



## Case Study on Successful Program Reducing Recidivism in Prisons and Jails

Destination Dad/Christian Heritage  
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### Organization Profile

Christian Heritage was established in 1980 as a faith-based organization to serve abused and neglected children in Nebraska who were taken away from parents/guardians and placed in residential and transitional facilities and foster homes. Christian Heritage concluded **fatherlessness is the primary cause of children being placed in foster care**, and launched a Statewide Fatherhood Initiative in 2007, including the Nebraska Father of the Year and Annual Celebration of Fatherhood Luncheon. In addition, they built an in-house radio production studio for statewide outreach to fathers.

Destination Dad™ (DD) is an organization under Christian Heritage dedicated to providing positive outcomes for Nebraska's vulnerable children and families. DD believes every child deserves a safe, loving, and healthy home. Destination Dad™ was launched in March of 2009 to **restore the relationships between incarcerated dads and their children.**

### The Challenge

In 2007 Christian Heritage became intentional about answering the question, "Why are so many children in our foster care system?" According to the Child Welfare League of America, **Nebraska led the nation in the number of children, per capita, in the foster care system.** After considering hundreds of cases, Christian Heritage determined a **primary contributing factor to children entering the foster care system was father absence.**

### The Solution

**Destination Dad™ was launched to help kids stay connected with their incarcerated dads.** In partnership with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, **over 900 dads have successfully completed NFI's InsideOut Dad® program.**

### DD's incorporates a three-tier model for their program:

- 1) Involved Fathers:** increase family connections with incarcerated fathers and empower incarcerated fathers to become involved in the lives of their children.
- 2) Safer Communities:** When incarcerated fathers understand the importance of their role as an active and involved father, they will demonstrate improved behavior while incarcerated and will be less likely to re-offend upon release.
- 3) Valued Children:** Increased family involvement for incarcerated fathers will ultimately lead to better outcomes for children. When children know their father values them, they are more likely to show better behavior at home and do better in school.

### Products used from NFI

- InsideOut Dad®
- InsideOut Dad® Training

### Services provided

Destination Dad™ currently facilitates classes at the following institutions

- Nebraska State Penitentiary
- Lincoln Correctional Center
- Omaha Correctional Center
- Tecumseh State Correctional Institution
- Nebraska Correctional Center for Women
- Geneva Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center
- Lancaster County Youth Service Center

Additional classes are offered for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

Greg Austen from NFI trained facilitator's in leading InsideOut Dad® in Nebraska in 2009. This program became the holistic intervention that includes the following components:

- **InsideOut Dad®:** The first step is to complete the 12-session InsideOut Dad® program developed by the NFI. Dads learn skills on discipline, fathering, and the impact they have on their children. To participate, a dad simply needs to send a request to the education department in the institution.
- **Peer Mentoring:** Once InsideOut Dad® has been completed, dads may attend Monthly Peer Mentoring sessions on parenting, relationships, and reentry issues. They will also learn about additional program opportunities, dates, and times.
- **Daddy Day Visits:** After successfully completing InsideOut Dad®, dads may participate in monthly Daddy Day Visits. These are two-hour special visits for the men and their children. Once a month, children spend two hours with their incarcerated dads who report, "This is the most like being at home." One mom said, "Two hours once a month may not sound like much, but it has changed my son's life."
- **DVD From Dad:** A book is provided for dads to read. As they talk to their child(ren) they are videotaped. The book and DVD are sent to their child(ren). Children have reported not wanting to go to sleep or leave for school until their dad has read to them.
- **Relationship Workshop:** Dads may attend a "Within My Reach" relationship workshop developed by PREP. Romantic relationships impact every area of one's life. They learn how to strengthen their relationships, how to recognize and eliminate dangerous communication patterns, and how to resolve conflict without fighting. Participants gain relationship skills and acquire communication tools.
- **Parent/Teacher Conferences via Skype:** Studies show children do better in school when their dads are involved.
- **Family Action Plan:** Dads have opportunities to sit down with a Destination Dad™ team

member to develop Family Action Plans. The plan will include specific steps to address reentry, including relationships, housing, employment, and positive associations.

### **Outcomes**

**Program Goal:** Increase family engagement to improve outcomes for program participants in the correctional system and improve outcomes for children.

**Long-term Impact:** Reduction of inter-generational incarceration.

### **Number of Participants:**

- 930 inmates
- 2,102 children  
(Participated in the program between March 2009 and April 2014)

### **Number Released:**

- 486 have left corrections

### **Recidivism Rate:**

- 13.2 percent (NDCS rate is 27.2 percent over same period of time.)

### **Parole Success Rate:**

- Destination Dad™ from March 2009 through 2013 — 70%
- NDCS (FY 2013) — 64%

**Note:** Inmate population was reduced by 40 dads, saving the state \$1 million (annual cost per inmate: \$28,773).

### **Overall program outcomes:**

- Involved fathers
- Safer communities
- Healthier children

### **Inmate outcomes:**

- Better family contact
- Lower recidivism rates
- Higher parole success rate
- Fewer misconduct reports and/or less serious misconduct reports
- Send more money to their families
- Qualify for early for parole
- More likely to Parole to home or family
- Have better outcome in the following areas: housing, employment, and social supports

### **Outcomes for Children:**

- In school
- At home
- Out of trouble

### **Impact: A Destination Dad™ Story**

Aaron, an incarcerated father, participated in his first Parent Teacher Conference via Skype in May of 2013. Aaron had been incarcerated for seven years and had invested his time in the Destination Dad™ program offered by Christian Heritage.

Aaron is now actively involved in his son AJ's life. AJ is a fun, lovable kid who always has a smile. AJ visits his dad regularly with his mom and also participates in the monthly Daddy Day Visit, a special visit between him and his dad. This opportunity gives Aaron a chance to parent and spend quality time with his son.

When AJ's teacher heard about the Skype parent teacher conference, she eagerly agreed to meet with his dad via Skype. Aaron came to the conference fully prepared with questions. He was given an outstanding report on his son. Aaron asked how he could help AJ with his academics when he has phone calls or special visits with his son. Aaron inquired about AJ's behavior at school. The conference was considered a great success.

It is our hope and vision that more dads will have the opportunity to invest in their children's lives to make a long-term difference. We are confident that the services Christian Heritage offers incarcerated dads will help us see our vision fulfilled. (excerpt from [http://www.chne.org/family\\_outreach/news\\_and\\_updates.html](http://www.chne.org/family_outreach/news_and_updates.html))

**For more details on Destination Dad™**

Read NFI's article "A Tribute to Gregg Nicklas" <http://www.fatherhood.org/fatherhood/a-tribute-to-gregg-nicklas>