



# Resources to support fathers returning from prison or jail to families in Minnesota

Photo: Rick Demopolis



## What can corrections workers do?

### Why should corrections workers pay attention to the parenting and child support issues of offenders?

More than half (55%) of state inmates are parents. Half of these parents have an open child support case. Typically, parents owe \$10,000 entering prison and \$20,000+ upon release. Proactive engagement with parenting and child support issues from corrections workers increases the likelihood of positive family reunification, future child support payments, and the wellbeing of the children of offenders.

#### Upon entry into a correctional facility:

### 1. Review child support and parenting issues as a part of intake. Encourage offenders to deal with child support and paternity issues while they are incarcerated.

- The county can file a court action to suspend or modify a father's support to zero while incarcerated. This process takes time and is not retroactive.
- If the order is not from Minnesota, the offender should contact the state which has jurisdiction to see if their laws allow modification while incarcerated.

#### Did you know?

- An offender's child support obligation does NOT automatically stop upon incarceration.
- Having a child support obligation does not mean that the offender has any custodial rights.

#### Prior to release from a facility:

### 2. Include child support, paternity, and family reunification as a part of pre-release programming.

A video is available on the Mind the Gap website ([www.mnfathers.org/mindthegap](http://www.mnfathers.org/mindthegap)) that you can use in this programming.

- Encourage offenders to update their county child support worker(s) about their housing and employment plans upon release.
- Inform fathers to establish paternity and secure their parenting rights if the child was not born during a marriage, unless they have a court order that pertains to custody and parenting time rights.
- Encourage fathers to take advantage of parenting classes in prison or jail.
- Encourage fathers to make and continue efforts to establish and maintain contact with their children.

#### On probation or parole:

### 3. Refer fathers to community agencies that provide reentry, parenting, and family services.

Some of these resources in Minnesota are listed on the website below.

- Have a domestic violence protocol in place to prevent and respond to risks of violence.
- Offenders may owe thousands of dollars in child support arrears. Encourage offenders to explore arrears management options with their child support officer.

"Research suggests two elements play an important role for released offenders who succeed at reentering society and avoid returning to prison: **Family support and employment.**"<sup>1</sup>

For videos, procedural guidance, and connections to supportive resources for fathers, go to:

[www.mnfathers.org/mindthegap](http://www.mnfathers.org/mindthegap)

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1. "Incarceration, Reentry, and Child Support Issues: National and State Research Overview." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement. 2006.

