide an integrated array of services to promote the emotional, social, and physical health of children separated from an incarcerated parent(s).</p>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Children, community caregivers, and incarcerated fathers	26 children, 15 caregivers, 15 incarcerated parents	39 children, 22 caregivers, 20 incarcerated parents	55 children, 37 caregivers received case management services, 28 incarcerated parents	LIKELY

	<b>Implementation Goal(s)</b>	<b>Was the program developed and implemented?</b>	<b>Did the program serve the target population?</b>	<b>Who did the program serve?</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 1</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 2</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 3</b>	<b>Sustainability* Is future funding in place?</b>
<b>Family Ties Program</b> National Center for Children and Families (Washington, DC)	To establish a program for children living in a high crime area, particularly those with incarcerated parents, that mitigates the risk factors that many of these children experience.	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Children and caregivers	Planning/ Assessment year  40 children received immediate services	122 children, 60 families	152 children, 71 families over 3 years	YES with modifications
<b>Future Links Program</b> New Jersey Association on Correction (Jersey City, NJ)	To establish and effectively implement a collaborative agency design for the systematic delivery of services to children who reside in a high crime community who are at-risk for or exposed to parental incarceration.	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Children ages 6 to 12 and caregivers	23 children, 1 child affected by parental incarceration	27 new children, 11 children affected by parental incarceration	12 new children, 4 children affected by incarceration 8 families received case management services	Still pending

	<b>Implementation Goal(s)</b>	<b>Was the program developed and implemented?</b>	<b>Did the program serve the target population?</b>	<b>Who did the program serve?</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 1</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 2</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 3</b>	<b>Sustainability* Is future funding in place?</b>
<p><b>Family Matters Program</b> The Parent Center  (Little Rock, AR)</p>	<p>To reinstate a comprehensive program to provide services to children of incarcerated mothers using a model of services based on developmental theory of change.</p> <p>To improve the program model of services for children of incarcerated mothers to further stabilize the families and reduce harm to the children by offering a continuum of services for each family member.</p>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Children, caregivers, incarcerated mothers, and mothers released from prison	28 children, 16 caregivers, 12 incarcerated mothers	31 children, 13 caregivers, 15 incarcerated mothers, 5 released from prison	51 children, 10 incarcerated mothers, 7 mothers released from prison, and 27 total families served by end of Year 3	YES with modifications



	<b>Implementation Goal(s)</b>	<b>Was the program developed and implemented?</b>	<b>Did the program serve the target population?</b>	<b>Who did the program serve?</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 1</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 2</b>	<b>Target population served in Year 3</b>	<b>Sustainability* Is future funding in place?</b>
<b>ROOTS Program</b> Community Works, Inc.  (San Francisco, CA)	To support and build the capacity of children of incarcerated parents through school and after-school programming.  To improve the skills of parents incarcerated in the San Francisco Jail.	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Children, Caregivers, and incarcerated parents	25 middle school students	35 middle school students 5 elementary school students	40 middle school students, 12 students for individual counseling, 6 elementary school students 10 parents in support groups.	YES
<b>Children of Incarcerated Parents Project</b> Catholic Community Services  Multi-site (Alaska)	To develop a statewide project to address the needs of children of incarcerated parents	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Children, Caregivers, and incarcerated parents	Planning year	<u>Juneau:</u> 70 children, 79 families <u>Eagle River:</u> 191 children, 138 incarcerated mothers	<u>Juneau:</u> 74 children, 81 families <u>Eagle River:</u> 226 children, 207 incarcerated mothers <u>Anchorage:</u> 42 children, 21 caretakers, 35 parents in prison	YES with modifications

\* For further details and discussion regarding sustainability, please refer to the summary section: Sustainability.

NCCD did not evaluate the impact of the services; this evaluation focused on program development only. Each intervention site defined implementation goals and established objectives and activities to develop and implement their programs. The Empowerment Evaluation model provided the sites the opportunity to review and determine if they should modify their objectives throughout the process. These changes included, but were not limited to: adding new activities for children, modifying assessment instruments, changing criteria for eligibility, establishing new partnerships for added family services, and recruiting more staff in order to enhance program delivery. Some of these changes resulted from challenges in working with the target population, challenges with staff, and/or challenges working with other partners, including corrections.

### **Common Challenges**

Based on review of program implementation for all six intervention sites, common areas of implementation that posed challenges included: lack of resources; staffing issues; resistance from target population; providing direct service; and, community involvement (including working with corrections). The following sections provide descriptions of these common challenges and how they were addressed by the sites.

- **Resources**

One of the most common challenges facing the sites was the lack of resources within their programs and within the community. For many, the demand for services exceeded the resources available. This included challenges of finding highly needed resources such as: housing assistance, medical and dental services, child care, and

mentoring. For projects where parents were incarcerated in many different locations, there were not enough resources to deliver parenting classes at every facility or to coordinate visitation. Sites addressed the lack of services for children, caregivers, and/or incarcerated parents by coordinating a variety of existing services and supports. These included connecting the target population with health services, clothing, food, hygiene resources, school supplies, summer programs and activities, and other support such as legal services for women being released. Several sites developed resource guides or informational packets to assist families with available resources in the community.

- **Staffing**

Having adequate, quality staff to implement the program was a challenge to some sites. Staff turnover was also an issue experienced by many of the sites. These issues were addressed by securing additional resources to hire more staff or by increasing salary/benefit compensation to attract and retain quality staff. Additionally, some sites found it essential to modify job descriptions for various positions based on service needs. The sites focused on the importance of having staff knowledgeable about cultural competency, child development, and behavior management techniques. Staff also received training in various areas including: mandated reporting, local community issues training, criminal justice system/corrections, child welfare, and related areas.

- **Resistance from target population** including:

1. children experiencing separation,
2. caregivers, and
3. incarcerated parents.

Many of the sites experienced initial resistance from children, caregivers, and/or incarcerated parents to share information for assessment purposes. Some staff also found it challenging to motivate the target population to participate in services. The sites addressed this challenge by looking for ways to increase trust and by developing incentives. Some sites incorporated additional time into their objectives in order to allow for trust to develop. For example, the Family Matters Program lengthened the time allocated to complete the assessment from 30 days to 60 days to address the issue of lack of trust for their family advocates. They also redesigned their assessment forms to reflect all family members to gather a more comprehensive family assessment. Staff found that many caretakers felt they did not have the time to participate in programs or did not want to be affiliated with such specialized programs for fear of stigmatization from the community. Also, some staff, particularly at Future Links were faced with the challenge that many families who received services were not convinced of the importance of stabilizing the family and of the positive emotional outcomes of maintaining relationships with the incarcerated parent. This site had planned to provide case management by conducting home visits and had to change the location of services to be on-site, because families did not want caseworkers coming to their homes. In order to ensure participation from caretakers, gift certificates for local stores were provided as incentives. Another site created an incentive that paid the caregivers for their time to complete a comprehensive assessment of needs. At the school-based site, children were paid at the end of the school year for their active participation and good behavior in the program.

- **Providing Direct Service**

Some of the demonstration sites encountered challenges working with their initially determined populations. Some sites discovered that the process of recruiting, making contact, and enrolling families was a more lengthy and challenging process than anticipated. Sites have used social service agencies, courts, schools, as well as incarcerated parents themselves as resources for referral and identification of target population. Because one site was unable to provide services to all of the incarcerated parents of the children they were working with, they utilized their respective state's Departments of Corrections' service systems to prioritize the needs of incarcerated parents and provide them with access to parenting classes, substance abuse education, and contact visitation privileges.

In the area of providing direct services to children, some sites experienced challenges regarding keeping children groups separate and developmentally appropriate when the groups were small. One site found it difficult to discuss the issue of parental incarceration even when it was a common condition among the group. Another site found it a challenge to discuss the issue of parental incarceration among a group where not all of the children were affected by parental incarceration. These issues were addressed by trying to increase the level of sensitivity towards the issues in more curriculum based group work. Also, some sites addressed the issue by working with children in one-on-one settings to help them write letters to their incarcerated parent and to provide counseling support.

- **Community involvement and other stakeholders**

Sites addressed the challenges of working with the community and other stakeholders by presenting information and conducting training groups for many audiences. They felt it was important to provide information regarding their projects and increase general awareness of the issues, including the impact of incarceration on families. Examples used to raise awareness and disseminate information across sites include: newsletters, articles, colloquiums, focus/training groups, ongoing presentations to many groups, television broadcasting, and summits. The challenge and issue of dealing with systems that have competing or incompatible goals remains an obstacle to the development of many programs. For example, some sites were faced with the reality that there are people who want children of incarcerated parents to remain invisible. Some people in corrections feel that children should not visit their parents at the facilities and many times feel that incarcerated parents do not deserve their children.

It is a challenge for some social service agencies to work with a corrections paradigm that may be focused on security and negative reinforcement, as compared to the traditional social service focus, based on strength-based reinforcement. In order to get support from correctional professionals, some sites used the following strategies: educating administrators/officers regarding the benefits to them, benefits for children, and the financial impact of innovative strategies; providing training from a child development perspective; and, identifying and nurturing relationships with a contact person at each correctional facility. Staff at sites also participated in corrections training provided by the facilities and incorporated the rules of each facility when planning service delivery. Sites worked with corrections to help develop more family friendly policies and procedures,

and in many cases were able to enhance, if not create, a visiting space for children and their incarcerated parent.

### **Unique Challenges**

Some sites faced unique challenges due to their individual circumstances. For example, the ROOTS Program of Community Works experienced difficulty in serving children whose parents were incarcerated in the local jail where Community Works provided services. This was due in part to the short duration of jail sentences and the ability to match children, as well as, the discovery that the children of these incarcerated parents were not of the target age group or did not belong to the target school district. This was addressed by providing services to identified children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers in the middle school they were serving. Parenting classes continued to be delivered to the local jail but not for the parents of the children they were serving.

The Future Links Program experienced staff logistics challenges from having their program located in another county (Hudson County, NJ). Future Links addressed challenges related to interoffice communications and supervision by providing support and cross-training for its remote staff. Catholic Community Services (Alaska) experienced challenges in recruiting staff to work in the initially planned third pilot site (Bethel) due to geographic challenges. Catholic Community Services addressed this challenge by choosing a different pilot site area that was easier to access and more likely to attract staff. They also provided support to their remote staff.

Because the Family Matters Program also provided services to families of mothers who had been released from prison, they were confronted with many legal barriers affecting the mothers (including termination of parental rights, outstanding arrest

warrants, and bankruptcies). These issues were addressed by adding a legal advocacy component for women with legal difficulties.

### **Lessons Learned by the Intervention Sites**

This section includes a synthesis of the lessons learned by the intervention sites during the three year period of implementation. These lessons are summarized by important category areas which include: Staffing, Recruiting/Access, Direct Service, Collaboration, Community Awareness/Buy-in, and Sustainability. NCCD recommends that the following information should be taken into consideration when developing, expanding, or implementing programs that will provide services to children of incarcerated parents.

#### **Staffing**

Organizations that plan to develop or are currently developing and/or implementing programs will have to address staffing issues. The following information provided by the sites offers guidelines for the types of staff backgrounds and experiences that have been found to be effective in working with children and families affected by parental incarceration, building staff culture, and strategies to retain staff.

##### *Staff Backgrounds*

People charged with making staffing decisions should be mindful that the issue of hiring is very important. While it may seem obvious that staff who work directly with children and families need to have the ability to connect with them, it has also been suggested that staff need to be willing to confront their own biases. Also, staff must have the training and the skills to be able to initiate conversations about difficult and sensitive



issues in non-threatening ways. The Family Matters project director found that social workers, developmentalists, and psychologists seem best prepared to work with these families. Staff who are able to view families in non-judgmental ways and not distance the imprisoned parent and/or family are important to the success and quality of services that are provided.

Even volunteers need to be recruited, screened, and trained. Volunteers tend to require more time and resources from staff. However, when volunteers/tutors are appropriately supervised, they can be very effective. It has been suggested that for organizations that use volunteers to provide services to children, the potential volunteers should be screened to determine their ability to interact with children as well as their level of cultural competence. For programs that work with children in after-school settings, it is recommended that staff be mature, highly trained, and have experience in clinical applications, child development, and behavior management. Drivers who transport children should be trained in behavior management techniques in order that they may effectively supervise children who demonstrate “acting out” behaviors. When working with caregivers, trained adult peer group facilitators for parenting education/support groups should be recruited.

### *Staff Culture*

Intervention sites that had program staff located in remote locations such as Catholic Community Services (Alaska) and Future Links (New Jersey), found it important to address the staff logistics related to interoffice communications, as well as meet supervision needs. They also suggest that remote staff need to stay connected for

moral support and debriefing. For sites that provided after-school programming such as the *YES* Program and *ROOTS* Program, it was suggested that staff should develop a program culture. There needs to be consistency among staff with regards to rules and interventions. This can be done by developing a philosophical core belief system among staff who provide direct service.

It often becomes important to use several staffing patterns. The *YES* Program found that there should be at least two staff on site to deliver services and manage behaviors effectively in an after-school setting. Also, trained volunteers can be very helpful in assisting staff as well as keeping costs down. When providing school programming, an onsite full-time school liaison is important to serve as the link between after-school activities and school counseling. It is also recommended that staff working in a school environment learn the particular school's counseling procedures in order to co-exist with school officials.

As for providing services in the community, at least two sites found it refreshing to have a male case manager perspective, probably for the father figure issue. Again, the importance of training staff and building cultural sensitivity in the program design was emphasized by all of the intervention sites. Family Matters experimented with non-traditional case management and service delivery, emphasizing a team approach for each family. The lesson learned was that some case managers will identify better with particular cases, and therefore the program now delegates individual cases to each case manager. The team approach is used for staff support, cross training, and to provide reassurance to families.

### *Retaining Staff*

In order to retain staff, sites found that factors such as: quantity of staff, quality of staff, and proper compensation for staff, are important considerations to the success of the program. For example, there should be adequate staff people to conduct comprehensive family assessments when there is a large target population so that staff are not overburdened. Several programs found it necessary to hire additional staff to account for increases in clients and or available services. A program manager position appears to be important for the coordination of services and of staff. In addition, sites found that full-time staff who receive benefits tend to stay longer than part-time staff. While it may seem obvious that increasing salary/benefit packages help attract and retain the most qualified staff, it is important to understand the impact that knowledgeable staff have on program success.

### **Direct Service**

When providing direct services to children (e.g. children's groups, after-school activities, counseling), some of the lessons learned involve the scope of the activities themselves. In several cases, staff found it difficult to discuss the issue of parental incarceration even when it was a common condition among the group. Several sites indicated that the length of time working with the children is essential in order to establish trust. For example, one site felt that it could be beneficial to have a separate group where children could be free to discuss issues with other children with similar experiences. However, another site that offered separate groups for children of incarcerated parents concluded that having several "programs" for these children may not

be necessary and that it could be a good idea to experiment with including other children in groups as well to avoid labeling and issues of separation. Most sites agreed that children could benefit from increased, more intensive services. Activities for children need to be structured and organized. When working with children, small groups were most effective.

*For caregivers*

When providing direct services to caregivers (e.g., support groups, case management, referrals for services, housing assistance, child care, etc.) who are incarcerated, there are several lessons shared by the sites. First, it is important to gather input about what services are needed from the caregivers themselves (often mothers, grandmothers, aunts, or foster parents) who are caring for children whose parent(s) are incarcerated. This can be done through one on one, focus groups, satisfaction surveys, etc. Time is needed to gain the trust of caregivers and it is important for staff to be aware of issues regarding trust and pride. Stabilization of families requires intensive and extensive in length services. Many families will need to receive support services for many years in order to sustain themselves. Staff must be willing to work with families who may otherwise not be motivated to participate. Home-based counseling services should be provided in order to alleviate transportation barriers, but programs must also be willing to be flexible when caregivers do not want staff in their homes. Programs must also address the issues of employment marketability for caregivers who may be computer illiterate. In regards to support, caregivers should meet often and experience “down time”

without the kids. If resources are available, child care should be provided while the caregivers participate in more outings and cultural events for themselves.

#### *For incarcerated parents*

For those programs that provided direct services to incarcerated parents (e.g., parent education classes, support groups, visitation assistance, post-release assistance), some sites shared lessons learned regarding group dynamics. One site made changes to the parenting class curriculum, based on the demonstrated areas of need which included: nutrition, stress management, school and agency interaction skills, and targeted life skills. Another important lesson learned based on working with incarcerated parents in groups was about the content of groups. Because the issues of the mothers, caregivers and children are different when some incarcerated mothers will be released and others are in prison for life, separate groups should be conducted to account for differences in conversations, emotional reactions, degree of hope, and family planning. It is also important to recognize and address the great need for legal advocacy and services for women released from prison (e.g., old warrants, bankruptcy, and custody matters). These services proved very beneficial to mothers in addition to continued parenting after-release programs and services.

#### **Collaboration**

Collaborations and partnerships with schools, social service agencies, corrections, and community agencies are an integral part of the implementation process. As the *YES* Program experienced, relationships with the state child welfare agency helped them

purchase program slots for children of incarcerated parents. The ROOTS Program would not have been able to implement their school-based program without developing strong relationships with school officials and teachers. Relationships with corrections personnel during planning phases and early implementation phases have proved helpful in developing family friendly visitation policies and procedures as well as for access to incarcerated parents. Also, having an identified point person at each facility that can receive, review, and distribute information regarding resources for parents is helpful in establishing support for the programs. It also helps nurture the relationship with the administration. Collaborations with other local agencies such as the public library, dance clubs, YMCA, etc. have helped provide additional services for children.

### **Community Awareness/Buy-in**

Building community awareness and support requires developing relationships, maintaining partnerships and collaborations, as well as providing training to educate groups about the issues and enlisting their support. In regards to increasing awareness, presentations should be made on a continuous basis, taking advantage of opportunities to engage and inform the community and to increase policymaker and professional awareness. Forums can help provide information to policymakers, and when possible, the media should be used to build more community awareness.

Training should also be extended to caregivers and incarcerated parents regarding parent education and behavior management techniques so that they are able to reinforce the behavior at home. Community groups and systems that impact families should also be

trained as part of public awareness of the issues. Clients as well as school staff should be engaged in the ongoing development of the project, so that it is responsive to their needs.

Strategies that have worked well for the intervention sites to build community support and buy-in include: developing resource guides which document important services such as emergency housing assistance, mental health/health services, job prep/placement, mentoring, educational services, support groups, utility assistance, recreational activities, food banks, and clothes closets that are available in the community. Development of training manuals for other social service agencies and handbooks of information for how to work with children and families affected by incarceration have also been employed.

### **Sustainability**

In general, sites were pursuing additional grant funding for continued support from diverse sources including: the federal government, state government, local entities and private foundations. Many have had success with foundations that are interested in supporting their services, but most of these foundations require additional matching funds. This has been a challenge for the sites, given the budget cuts in many states. Intervention sites had strong support from top administrators (e.g., state/local government, corrections) and/or their parent organizations which helped build program credibility.

As of the writing of this report, Catholic Community Services has received two federal grants: (1) mentoring grant for children of incarcerated parents and (2) a strengthening families and marriages grant. The Family Matters Program also received the federal mentoring grant and will continue to provide services to the children of

incarcerated parents. The families will continue to be supported through various other grants under the Parent Center, but the program plans to continue to search for funding to be able to deliver the comprehensive model of services. The Family Ties Program is pending notice for funding from two foundations (the Freddie Mac Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation) which would expand current services to include therapeutic support groups at various public schools in Wards 7 and 8. Families in Crisis, Inc.: *YES* Program is waiting to hear about contracting with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families to serve the target population. They are also in the process of securing a collaborative grant with a community based organization to provide services for mothers in prison and continue looking for matching funds to secure additional mentoring grants. The Future Links Program is currently still searching for viable funding to continue. The ROOTS Program secured funding from the San Francisco County Department of Children, Youth and Their Families as well as from several foundations to continue serving students affected by incarceration and to expand their program. It is expected that for many sites that receive funding, program operations (including mission, goals, and objectives) may change in order to meet the requirements of the grants.

## **Conclusion**

Based upon the evaluation, NCCD has identified minimal components that need to be incorporated for program development success. Any entity or anyone considering working with children and families affected by incarceration must take the following into consideration:



- Collaboration: Programs must collaborate and build partnerships with other organizations that can help them with the process of implementing services. They must also continue engaging the community and stakeholders about the issues facing children of incarcerated parents.
- Relationships: Beyond partnerships, programs must also develop and nurture relationships with corrections, schools, and the community to be successful in gaining access.
- Space: Programs need to secure space to deliver activities whether it is for counseling, support groups, children's groups, activities, etc. When providing services in the community, programs should be housed in a safe, child-friendly neighborhood. There should also be easy access to water and bathroom facilities. Some sites found it beneficial to have staff on-site at correctional facility or at the schools where a majority of the services were provided.
- Target population: The target population should be clearly defined and plans for how to identify, recruit, and enroll clients should be determined.
- Viable services: Programs should conduct needs assessments to determine the needs of their target populations and of the services that are available in their community. In order to be successful, programs must be able to make connections between the two. Services provided to children should be developmentally appropriate.
- Staff: In order to operate effectively, not only is sufficient staff necessary, but staff must also be competent and possess quality skills for working with the children and families affected by incarceration. As in most endeavors, experience is important. It appears that the level of skill understanding the issues of trust and challenges of

families affected by parental incarceration may be correlated with the length of time that staff worked with children as well as length of time that staff had worked specifically with children of incarcerated parents.

- Financial sustainability: Programs must continually search for diverse resources in order to maintain and/or expand level of services. Sustainability also aids in the retention of staff.

In addition, depending on circumstance, it is also important to consider the following factors that may impede program development. These include:

- Changes in political environment
- Changes in administration (e.g., state/local government, corrections)
- Staff turnover
- Changes in funding
- Resistance from community

Taking these factors into consideration, some the “best practices” that can be derived from this study focus on how to effectively address and overcome some of the challenges that may be presented to organizations that are developing or implementing programs with this target population.

- Anticipate resistance: Programs should plan strategies to motivate the target population to participate. Providing incentives for participation appear to work. It is also necessary to develop a clear strategy for recruiting the target population into the program. Resources and time should be allocated for this.

- Reduce stigma: Programs need to act on efforts that reduce labeling by avoiding special groups, marked vehicles, mail/newsletter distribution, etc. Programs should also provide training to groups/systems that come in contact with these children (e.g., law enforcement, child welfare, and schools) about the issues facing these children.
- Access: Securing access to correctional facilities, incarcerated parent groups, and schools can be challenging. Programs need to develop and continually nurture relationships, identify contact liaisons at the facilities, participate in trainings to incorporate rules of facilities/schools in their programming, and provide information about their programs and services to develop support.
- Anticipate need for further services/resources: Programs should be aware of the available resources in their community, but should also be willing to develop relationships with other organizations/groups that can help provide additional resources.

### **Implications for Future Program Development**

Intervention programs that address the needs of children of incarcerated parents require effective program development. The components involved in the development of the program are multi-faceted. We hope that the information presented can be used to develop comprehensive approaches to guide program development for programs serving an increasing number of children that are impacted. The experiences of the demonstration sites enabled NCCD to (1) provide feedback to the target sites that can be used to assist them in their program implementation, (2) assist other organizations that are considering developing programs that work with this target population so that they can be better

informed about the challenges and issues to consider when designing a program for providing services to children of incarcerated parents and/or families, (3) provide information about “best practices” for addressing some of these challenges and issues, and (4) provide information that can inform funders and policymakers who can potentially fund this important work. After understanding the processes involved in continuing or developing, as well as implementing programs that address the needs of children of incarcerated parents, can we begin to collect data to determining the impact of the intervention programs on the children and families.

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## **APPENDIX**





**Program Design Matrix- Year One (Months 1-12)**

**Organization Name:**

**Proposal Title:**

Itemize as Stage I Start up phase Implementation

Stage II Early Implementation

Stage III Mid-Stage

**GOAL STATEMENT:**

STAGE	Objectives	Related Activities	Who is Responsible	Expected Outcome	Indicators	When Measured
Stage I						

## Sample: Grant Progress Report

Stage \_\_\_\_

Submitted to National Council on Crime and Delinquency by

Grantee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This report is submitted in fulfillment of the reporting requirements for Stage \_\_\_\_ of the Grantee:

\_\_\_\_\_.

### *Project Scope*

1. What were your objectives for this stage? What was the level of achievement for each objective? (Attach documents reflecting indicators where appropriate). *Grantee should refer to the matrix when completing this section.*

a) Indicator:

*Result:*

b) Indicator:

*Result:*

2. Were your objectives as outlined in your matrix achieved? If not, please explain the challenges you faced and if you think you will be able to overcome them. Will you need to change your objective? Please explain fully.

3. Are you ready to move into the next stage or phase? If not, why not? Please explain if you have to make changes to your objectives, activities, etc.

4. What lessons have you learned in this stage? How will it impact your project and the next stages of your program implementation? Please provide details and any advice you would provide to similar programs/projects.

**National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD)  
CWLA Advisory Board Member Interview Protocol**

**Background Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation(s) related to organizations dealing with children and families affected by parental incarceration:

\_\_\_\_\_

Position/Title within organization(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have **you** worked with this organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time on CWLA's Center for Children of Prisoners Advisory Board? \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Brief organization description:**

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe briefly the organization listed above. What does the organization do? What services (if any) are provided? What is the organization's mission? Are there specific programs or projects that help fulfill the organization's mission?

What is your “role” in the organization?

How did your organization/project begin? (i.e., what were the circumstances or event that resulted in the creation of your program)

Number of years organization/program in operation: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Who are the target client(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Does the organization work to address the needs of children of incarcerated parents? Yes No

If so, what specific services (if any) are provided to address the needs of children and/or families of incarcerated parents?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Setting (where are services provided?): \_\_\_\_\_

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**First Hand Knowledge:**

1. In your organization, were you part of the ongoing implementation process of programs or projects as they developed or expanded? Yes No
2. Please provide an example of a challenge or obstacle that needed to be addressed in order to fulfill the goals of the organization. (e.g. identifying/recruiting target population, recruiting/retaining/and training staff, service provisions, collaborations, community training/awareness or other).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What strategies were used to overcome challenges and obstacles? In the early planning stages, what strategies would you suggest to other organizations to achieve higher levels of results?

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4. In your experience, what are some pitfalls that can hinder program development?

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5. What are some of your lessons learned when providing services to children, their caregivers, and/or incarcerated parents? (e.g sites have indicated the importance of establishing trust as well as the need for referral of many other services)

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6. [If applicable] What lessons were learned during the recruitment, training, and staff development process of your organization?

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7. Does your organization have partners or collaborators?    Yes        No

8. If so, what suggestions can you offer for choosing partners and forming collaborations?

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9. Demonstration sites have indicated the need to provide training to community agencies (eg. child welfare workers, law enforcement, corrections, schools, etc.) as well as engage the community to help build awareness. If your organization provided training, what are some of the lessons learned that can help make trainings more useful?

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10. Does your organization/project have sustainable resources? Yes No

11. What suggestions do you have for organizations trying to build sustainability?

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12. Were there other factors/forces that impacted the organization's ability to implement the program (ie. role of local politics, changes in policy, funding, community resources/support, etc.)? If so, please explain. How were they addressed?

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Other comments: