



# Network Notes

August 2005

## Working with fathers during the transition from corrections

The "Transitions Roundtable: A focus on fatherhood after incarceration", sponsored by the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network, was convened at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, on June 29, 2005.



There were 68 participants in attendance, representing five state correctional facilities, four county jails and a wide range of community agencies from across Minnesota.

Sponsored by a grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation, the goals of the one-day event were to invite professionals working in corrections and in the fatherhood field to gather to (1) identify barriers that fathers encounter as they re-enter their families, neighborhoods and communities; and (2) propose organizational and community strategies that may be implemented to promote fathers' successful transition and reduce recidivism.

The meeting included a variety of small-group discussions, panel presentations, and informational speakers.

### Recommendations for working with incarcerated and recently-incarcerated fathers

Throughout the day, attendees proposed action steps, policy changes, research questions, and activities that could lead to easier transitions for fathers exiting the state's correctional facilities. Some of those recommendations are listed here.

#### Community agency professionals can:

- Create employment opportunities by approaching employers directly to create positive relationships;
- Work with employers to pursue tax credits and insurance bonds that are available for hiring ex-felons;
- Provide a positive force by working with employers to support the hiring of ex-felons and by explaining that ex-

offenders often become loyal employees;

- Make connections and provide resources for ex-offenders;
- Start a public sector work program – if an ex-offender is doing well, offer him a

full-time position;

- Ease an ex-offender's transportation needs by helping secure bus tokens, ride-share opportunities, or other means for getting to work.

#### Correctional facilities can:

- Allow incarcerated fathers to stay connected to their children until their release through a range of supports: visiting policies, friendly waiting rooms, transportation for family members, affordable phone calls, audio tapes or DVD recordings through the mail, etc.;
- Develop strategies to help men complete BCA forms, which are very complicated;
- Open facility doors to community service providers to come in and work with offenders; invite people from the community in to correctional programs;
- Help incarcerated fathers address family violence issues;
- Provide comfortable and appealing visiting areas for children to spend time with their fathers;
- Emphasize and support family literacy initiatives;
- Inquire during enrollment / intake whether men are fathers and offer appropriate programming and transitional services;
- Improve the "bridges" between the Dept. of Corrections and communities by enhancing communication and technology systems.

#### Probation and parole officers can:

- Establish methods to help fathers be held accountable as competent parents;

"Transitions from Corrections" continued on page 2.

Our mission,

as a statewide network,

is to initiate, promote and support effective programs and to educate on public policy to enhance the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of children, families and the community.

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### A Voice for Fatherhood

MFFN seeks to provide a voice for Minnesota's fatherhood and family services organizations. If you have a "best practice" or information you would like to share, please send your idea to MFFN.

“Transitions from Corrections” continued from page 1.

- Support opportunities for restorative justice to be applied, especially for older offenders;
- Use probation as a positive, affirming method to hold men accountable;
- Support work-release for a larger number of men – thereby easing the transition back to family and community;
- Enhance the capacity for fathers to be positively involved with their children.

### Ex-offenders can:

- Remain as active as possible in the neighborhood, faith-community, civic organizations, family, employment and/or leisure activities to survive and thrive after incarceration;
- Volunteer at a food shelf or men’s program, pursuing any work that is richly rewarding and where one can talk about one’s history of offense openly;
- Be available to the community as a resource provider, to get over the sense of powerlessness and fragility;
- Create a positive network for oneself and use it. Make new friends in order to stay straight;
- Find ways to get over feelings of being disenfranchised.

### Family and friends can:

- Become more involved in promoting solutions (for housing, employment, relationships, etc.);
- Encourage appropriate, positive father-child relationships.

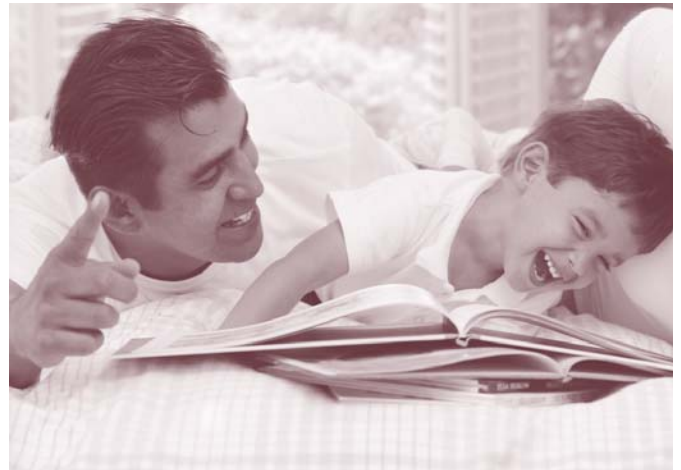
### Everyone in the community can:

- Focus on re-creating a structured environment for the ex-offender through safe housing, stable employment, three square meals, staying away from chemicals and alcohol, volunteering, establishing new routines and making other healthy choices one day at a time;
- Remember that the consistent structure of prison life is attractive and beneficial for some ex-offenders;
- Involve women in supporting fatherhood – especially work with female advocates to encourage mothers to allow father involvement at all stages of child development;
- Remember the important element of spiritual support;
- Develop mentoring assistance for fathers;
- Help ex-offenders start anew by remembering: “Get to know me before you categorize me.”

At the end of the roundtable meeting, each participant signed an Individual Commitment to Act. On the form, they identified personal activities and actions to extend the meeting beyond a day-long “brainstorming session”.

For a full overview of the roundtable meeting, and a more extensive list of action steps and recommendations, visit [www.mnfathers.org/TransitionsRoundtableFinalReport.pdf](http://www.mnfathers.org/TransitionsRoundtableFinalReport.pdf) (11 page PDF file).

**Help spread the word about services for fathers!  
Create a weblink to [www.mnfathers.org](http://www.mnfathers.org).**



## Connecting dads and children through literacy and early education

Join MFFN in September or October to learn:

- developmentally appropriate literacy activities for dads and kids;
- the influence of gender on reading habits;
- the role of father-figures in children’s literacy development;
- the influences of talking, reading, singing, and playing as tools for expanding literacy.

Whether you plan to teach a parent education class or to interact one-on-one with a single dad, the sessions will give you the tools necessary to help dads feel confident about their role in promoting literacy and alternate literacies.

St. Cloud	Friday, Sept. 23, 2005
Crookston	Thursday, Sept. 29, 2005
Marshall	Thursday, Oct. 6, 2005
Morris	Friday, Oct. 7, 2005
St. Paul	Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2005
Northfield	Thursday, Oct. 13, 2005
Proctor	Friday, Oct. 28, 2005

*\* All workshops will be held from 8:30 am – 12:00 noon.*

The 2005 Fall Seminar Series is the fourth annual series of professional-development workshops hosted by the Minnesota Fathers & Families Network. This year’s workshops are sponsored in collaboration with the Minnesota Humanities Commission, Southside Community Health Services, St. Cloud State University, and the Minnesota Initiative Funds. More information is online at [www.mnfathers.org/news2005.html](http://www.mnfathers.org/news2005.html).

Please RSVP no later than one week prior to the event. EMAIL: [info@mnfathers.org](mailto:info@mnfathers.org) or FAX: ATTN Paul Masiarchin 612-787-4002. Please include your name, email and the session you will attend. For further details, call Paul at (612) 787-4091.

The workshops are free to members of MFFN. Non-members are asked to pay a \$10.00 registration fee at the door upon arrival (registration includes a Certificate of Attendance, snacks, handouts, and a father-focused children’s book). Cash or check payable to MFFN.

## State-by-state guide tracks restoration of ex-offender rights

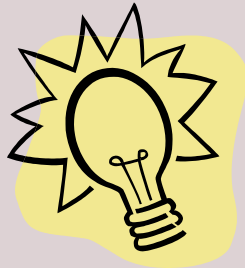
The Sentencing Project has posted online portions of a new study entitled Relief from the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Conviction: A State-by-State Resource Guide. This is the first comprehensive review of state and federal laws and practices relating to restoration of rights and obtaining relief from the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction.

The study illustrates the extraordinary variety and complexity of state and federal laws that impose continuing burdens on convicted persons long after their court-imposed sentences have been fully discharged. It is an important resource for policymakers interested in offender reentry and reintegration, for practitioners at all levels of the criminal justice system, and for people with a criminal record who are seeking to put their past behind them.

Details at [www.sentencingproject.org/news.cfm](http://www.sentencingproject.org/news.cfm).

### Working with Fathers

#### TIPS FOR PROFESSIONALS



**A “group” by any other name is not the same.**

According to the publication, “Working with Fathers”, research shows that 43% of fathers would prefer to “talk with other fathers with similar experiences” while only 15% would join a “father’s group”.

Further research shows that more fathers would join a “group” if it was called a “meeting”, a “course” or a “training day.” Other father-friendly terms, in some situations, included “session”, “seminar”, or “dads’ club”.

The lesson: Dads pay attention to language and may respond better if your “dad’s group” gets a new name. (Source: [www.fathersdirect.com](http://www.fathersdirect.com))

## Organizations share ideas for working with incarcerated parents

If you are seeking information about research and effective practices for working with incarcerated parents, the following organizations offer valuable information.

The Minneapolis-based **Council on Crime and Justice**, [www.crimeandjustice.org](http://www.crimeandjustice.org), maintains a “Felony Friendly Resource List” that describes agencies that work directly with people as they are leaving prison and other community resources that are important for prison returnees. The Council on Crime and Justice also maintains a directory of parent education that is currently happening in Minnesota prisons and jails. If you would like a copy of either of these lists, or if you have information to contribute to them, contact Michael Bischoff at [bischoffm@crimeandjustice.org](mailto:bischoffm@crimeandjustice.org) or (612) 596-7622.

A number of Minnesota-based corrections-related organizations are linked on the inclusive **Minnesota Corrections** website: [www.mnccorrections.org](http://www.mnccorrections.org). On this site, you can find links to the Minn. Corrections Association, the Minn. Department of Corrections, the Minn. Assoc. of Jail Programs and Services, the Minn. Assoc. of Women in Criminal Justice, and others.

Another valuable resource for organizations working with incarcerated parents is the **Family & Corrections Network**. The Network offers information, training and technical assistance on children of prisoners, parenting programs for prisoners, prison visiting, incarcerated fathers and mothers, hospitality programs, keeping in touch, returning to the community, the impact of the justice system on families, and prison marriage. View FCN online at [www.fcnetwork.org](http://www.fcnetwork.org).

The **Re-Entry Policy Council** lists online a review of policy recommendations. According to their website, the Council “offers hundreds of consensus-based, bipartisan recommendations for reducing public spending and increasing public safety by promoting the safe and successful return of [ex-offenders] to the community.” View the report online at [www.reentrypolicy.org](http://www.reentrypolicy.org).

## Website connects employers with ex-offenders

The following website caters to uniting American employers, especially small businesses, with ex-offenders: [www.nouturns.org](http://www.nouturns.org).

As stated on the website, “In our business, ex-offenders have turned out to be some of our best employees. We discovered this concept by accident, but it has worked so well for five years that we want to share our success with small business everywhere. So we created this no-charge hiring website as a permanently-supported gift to America. It is our hope that businesses nationwide will find the same benefits we have found by hiring deserving people who are ready to work.”

The website also links to similar resources that strive to connect employers with people in recovery from drugs and alcohol, our ageing population, and our citizens with disabilities.

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The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network is committed to hearing the voices of fatherhood practitioners from throughout Minnesota.

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## Fatherhood research roundup: Recent documents examine fatherhood from a variety of perspectives

### Postnatal Paternal Depression Triggers Behavioral Problems for Sons

The report notes that “the effect of the paternal depression on behavioral problems remained significant even after maternal depression and other factors were taken into account.” View a review of the data online: [www.medpagetoday.com/tbindex.cfm?tbid=1241](http://www.medpagetoday.com/tbindex.cfm?tbid=1241) (June 2005).

### Parent-Child Connectedness: Voices of African-American and Latino Parents and Teens

ETR Associates has posted findings from a 2004 focus group study. The document “makes a clear and compelling case that parents want help and look to community partners for assistance...[it also] captures parents’ ideas about what practitioners can do to help them figure out why teens do what they do.” Available online at [www.etr.org/recapp/research](http://www.etr.org/recapp/research) (May 2005).

### The New Kid on the Block: What is Marriage Education and Does It Work?

This brief provides an introduction to marriage and relationship education, highlights its research roots, and summarizes what is known thus far about the effectiveness of marriage education programs. Visit the Center for Law and Social Policy online: [www.clasp.org/publications/marriage\\_brief7.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/marriage_brief7.pdf) (July 2005).

### Teenagers and Attitudes Towards Fatherhood

A new report from Fathers, Incorporated explores the thoughts and attitudes of today’s teenagers. The report notes that that “the new realities of today’s society [have] put a strain on how [teens] process the relationship of fathers and children.” View the report online: [www.fathersinc.org/Fatherhood%20Teenager%20Report.htm](http://www.fathersinc.org/Fatherhood%20Teenager%20Report.htm) (April 2005).

### The Child Support Program: An Investment That Works

This 4-page paper provides data to explain how child support helps children and increases self-sufficiency. It also briefly discusses the federal program's performance and its funding. Online at [www.clasp.org/publications/cs\\_funding\\_072605.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/cs_funding_072605.pdf) (Revised July 2005).

### Support for MFFN is provided in part by:

The McKnight Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, & MFFN members.

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Help us to meet the needs of fatherhood advocates across Minnesota.  
 Your gift in any amount is appreciated.

My gift is (please check one):

- membership registration (basic membership is \$20 annually).
- a gift to MFFN.
- an anonymous contribution.
- in memory of: \_\_\_\_\_
- in honor of: \_\_\_\_\_
- other: \_\_\_\_\_



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