



THE WELFARE PEER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK

**Overview of the
Second North American Conference on
Fathers Behind Bars and on the Street
(November 6-8, 2002)**

*A report prepared by
Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants – Virginia, Inc. for the
Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network*

This report is a summary of the Second North American Conference on Fathers Behind Bars and on the Street held November 6-8, 2002 by Keith DeBlasio--Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (Virginia C.U.R.E) – Virginia, Inc. This report is a continued effort to build upon the goals and objectives of a previous TA event entitled “Uniting Incarcerated Parents and their Families” hosted by the Welfare Peer TA Network in May, 2002. A copy of the “Lessons Learned” from the May event are posted on the Peer TA Network web site at <http://www.calib.com/peerta>. A copy of any conference materials can be obtained by contacting:

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I. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families joined with the Family and Corrections Network in this collaborative effort—the Second North American Conference on Fathers Behind Bars and on the Street. The conference presented an opportunity for practitioners, researchers, policy experts, and advocates who work on behalf of father—both those living in the community and those who are incarcerated in prisons, jails, and detention facilities—to come together to learn from each other in an unique event for this still young field of work. There were many excellent opportunities during the week to expand our own knowledge, gain new skills, and create networks with others who are working with fathers and their families. The program included plenary speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and seminars. Resources included video viewing, a networking reception, and exhibits.

In addition, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation contributed its support for this conference, as did other supporting organizations, exhibitors, program advertisers, and presenters.

II. BACKGROUND

About the National Practitioners Network for - Fathers and Families, Inc., (NPNFF)
Striving to serve the professional development needs and interests of the fathers and fragile families program practitioner.

The National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, Inc. (NPNFF), is the national individual membership organization whose mission is to build the profession of practitioners working to increase the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of their children. NPNFF's programs and services are designed to foster communication, promote professionalism, and enhance collaboration among individuals working with fathers and fragile families.

Through publications, conferences, training events, technical assistance, advocacy, collaboration with other fathers and families organizations, and networking opportunities, NPNFF seeks to strengthen practitioners in their day-to-day work with fathers and fragile families.

Recent projects that NPNFF has been involved with have included the development of program standards for fatherhood organizations, completion of a Gender Equity Project, and the recent establishment of a Center for Excellence in Fatherhood Program Practice.

NPNFF's 660 members represent a wide range of perspectives of fatherhood and fragile families program practitioners across the United States. Through participation in national advocacy coalitions and collaborative efforts; NPNFF ensures that the voice of the individuals who work with fathers in local programs will be heard as national policy decisions are made.

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About Family and Corrections Network

There are over 2 million people behind bars in the United States. What is happening to their families and their children? One in forty children have an incarcerated parent. Where does one go for answers? Family and Corrections Network (FCN) breaks the wall of silence, provides practical information, and makes connections to local resources throughout the United States.

FCN's web site, www.fcnetwork.org is the gateway to programs and services for families of prisoners for 150,000 visitors each year. FCN REPORT is the only national periodical devoted to families of prisoners.

Since 1983, Family and Corrections Network has provided ways for those concerned with families of prisoners to share information and experiences in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We have done this through publishing, sponsoring conferences, liaison with other agencies, presentations, and consultation. We have published information on children of prisoners, parenting programs for prisoners, prison visiting, incarcerated fathers, hospitality programs and a variety of other topics. We are a low overhead, volunteer organization with a vital mission.

FCN is a network of agencies and individuals concerned with families of prisoners. FCN has members in fatherhood programs, child and family service organizations, education, social work, law, government, academics, and religious organizations.

FCN especially values the leadership, wisdom of experience, and creative contributions of prisoners, former prisoners and families of prisoners. To insure their active involvement and leadership, FCN has:

- awarded over \$30,000 of scholarships enabling former prisoners and families of prisoners to attend FCN's national conferences
- featured prisoners, former prisoners and families of prisoners as presenters in FCN's national conferences
- published materials by prisoners, former prisoners and families of prisoners. On the FCN web site: The Wall, a growing collection of poetry and prose by prisoners, former prisoners and families of prisoners; and The Incarcerated

Fathers Library, pamphlets for and about dads behind bars edited by two incarcerated fathers. FCN REPORT has featured materials by prisoners, former prisoners and families of prisoners.

- placed a priority on board membership by former prisoners and families of prisoner members

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III. WORKSHOP SESSIONS

1. OPENING PLENARY

*Dwaine Simms, Chairman of the Board, NPNFF
Ann Adalist-Estrin, Vice-Chair, FCN
Dr. John Jeffries*

Both Dwaine Simms and Ann Adalist-Estrin individually welcomed everyone to the conference and shared a brief background of their individual organizations.

Dr. John Jeffries discussed focusing on the objectives each participant had for the conference and workshops, building realistic goals from the information received, and following through with actions. Dr. Jeffries also discussed his history as it related to his current involvement with fatherhood programs, the need for changes from within, and the perception of the male/masculine condition.

John Jeffries, Ph.D. joined Vera Institute of Justice in 1996 and became the first director of the National Associates Programs when he helped create the department in 1997. He teaches at Columbia University, where he is an associate professor in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and a visiting professor at the Institute for Research in African-American Studies. He, Creasie Finney Hairston and Suzanne Menghrajic co-authored “Serving Incarcerated and Ex-Offender Fathers and Their Families: A Review of the Field.”

2. LUNCHEON ADDRESS - “A view from the outside.”

*Elizabeth Gaynes
Emani Gaynes*

Elizabeth Gaynes addressed the need to maintain a workable relationship with non-custodial incarcerated parents. Ms. Gaynes provided interesting insight into ways for

both parents to continue joint involvement in the children's lives, even though one parent was incarcerated. One particularly innovative initiative cited was the use of a joint contract for appropriate parent behavior.

Elizabeth Gaynes is director of the Osborne Association, a NYC nonprofit that serves prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families. Her children's father is incarcerated in Virginia. She is a member of the Board of Directors of Family and Corrections Network.

Emani Davis spoke on the child's need to maintain a positive relationship with their incarcerated parent. She emphasized the need for honest discussion regarding the circumstances involved and the need for open communication. Ms. Davis also addressed how to recognize children and adults who subconsciously delay their emotional development during the years of incarceration in order to avoid losing those years.

Emani Davis, 24 and daughter of Elizabeth Gaynes, attends Manhattanville College and volunteers with Osborne's Family Works program, speaking with prisoners and families about her experience of her father's incarceration for 18 years.

3. ADDRESSING REINTEGRATION ISSUES WITH FATHERS LEAVING PRISON (Workshop Session 1)

Joseph Mason

Robert Houston

The local demonstration project, being conducted in Chicago, focuses on introducing child support case management services to two Adult Transition Centers (ATCs), which are managed by the non-profit employment and training service provider, Safer Foundation. Project staff adds child support presentations to ATC educational services, refers Non-custodial parents (NCPs)/offenders residing at the ATCs to family reintegration services and other appropriate services and keys child support payment arrangements to the current employment situations of NCPs who are leaving the ATCs and re-entering society. Illinois Division of Child Support Enforcement is currently collaborating with the Illinois Department of Corrections and with numerous community-based service providers that serve low-income families. This project will enhance these collaborations and will explore linking child support activities with the expertise of an established employment and training program for offenders in order to promote reintegration of incarcerated and released NCPs through successful employment.

4. MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS – A POLICY DISCUSSION (Workshop Session 2)

Kirk Harris

Arlene Lee

Denise Johnston

In 2001, Congress created P.L. 107-133, a discretionary grant program for mentoring children of prisoners. Mentoring is defined as matching screened adult volunteers for one-on-one activities with children of incarcerated parents. The law does not provide for any services to the families of children of prisoners. This workshop explored the policy issues raised by the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Act. Questions were raised, such as: Can the Act be modified to better meet the needs of children of prisoners? What approaches to policy change would be most effective? How can agencies concerned with families and children work together on these issues?

Several participants agreed to submit proposals for an effective mission statement on developing mentoring approaches for families of prisoners. It was the consensus of the practitioners that parenting and overall family development should not be excluded from the programs of the intended grant recipients. FCN agreed to collect these proposals and organize a future collaborative meeting where suggested guidelines for potential recipients of such grants could be organized for submission to Health and Human Services.

5. RECEPTION ADDRESS - "Missouri 's Approach to Incarcerated Fathers."

Gary D. Kempker, Director Missouri Department of Corrections
Kathy Martin, Director, Department of Social Services

Both speakers discussed unity of agencies in working towards constructive reintegration of offenders and breaking the incarceration cycle.

Missouri Governor Bob Holden appointed Gary Kempker Director of the Department of Corrections on May 1, 2001. Kempker brings to the Department a strong law enforcement background, having served in the field for more than 20 years. His most recent position was as Director of the Department of Public Safety (1995-2001). Former Governor Mel Carnahan appointed him to this position on May 15, 1995. Prior to becoming Director of DPS, Mr. Kempker served as Chief of Police for the Jefferson City Police Department.

Governor Bob Holden appointed Kathy Martin Director of the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) on March 1, 2001. DSS is the umbrella agency consisting of the Divisions of Child Support Enforcement, Family Services, Medical Services, and Youth Services, as well as four support divisions. DSS annually serves nearly 850,000 Missourians through its children's services, income assistance, Medicaid, and related social service programs. The DSS budget exceeds \$5 billion, with approximately 9,300 staff in 300 locations. Prior to this appointment, Kathy served as a consultant with the Center for the Study of Social Policy and private foundations, as interim executive director of Prevent Child Abuse-Missouri, and as president of the Methodist Early Learning Board.

6. PLENARY SESSION

Dr. Kirk E. Harris

Dr. Harris focused on media influence over minority behavior.

Kirk E. Harris, M.P.A., J.D., Ph.D., is Senior Group Vice President and General Counsel at Family Support America. His duties encompass the management and oversight of the day-to-day legal and administrative affairs of the corporation in collaboration with the President/CEO and the senior management team. He provides strategic leadership and management of staff who support the research, evaluation, and the public policy work of Family Support America.

7. INNOVATIVE USE OF TANF FUNDS TO ENHANCE ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION, PROBATION, AND PAROLE: THE NEW YORK STATE EXPERIENCE (Workshop Session 3)

Tracie M. Gardner

Bernard Wilson

Brad Dudding

This workshop focused on New York State's experience in identifying and utilizing Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds to support custodial and non-custodial parents with criminal histories. Specific program models and possible opportunities for other federal resource support were highlighted.

8. LUNCHEON ADDRESS

Dr. Anne Nurse

Anne M. Nurse is Assistant Professor of Sociology. B.A. University of California, Berkeley; M.A., Ph.D. University of California, Davis. Her research examines the meaning and practice of fatherhood for young men on parole. She is the author of *Fatherhood Arrested*, a study of fathers while in the California Youth Authority and upon release.

Dr. Nurse discussed issues involving incarcerated and paroled juvenile fathers. Rates of juvenile incarceration have increased dramatically over the last twenty years and it is estimated that over a quarter of male inmates are fathers.

Little is being done to address the needs of this population. Drawing on her own research in California, Nurse discussed young imprisoned men's relationships with their children. She will focus on how the structure of the prison shapes these relationships and presents barriers to fathers' involvement. The presentation also included a discussion of select issues facing juvenile fathers as they return home. She concluded with policy and program recommendations.

9. FORMERLY INCARCERATED FATHERS (Workshop Session 4)

*Charles S. Lanier
Edwin (Eddie) Ellis
Michael Carlin
Ragland Biggs
Carol Burton*

This session focused on the challenges facing parents released from prison. Understanding the scope and impact of civil disabilities, as well as being able to constructively confront and surmount these drawbacks, was also a topic of discussion during the panel.

10. FATHERING COURT (Workshop Session 5)

*Stacey Diamond
Victor Crawford
Amos Johnson
Commissioner Robert Scheiber*

Fathering Court began in March 1998 in Jackson County, Missouri for fathers financially failing to support their children. Fathers are given the opportunity to participate in this court supervised, case managed program as an alternative to a jail sentence. A variety of issues and challenges are addressed including substance abuse, lack of effective fathering skills, literacy, medical and mental health, unemployment, and housing. Because of Fathering Court, fathers are spending more dollars on and more hours with their children.

Victor Crawford discussed the high percentage rate of employment and of continued support to children for those fathers receiving employment incentives through this program.

11. THE MELD PROGRAM FOR YOUNG DADS AT THE HENNEPIN COUNTY HOME SCHOOL (Workshop Session 6)

Dwaine R. Sinuns

The MELD for Young Dads Program supports young fathers as they seek to be involved in raising their children. At the Hennepin County Home School, a juvenile detention facility, this program is designed to increase awareness of the choices young fathers have in parenting and encourage the development of their commitment to be involved in their children's lives.

12. ADDRESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM (Workshop Session 7)

Bobby Tucker

The purpose of this workshop was to examine racial disparities in the criminal justice system and how such disparities may result from decision-making at various points in the system. The workshop explored means to reduce racial disparities at each decision point of the criminal justice system, including preventative balancing of education. A *Racial Proportionality Measurement Matrix* was used, and there was much group discussion.

13. CLOSING LUCHEON ADDRESS

Tom Lagana

The closing address given by Tom Lagana was primarily a motivational address expressing the importance of looking for alternative amicable means of problem resolution and the importance of leading by example. Mr. Lagana closed the conference by asking every participant to write down one strategy or piece of information gained from the conference that they incorporate into a realistic goal for the near. Participants then exchanged these goals along with their contact information so that updates could be reported on December 8, 2002.

Tom Lagana is a professional speaker, trainer and co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul* and *Chicken Soup for the Volunteer's Soul*. A popular speaker around the country, Tom specializes in helping people become their best.