

When Preparation Meets Opportunity



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By Ave Mulhern

I love the saying by Zig Ziglar, “Success occurs when preparation meets opportunity”. It was a mantra for my kids when they were younger and participated in various sports. With seemingly endless practice sessions, there was always that sweet reward when they succeeded in a touchdown or beat a swimming record in breaststroke. Ironically, this saying came to mind recently when I connected with a pregnancy center who purchased NFI’s **Inside Out Dad**® curriculum (a program that is typically used in correctional facilities for incarcerated dads).

When I reached out to learn more, I met the Director of Client Services, Michele Cheresnick at Choices Pregnancy Center in Chattanooga, TN. They work to empower, educate, and support women facing a pregnancy decision. Michele shared that research states that half of abortion-minded women choose abortion because they did not want to be a single parent or were having problems with husband or **partner***. For that reason, Michele wanted their center to offer a vibrant men’s ministry to help dads understand the important role they play as a father. Not knowing what that would look like she just prayed. Soon after, Choices PRC brought on Jonathan Hoover as their Director of Men’s Ministry. Jonathan jumped right in and got to work.

Here's how that looked for this pregnancy center.

To get the ball rolling, Choices invested in Jonathan attending the annual Care-net Conference to learn what other centers with a similar mission are doing in general, and with fathers specifically. It was there that he met Steve Longenecker, Assistant Director of Programming, and Shaun Barnes, Men’s Services Coordinator with Sav-A-Life Pregnancy

Resource Center in Birmingham, AL. Their center has a long-standing history of serving fathers exceptionally both in the center and out in the community.

This sparked an idea within Jonathan that they need to not only reach within their center, but reach out, too. While he began to work in this direction, it just so happened that a nearby prison's Director of Reentry was searching the internet for a community partner who could help dads who were soon to be released from prison reconnect with their child(ren) and families. She found that Choices PRC had services for **Men & Partners** listed on their website—and as Zig Ziglar once quoted, “*Success occurs when preparation meets opportunity*”.

The result? Starting in February, Jonathan and another volunteer begin delivering NFI's *InsideOut Dad*® as a pilot program to a select group of dads who will soon be released from prison!

While the story of how Choices PRC got here is interesting, there are several steps that both Choices, Sav-A-Life, and other successful pregnancy centers have taken to position fatherhood services from the back and into the front of their services:

1. They researched and understood how father absence and/or father involvement impacts their field of work and specifically, within pregnancy care centers.
2. The centers recognized a gap in services and resources for dads in their center.
3. Leadership was on board and intentional about reaching out to dads, and as such, recognized the need for a designated person for their Men's Ministry (and not just an added 'chore' for the director or existing staff).
4. They used their annual banquet to raise awareness with their supporters of their intent to better serve fathers. Through a call for male volunteers, Choices grew their volunteer base from 3 to 8 fully active volunteers.
5. Leadership invested in educating staff around fatherhood training (sending staff to a conference) and networked with another PRC in the field to develop the Choices for Men program.
6. Choices created a designated **Men & Partners** page on their website. (It's how the prison found them) If you are doing this kind of work, ask yourself, “Would a guy, or anyone know right away on your website that we offer resources and services for fathers?”
7. They became intentional about including fathers in one of the long-standing programs like “*Earn While You Learn*”. Many centers offer double points if mom brings dad, but offering dads their own account for specific points/\$ (called “Dad Dollars”) allows dad to be the provider for his baby's supplies like diapers, clothing, car seats, etc.

To learn more about fatherhood programs and being 'prepared' to work with fathers:

- Sign up for NFI’s **Father Factor** Newsletter/Blog for fatherhood news and our **Online Learning Community**, a discussion board that connects you to almost 2000 fatherhood practitioners from across the country – you can sign up [Here](#).
- **For more information on Choices PRCor Sav-A-Life.**

For more information on NFI Inside Out Dad and other resources at www.fatherhood.org.

*Finer LB et al., Reasons U.S. women have abortions: quantitative and qualitative perspectives, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2005, 37(3):110–118, doi:10.1363/3711005.