

Ninety-two percent of federal and state prisoners have children, and of these more than half of them have children under the age of 18. With so many incarcerated fathers who will eventually return to the community, there is an obvious need to not only focus on employment and housing, but also fatherhood and family reintegration. Compelling research indicates that effective reentry programs for men are critical to reducing recidivism, strengthening family connections and promoting social and economic well-being. One such program is the Creating Lasting Family Connections Fatherhood Program (Fatherhood Program), which works to address the needs of fathers, men in father-like roles, and men who are planning to become fathers who will reintegrate with their families following release. Developed by The Council on Prevention and Education Substances, Inc. (COPES), the initiative provides a \$41 return on investment for every taxpayer dollar spent by the program.

Success

Based in Louisville Kentucky, the COPES Fatherhood Program has received national recognition from both the justice and public health sectors. In 2009, the program and its curriculum were identified as a promising program by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and in 2013 it was listed on the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP). In addition to being cost-effective, the program and its parent curriculum Creating Lasting Family Connections, have been shown to reduce recidivism by 60 percent, improve family engagement and enhance relationship building- skills. The program's overarching family connections curriculum has also been highlighted by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and has been nominated for review on The National Institute of Justice's CrimeSolutions.gov website.

Nuts and Bolts

Based on the Creating Lasting Family Connections curriculum, the Fatherhood Program is designed to strengthen families, enhance parenting skills, and minimize risks related to substance abuse, violence, risky sexual behavior, and recidivism. The adapted curriculum is specifically designed to cultivate an atmosphere of respect, inclusion, and sensitivity targeting the adult male population.

Using a multi-faceted strength-based approach, the curriculum is comprised of four highly interactive modules that are delivered in up to 20 weekly or bi-weekly two-hour group sessions by qualified trainers. With curriculum informed by adult learning theory, the program has been administered both in the community and in corrections settings and has served over 1,500 participants since 2005.

The program engages individuals immediately upon release (or conditional release) and offers services in the community. The program consists of three standard modules focusing on developing positive parental influences; raising resilient children; and Getting Real which focuses on communication skills. One additional optional module - the ABC 3 (D) Approach to HIV, Hepatitis and Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases Prevention - focuses on effective preventive measures, and healthy sexual expression practices. While in the program, participants have access to case management and community referral services. Regular fidelity checks are required and conducted through the collaborative efforts of trainers, administrators and community partners.

Funding

The program was initially funded through a Substance Abuse, HIV, & Hepatitis Prevention for Minority Populations in Communities of Color Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Currently, funding comes from in-kind contributions from community partners; private donations; and funding from SAMHSA and the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. Current efforts aim to develop a comprehensive long term sustainability plan that will involve several local and national partnerships. Several grant extensions were awarded through 2015.

Moving Forward

The Fatherhood Program is one of the organization's evidence-based interventions, consistently demonstrating positive outcomes for participants and taxpayers alike. The influence and success of COPES's Family Connections and Fatherhood Programs have helped stimulate community awareness about the importance of family re-integration. While the program is currently grant funded, the organization hopes to institutionalize funding through dedicated private or public sources. The agency is also working towards the creation of a dedicated Family Recovery Support Center, which will not only provide new office and training space but will also provide 30 units of supportive and transitional housing, family support and reintegration services and supportive employment/job placement services. This expansion will help the agency expand the number of clients serviced and expand the types of residential offerings available to those re-entering from incarceration.

For more information about COPES, Inc. and the Creating Lasting Family Connections Fatherhood Program: Family Reintegration [click here](#)