

# The Power of Fatherhood Education in Corrections and Reentry



**National  
Fatherhood  
Initiative®**

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# About National Fatherhood Initiative®

Creating a world in which every child has a 24:7 Dad.<sup>SM</sup>

National Fatherhood Initiative® (NFI) is the nation's leading non-profit organization working to end father absence. Underlying many of society's most pressing challenges is a lack of father involvement in their children's lives.

## Our Mission

NFI works to increase father involvement by equipping communities and human service organizations with the father-engagement training, programs, and resources they need to be father-inclusive.

## Our Vision

NFI's vision is that all communities and human service organizations are proactively father-inclusive so that every child has an involved, responsible, and committed father in their lives.

To see more about our mission, our partners, our impact, and how we can help you engage fathers, please visit [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

For fatherhood and family resources, including programs, resources, and other helpful materials, please visit [www.fathersource.org](http://www.fathersource.org).



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# The Case for Fatherhood in Corrections and Reentry

There are 2.7 million children with a parent in prison or jail. Ninety-two percent (92%) of parents in prison are fathers.

Incarceration makes a significant contribution to father absence. Indeed, it is a cause of father absence. As described in National Fatherhood Initiative®'s [Father Facts™](#), 1 in 28 children in the United States has an incarcerated parent.

The number of incarcerated fathers has dramatically increased over the past 30 years, leaving children to be raised without their biological father, which creates additional challenges for parents and children. The number of children with an incarcerated father has risen 79% since 1991, and it is a fact that children with incarcerated fathers are at higher risks of antisocial behavior.

When compared to children of absentee, but not incarcerated fathers, children with incarcerated fathers showed more aggressive and inattentive behaviors. Furthermore, having a parent who is incarcerated is now recognized as an “adverse childhood experience” (ACE), which is different from other ACEs because of the trauma, stigma, and shame it inflicts on children.

As one study found:

"Parental incarceration is independently associated with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, behavioral or conduct problems, developmental delays, and speech or language problems. Taken together, results suggest that children's health disadvantages are an overlooked and unintended consequence of mass incarceration and that incarceration, given its unequal distribution across the population, may have implications for population-level racial-ethnic and social class inequalities in children's health."\*

\* (2014). Turney, K. "Stress Proliferation across Generations? Examining the Relationship between Parental Incarceration and Childhood Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 55: 302-319



# The Case for Fatherhood in Corrections and Reentry, Continued

We've known for decades that having an incarcerated parent places children at a greater risk for a host of poor outcomes compared with children whose parents aren't incarcerated. We also know from research that former inmates are less likely to return to prison when they have strong connections to their families while in prison and upon release.

Therefore, one of the most promising approaches to affecting the instances above is the integration of fathering training into behavior-change programs before and after release. After all, the vast majority of inmates are men (93 percent), many of whom are fathers. Building strong bonds between fathers and their children is vital to achieving these reductions.

**NFI urges correctional facilities, halfway houses, and reentry programs and organizations to offer evidence-based programs and other educational resources to connect incarcerated fathers to their children and families prior to and after release.**

In the following pages, we will discuss the ways fatherhood programming addresses several pain points in the corrections arena, how offering evidence-based and sustainable programs ensures incarcerated fathers are getting proven life skills, and hear from fathers who have participated in and about organizations who run the evidence-based [InsideOut Dad](#)® program.



# Rehabilitate and Address Criminogenic Needs

“I see this as a true opportunity to help rehabilitate someone and help put them in a better place.”

Working with incarcerated men, specifically around their fatherhood role, has many benefits. In particular, NFI’s InsideOut Dad® program has a cognitive-behavioral foundation and addresses several criminogenic needs of incarcerated fathers.

Principally, InsideOut Dad® addresses the family/marital domain that is concerned with an offender's family relationships. “Needs indicators” include relationships with parents and siblings, absence of parents, history of family abuse and/or criminality, marital history, dependents and parenting skills, and involvement in child abuse. (Indeed, InsideOut Dad® addresses most of these areas.)

Furthermore, programming that focuses on building support from the offender's family members, teaching parenting skills, and reinforces offender responsibility for dependent children and directly addresses family dysfunction all help to address criminogenic needs. InsideOut Dad® addresses these needs in a comprehensive way.

Rickie Shaw, InsideOut Dad® program Facilitator at Jacksonville’s Montgomery Correctional Facility says:

“The biggest misconception about inmates is that whatever got them here, they have to be punished and no rehabilitation. I think the original thought behind imprisoning someone was that they would have the time to rehabilitate—maybe change the behaviors that got them bars. Classes like InsideOut Dad® and GED programs and various drug abuse programs and domestic violence classes, those are the rehabilitative devices that are definitely needed in a place like this so that they can come out with skills that they didn't have when they came in. I see this as a true opportunity to help rehabilitate someone and help put them in a better place.”

Watch [this video](#) of Rickie talking about the impact of InsideOut Dad® and the fathers he serves talking about the impact he has had on their lives.



# Maintain Facility Safety and Order

The Kentucky DOC saw a “whopping 86 percent reduction in disciplinary actions.”

It has been said, “Idleness is a devil’s workshop.” Facility safety is of utmost importance in the corrections environment and benefits the warden as well as fellow inmates. Fatherhood programs in particular can help to engage inmates and encourage good behavior. By connecting to their role as a man, and specifically as a father, inmates are more engaged in that aspect of their life. These programs also help to create a peaceful, contented environment in the correctional facility.

Fatherhood programs often create bonds among group members, which generates good morale. Good morale is important for safety, and can result in less disciplinary infractions as a result of participating in these programs.

By connecting with their children, incarcerated fathers are motivated to maintain good behavior to keep visiting rights (if available to them), which is beneficial for both the facility and correctional officers working with them.

Statistics compiled by the Kentucky DOC on the recidivism rate and rate of in-prison disciplinary actions (e.g. behavioral infractions) for 575 dads who participated in their fatherhood program during 2012-2014 show that prior to entering the program, participants averaged 1.836 disciplinary actions per inmate compared to only .32 actions per inmate while they participated in the program and .26 actions per inmate after they completed the program. **This is a whopping 86 percent reduction in disciplinary actions.** (For more details on the success of the InsideOut Dad program in Kentucky, read this [Championing Fatherhood blog article](#).)

Note: NFI programs help fathers in Kentucky’s DOC not only while in prison with the InsideOut Dad® program but upon release with the evidence-based [24:7 Dad®](#) program. See page 9 of this ebook for details.

# Planning for Reentry

Research shows that fathers who are connected to their children and family prior to release are less likely to return to prison.

Successful reentry is one of the greatest challenges facing America today, especially the future of our children. In fact, the greatest predictor of whether a child will wind up in prison is whether his parent(s)—namely the father—was in prison. Sadly, two out of three offenders will re-offend once released. There is an intergenerational cycle of incarceration: a study of 109 juvenile offenders indicated that family structure significantly predicts delinquency.\* Said in a less academic way: when dad's in prison, his child is more likely to go to prison. We must train fathers how to be better dads while in prison.

Despite the daunting challenges that fathers face upon their release, did you know that incarcerated fathers are more likely to stay out of prison once released when they know they have a unique and irreplaceable role in the life of their child? Also, when dads connect with their children and families (especially prior to release), they're more likely to stay out of prison. It's true! Research shows that fathers who are connected to their children and family prior to release are more likely to successfully integrate back into the community and less likely to return to prison.

Furthermore, housing, transportation, and a job are the three most critical and immediate needs of an ex-offender. And these are exactly the types of reentry environments where fatherhood programming fits. One of the best ways to incorporate fatherhood programs is alongside “wrap-around services” that address the many challenges ex-offenders face, all the while helping them be better dads. If you think about it, when a dad really cares and has a connection with his child and family, he can be more motivated to seek and secure the aforementioned needs so that he can “do right” by his kids and family.



\* (2000). Bush, C., R. Mullis, A.K. Mullis. “Differences in Empathy Between Offender and Nonoffender Youth.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 29: 467-478.

# Planning for Reentry, Continued

Providing ongoing support to a father after he is out of prison is key to his success.

Whether you work in a jail, prison, or other correctional facility, consider partnering with a reentry focused organization to give offenders a path out. This approach helps ensure that incarcerated fathers have ongoing support and people who are committed to helping them focus on their role as a father and contributing member of society.

For example, the Kentucky Department of Corrections (DOC) works with community-based organizations, via the state's Probation and Parole Division, to deliver NFI's evidence-based [24:7 Dad](#)<sup>®</sup> program in transitional facilities and other community-based organizations in the reentry field.

A representative of the Kentucky DOC pointed out that by using InsideOut Dad<sup>®</sup> and 24:7 Dad<sup>®</sup>, the state addresses the top four needs of incarcerated fathers:

- Criminal and family history
- Family (marriage and parenting)
- Education and employment
- Leisure and recreation





# Reduce Recidivism

Ninety-five percent (95%) of all inmates will eventually be released. Most—two out of three inmates—will re-offend and be back in prison.

It is ideal for men to get out of prison or jail, become a successful, contributing member of society, and stay out. **Giving incarcerated fathers a vision that they have a unique and irreplaceable role in the life of their child along with increased confidence and changes in attitude and skills is a powerful motivator for successful reentry.** Fathers who are involved and connected with their children and families prior to release are less likely to return to jail or prison.

The research is clear: “effective parenting and strong family functioning—with warm affective bonds, high monitoring and consistent discipline—protect against a variety of antisocial and problem behaviors, such as involvement with delinquent peers and subsequent likelihood of gang membership and violence.”\*

In fact, a three-year study by the Indiana Department of Corrections found that fatherhood programs such as InsideOut Dad® were linked to prisoner return rates of less than 20%, compared to a national rate of nearly 38%. And in the previously mentioned study by the Kentucky DOC, of 575 fathers who completed their fatherhood program, 318 were released; only 52 of those 318 (or 16 percent) returned to prison as a result of a new charge or a parole violation, which is 57 percent lower than the two-year statewide recidivism rate of 37%.

Reductions in recidivism can lead to enormous cost savings for taxpayers and the criminal justice system. Nationally, the annual cost of incarceration per inmate, according to Vera (formerly, the Vera Institute), is between \$14,000 and \$70,000. The cost to take an incarcerated father through the InsideOut Dad® program could be as little as \$40.



**A 10% decrease in recidivism could save US\$ 635 million (Source: US Justice Dept; Illustration by J.D Crowe)**

\* (2013). National Institute for Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Changing Course: Preventing Gang Membership.

# Evidence-Based Fatherhood Programming

Implementing evidence-based programs is important because it means the program has rigorous research behind it, proving its effectiveness. Often times, government agencies and certain foundations or grantors require use of an evidence-based program as a requirement for funding.

For corrections and some reentry environments, we recommend NFI's InsideOut Dad® program, which is the nation's only evidence-based fatherhood program designed specifically for incarcerated fathers.

The most significant study in the evidence base for the program was conducted by researchers at Rutgers University in three prisons in New Jersey. A summary of the study and its results follows. You can download and review the entire report [here](#).

- The evaluation compared the effects of the InsideOut Dad® program on more than 300 incarcerated fathers who participated in it (intervention group) to incarcerated fathers who did not participate in it (control group). The researchers found statistically significant changes across confidence, knowledge, behavior, and attitude variables in the intervention group compared to the control group.
- The researchers also conducted interviews with program facilitators. This qualitative data indicated that several of the practical issues that emerged in previous evaluations of other parenting programs for incarcerated parents did not become a problem, such as staff turnover, poor coordination, interruptions during class, a lack of respect, and comprehension difficulties.

You can read other evaluations of the program [here](#), including a study by Utah State University on its effectiveness with minority incarcerated fathers.

InsideOut Dad® is the nation's most widely-used evidence-based program designed specifically for incarcerated fathers. As of July 2022, NFI had **trained 2,671 individuals in 49 states to facilitate the program**. These individuals represent staff from corrections facilities and community-based organizations that partner with corrections facilities and systems to deliver the program. In addition to its use in corrections facilities, it's also used by many community-based organizations as a reentry or transitional program to help reintegrate ex-offenders back into their communities, and is often used in conjunction with NFI's 24:7 Dad® program, job training programs, and other helpful interventions (e.g. substance abuse treatment).

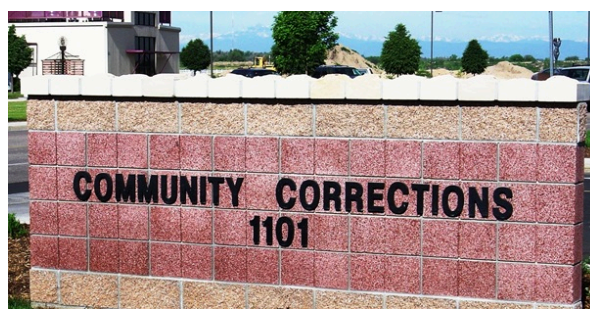
# Creating Sustainable Programs

Corrections facilities of all types have immense inmate-related costs that must be closely managed. Therefore, it's important that facilities choose programs that are sustainable for the long term—and fatherhood programming in jails or prisons is no different.

“Sustainability” can be related to staffing, funding, or the kind of program you use. NFI understands your sustainability needs, and depending on your “sustainability challenge,” NFI offers several solutions:

- If your sustainability challenge is staffing a facilitated, 12-week, group-based fatherhood program, then we recommend our [InsideOut Dad® Guide to Family Ties](#)—a self-paced guide that does not require a facilitator.
- If your sustainability challenge is related to limited staff availability, but are still interested in a facilitator-led program, then [The 24:7 Dad® Key Behaviors Workshop](#) is a good, shorter-length option for your facility.
- If your sustainability challenge is related to securing long-term funding for a fatherhood program, NFI offers fatherhood skill-building resources that have reproducible handouts such as The FatherTopics™ Collection for Non-Custodial Dads, Talking with Mom™, or Understanding Domestic Violence™. To learn more about these options, click [here](#).

If you have already purchased or plan to purchase the InsideOut Dad® Complete Program Kit (which includes 10 fathering handbooks), but cannot continue to budget for or purchase fathering handbooks, then you can continue to run any or all of the six optional reentry sessions located in the back of the Facilitator’s Manual: Optional Reentry Sessions, which do not require handbooks.





# Programs in Jails and Short-Term Stay Facilities

Just because a father is in a jail or short-term stay facility (such as a halfway house or rescue mission), doesn't mean he can't benefit from programs, workshops, or other fatherhood skill-building resources that can help him be a better dad.

NFI offers many fatherhood skill-building resources that can fit, or can be adapted to, this type of transitional environment:

- To shorten NFI's evidence-based InsideOut Dad® program for your jail or short-term facility, download our free program supplement, [The InsideOut Dad® Guide for Jails](#). This free supplement will teach you how to consolidate the InsideOut Dad® program, so that you can deliver it in half the time (i.e., 12 hours instead of 24 hours).
- Some halfway houses or other reentry facilities choose to use the [24:7 Dad®](#) program (A.M. or P.M. version), which helps all types of fathers to become better dads. This program can be a better fit for fathers whose stay is extremely short such that they are not separated from their children for a long period of time (i.e., 6 months or longer).
- Another option for this type of environment is to offer any of our FatherTopics™ Booster Sessions half-day or full-day workshops. For example, [The FatherTopics™ Collection for Non-Custodial Dads](#) covers important topics such as child support, workforce development, money management, and more. Our booster sessions contain reproducible handouts for the dads. You can break up any of our fatherhood programs into shorter, one-hour sessions.
- The self-paced [InsideOut Dad® Guide to Family Ties](#) is an excellent resource that fathers can work through on their own. This guide helps incarcerated fathers learn the importance of getting in touch—and staying in touch—with their family, maybe even for the first time. It also helps them create strong ties between themselves and their children, and between themselves and the mother of their children.

***"I never had my dad or nobody tell me they were proud of me until this program..." —William Jones, recent graduate of NFI's InsideOut Dad® at the Richmond City Jail (VA).***



# Testimonials from InsideOut Dad® Participants and Facilitators

NFI regularly receives letters from incarcerated fathers, many of whom have participated in InsideOut Dad®. We receive as many as 25 letters per week! Many of these letters have included heartfelt testimonials about the impact of the program on these fathers and their children.

Some years ago we decided to capture testimonials from fathers and facilitators in videos created by corrections facilities that use the program or by news agencies around the country that have reported on the program's impact. To view these video-captured testimonials, click [here](#).



As we close out this ebook, we'll share a letter we received from "Brian" in Kentucky—a father whose life was changed by InsideOut Dad®. His letter captures the spirit of so many of the letters we've received from program graduates. Brian had issues that many incarcerated fathers face—in and out of prison many times, communication challenges, and lack of family connection. Fortunately for Brian, his facility offered InsideOut Dad®, which helped him change all of that.

# A Letter from “Brian” in Kentucky

Dear NFI,

***I've always heard the old adage a carpenter is only as good as his tools. That's why I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to have experienced and to have graduated your InsideOut Dad® program. With so many dynamics I have facing me in having six children I have a large task ahead of me, but I have some of those tools I need to start building and mending those relationships I so long to have with my children and vice versa.***

*First of all I will tell you a little about myself, because change has to start with me. I am 45 years old and have six children ranging from 27 to 8 years of age. In 11 days I will serve out a 15-year sentence, but it is not the first time I have been incarcerated. Altogether, it will make 22 years I have served in sentences in the state of Kentucky which lets you know I haven't been in my children's lives very much over the years.*

*Through God and this class I have actually started mending some of these relationships I have either destroyed or never gave a chance to develop in the first place. Since 1988 I've been in and out of jails and prisons only to stay out long enough to start a relationship and ultimately having children and then to leave them behind again. This time I served out my 15-year sentence and then seven years and four months with educational and other good time. I know I've done everything this time to turn my life around, but in order to do so I had to finally face my demons and look at myself for who I really was. If we don't know it's broke we tend not to fix the problem.*

***All in all I've left a lot of damaged lives behind in my wake of destruction. With the InsideOut Dad® program I've been able to salvage some of these relationships and prepare to face the challenges of starting a relationship with my children.***

*The first tool I've learned to use is communication. I have six children by four different mothers which I'm not proud of, but ultimately it seems I had fallen into my father's footsteps (learned behavior), so in the seven years there's been no telephone calls because of the high cost to make telephone calls from prison. I wish I could start a fund just to help with that cost of future fathers could stay in touch with your children, especially the ones going through this program.*

*Through writing I had mended my relationship with my oldest daughter Sheena. We have been corresponding on a regular basis for a while now. She followed my footsteps and committed a crime two years ago, but was put on a diversion program, which included six months of in-house rehabilitation.*

***During our time of writing I've used several tools I've learned through the InsideOut Dad® program such as getting to know who she is, her personality traits, so I would be able to have more to talk to her about. Of course I have apologized many times over the years that I was absent from her life.***

*I knew she blamed me for the way her life had turned out so I used another tool (empathy). I put myself in her shoes and realized this was true because I too blame my parents as well for my life being messed up. Now we have something in common that we can share and build on. I let her know I can relate to her, because I had been on my own all of my life as well. I told her how I finally located my mother at the age of 15 years old and how it didn't go over so well. Ultimately I moved in with her and my step-father to pay \$55 a week for my part-time job that I had that summer just to sleep on the couch. I moved out on my own after two months and it actually was cheaper for me that way. I also told her I had to stop blaming them, because as an adult I knew wrong from right now. I couldn't blame them for my mistakes any longer. Like her, my rough childhood resulted in drug use to numb the pain from the past.*

# A Letter from "Brian" Continued

**Now here's the miracle I want to share with the world. This is better than the fact I get to leave prison here in 11 days.** After the fact she did six months rehab she decided she wasn't ready to leave so she signed up for another six months which I supported 100%. I told her that she needed to take this time to be there for herself and not worry about anyone else because she does have four children of her own which her mother has now. I told her I have learned by experience if you can't be there for yourself you can't be there for anyone else either. If you don't love yourself how can you expect anyone else to love you in return? This one time it was all right to be selfish, because it was for all the right reasons.

This girl completed 14 months of rehab with dad being her number one supporter and biggest fan. A recovery center in Kentucky has hired her on full-time as part of the staff now. She is in a good place now and loves her job. A month ago she sent me her phone number. The fact that I'm leaving here on the 31st gave me an opportunity to get an institutional phone call to see if she would be at the bus station when I'm dropped off that morning. By the way I will be spending the morning with her and my four grandchildren whom I've only met the oldest as of yet. This is the first conversation I've had with my daughter in over seven years.

She answered and said hello and I said hi baby girl. She said who is this and I said it's your daddy. All she could do is cry. After she got her composure she finally said the words so longed to hear. I love you and I forgive you for not being there for all those years. She said through God she had so much peace that she was finally able to forgive me. In our conversations through writing God had been our main subject of discussion. The way I see it, whether you believe in Jesus or not, which I do, there are good morals to be learned from the Bible. Just as the tools I've gained from IoD. With these tools and the wisdom and patience of my instructor Mr. X, I've built relations with two of my children.

Nikki my 21-year-old daughter is who I am moving in with on the 31st. She just had her first baby on the 18th of this month. She truly loved and forgives me as well. My 25-year-old daughter and whom I've only seen four times while incarcerated since her birth has expressed a need to know me as well, because she has talked to her siblings and has noticed a change in my life and relationships I've built with them. IoD (InsideOut Dad®) is contagious.

My 19-year-old son doesn't respond, but I still send him letters, just to let him know I still love you. He may be a little angry, but in time even water dissolves the biggest and hardest of rocks.

My children 10 and eight years of age don't know me, but they soon will. I have written them over the years so they do know I exist and that I put forth the effort. All in all I would like to think NFI for IoD (InsideOut Dad®) for the programs put forth to help us fathers and children. Like I told my oldest daughter Sheena it's up to us now to stop this vicious cycle that's been handed down to us from generation to generation. It's time to plant new seeds.

**Thank you for giving me the tools to do so. I don't know by putting my children needs before mine and getting to know them and giving them the chance to know me that we can turn things around. I believe now that I can turn things around.** I believe now I can lead by example, to teach my children that they can live a morally ethic life by watching me to do it in love. I have for myself and them as well now. If I can't fix myself how can I even possibly think of fixing my relationship with them? Thank you for your time in the tools I needed to rebuild the relationships I so desire to have with my children. Your work and efforts have not been done in vain.

Sincerely,  
Brian



# NFI Programs and Resources for Corrections

InsideOut Dad® Complete Program Kits  
 Learn more at [store.fatherhood.org/insideout-dad-programs/](http://store.fatherhood.org/insideout-dad-programs/)

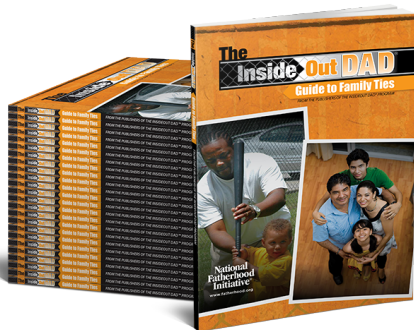


InsideOut Dad® Complete Program Kit



InsideOut Dad® Bundle

Guide to Family Ties and Other Resources for Incarcerated Fathers  
 Learn more at [store.fatherhood.org/corrections-incarcerated-dads/](http://store.fatherhood.org/corrections-incarcerated-dads/)



InsideOut Dad® Guide to Family Ties (25 Pack)



Brochure: How to Connect with Your Minor Child After a Long Absence



Out Of The Ashes: Where a Seed Finds Life [DVD+Discussion Guide]



Brochure: Staying Involved with Your Children While Incarcerated



Brochure: 14 Things Dads in Prison Should Do Before or Right After Release



Brochure: 20 Ways to Connect With Your Children and Family After Release