

## Mind the Gap:

A pilot project to promote fathers' re-entry into communities and re-engagement with families.

### What is Mind the Gap?

This pilot project involves a unique combination of programs and activities in Ramsey and Hennepin counties. Its overall purpose is to close the social and economic gaps experienced by fathers who leave prison. Finding employment and becoming voluntary and reliable payors of child support are among the most formidable gaps ex-offenders face. When realistic child support orders are set and regular financial support is provided, father-child relationships are strengthened and children's lives improve.

### Who benefits from this collaboration?

- Participating agencies will benefit from sustainable partnerships that facilitate information sharing, education and awareness.
- Ex-offenders will benefit from specialized case management and from having realistic child support orders.
- Child support enforcement and corrections organizations will benefit from collaborative improvements in system infrastructure.
- Families will benefit from higher paternity establishment rates and more reliable child support payments.

### What are some of the project's key elements?

**Collaboration.** State and local agencies as well as community partners involved in both corrections and child support enforcement are committed to working more efficiently toward common project goals. Partners in the project share the belief that most fathers want to support their children both financially and emotionally, but ex-offenders, especially, need help in finding jobs or overcoming barriers to successful reintegration into families and communities.

**Information sharing.** By sharing information among corrections and child support agencies and by increasing the quality and timeliness of that information, frustrating delays in processing cases pre- and post-release can be averted.

**Training and education.** Professionals who serve fathers benefit from learning new ways to improve services and increase engagement of fathers with child support obligations.

**Specialized case management.** A critical component of this project is linking ex-offenders pre- and post-release to a fatherhood coordinator who will help access wrap-around services that are crucial to success. Well-coordinated multidisciplinary case management helps ex-offenders reintegrate into communities and support their families. Children of ex-offenders will benefit from regular financial support and stronger father-child relationships.

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4671. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at (800) 627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call (877) 627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact your agency's ADA coordinator.

**Funding.** Mind the Gap is a three-year project, begun in 2010, and funded in part by the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement through a Section 1115 Demonstration Grant—Projects in Support of the Prisoner Reentry Initiative. The project budget is \$172,418 annually. Almost all (95 percent) project expenses are paid with federal funds; the state share is 5 percent. There are no contributions from non-government sources.

### How does it work?

A number of activities help build a culture in which parents support their children voluntarily and reliably.

- Grant-funded case managers are assigned to volunteer participants prior to their release from a state correctional facility to help them build focused, practical plans for their return to the community.
- Following release, case management and planning continues through the Goodwill/Easter Seals FATHER Project. This includes direct connections to the wrap-around resources of Goodwill/Easter Seals, including parenting supports. These services are not time-limited.
- Child support officers from Hennepin and Ramsey counties provide services designed to encourage appropriate and reliable support payments to families.

- The project follows the domestic violence protocol specifically developed by African American Family Services, specializing in family preservation services.
- The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network facilitates information sharing, cross-training and education among agency partners and will conduct a project evaluation.
- The approach is consistent with the Minnesota Child Support Program Strategic Plan and the National Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan which emphasize early intervention to prevent the build-up of child support arrears.

### What agencies are involved?

- African American Family Services
- Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota
- Hennepin County Child Support
- Minnesota Department of Human Services' Child Support Enforcement Division
- Minnesota Department of Corrections
- Ramsey County Child Support
- The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network.

### Who to contact for more information?

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កំណត់សំគាល់ បើអ្នកចង់បានជំនួយបកប្រែព័ត៌មាននេះដោយមិនគិតថ្លៃ សូមសួរអ្នកកាន់សំណុំរឿងរបស់អ្នក ឬ ទូរស័ព្ទទៅលេខ 1-888-468-3787 ។

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Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, nug koj tus neeg lis dej num (worker) lossis hu 1-888-486-8377.

ໂປດຊາບ. ຖ້າຫາກທ່ານຕ້ອງການການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປຂໍ້ຄວາມດັ່ງກ່າວນີ້ຟຣີ, ຈົ່ງຖາມນຳພນັກງານຊ່ວຍວຽກຂອງທ່ານຫຼືໂທ 1-888-487-8251.

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