

# Prisoners as Parents

## Building Parenting Skills on the Inside

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*This handbook is dedicated to the  
incarcerated parents, children and family members  
who made Project H.I.P. come alive.*

Based on careful consideration of the accomplishments and the limitations of Project H.I.P., and recognition of the needs of incarcerated parents, their children and families, project staff recommend that the Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the National Institute of Corrections:

1. Explore options for developing a long range (ie., ten year) follow-up study of the outcomes of participation in corrections-based parenting programs.
2. Conduct a comprehensive national survey of corrections-based children's centers and other family-focused programs to include information about financial support, space, staffing and training needs, and program structure to serve as a resource for individual states.
3. Develop a request for proposals to encourage development of programs to improve pre-release planning and community-based support following release.

The Project H.I.P. Advisory Board and the Edmund S. Muskie Institute of Public Affairs offer their assistance in further developing these recommendations.

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# Introduction

This handbook is intended to provide a guide to incarcerated parents, prison administrators and staff members, and child development and parent education professionals interested in developing and running parenting education and support programs for incarcerated parents.

It may also be a resource for others — faculty, students, legislators, state officials, and the public — learning about the impact of incarceration on all family members, and the importance of considering that impact, and the needs of children in particular, in establishing prison policies, developing priorities for funding, and delivering services to prisoners and their families.

The information and suggestions presented in this handbook are based on the knowledge and experience we gained through developing and running Project H.I.P. (Helping Incarcerated Parents), at Maine Correctional Center in Windham, Maine. We describe the Project H.I.P. program model, and include suggestions and tips for all aspects of program development, based on our experience.

Project H.I.P., initiated by a three-year grant from the United States Department of Human Services, was designed collaboratively by University of Southern Maine parent and child development specialists, Maine Correctional Center staff, and incarcerated parents. Cooperation among these three groups has been essential to the development, implementation, and ongoing maintenance of our program, and is vital to the success of any corrections-based parenting program.

## **Why Develop a Corrections-Based Parenting Program?**

Incarceration touches the lives of many people beyond those imprisoned. Based on Bureau of Justice statistics, Susan Hoffman Fishman (1982) reported that an estimated 900,000 children in the United States had a parent who was incarcerated in 1979. That number increased by more than 50 percent in thirteen years. In 1992, data collected by a one-day count estimated 1.5 million children in the United States who have a parent who is incarcerated. (Johnston, 1993)

The national average of incarcerated women who are mothers is eighty percent, based on several studies. Sixty-six percent of incarcerated men are estimated to be fathers, but no large scale studies have been conducted. (Johnston, 1993)

There is no question that children's lives are disrupted when a parent is incarcerated. Studies focusing on the children of incarcerated parents have identified behavioral, emotional and school performance problems (Hairston, 1991) related to their parent's imprisonment.

If the father is incarcerated, the degree of disruption may vary depending upon the extent of his relationship with the children and his financial support of the family. If he lived in the home, his absence alone will make a difference. While the children are likely to remain with their mother, changing financial status or loss of income may result in numerous losses and the need to uproot the family.

If the mother is incarcerated, the disruption may be even worse. If the mother was the primary caregiver, the children are likely to be moved to the care of a relative or, in some cases, separated and cared for by different family members, some of whom may resent the responsibility and not only feel anger toward the incarcerated parent who made it necessary, but express that anger in ways that impact the children. Only a small number of children whose parents are incarcerated are placed in foster care; this happens when there is no one else willing or able to assume responsibility.

Incarceration is an embarrassing and potentially stigmatizing situation which families often try to hide. Often, children are not told the truth about where their parent has gone, or are asked to keep it secret. Many children, depending upon their age, understand or figure out more than they are told. Families must then deal with the consequences of having lied to the child. It is usually better for families to be honest about why the parent has gone away, that he or she had no choice, and that the child is not to blame. The child's fear is often worse than the reality.

Research over the past thirty years has shown the benefits of family-focused programs in prison, including traditional visiting programs as well as parenting education and support programs. These programs help preserve and strengthen family ties during incarceration. As documented in two thorough research reviews by Hairston (1991 and 1988), they help keep families together, enhance the well-being of individual family members, and improve prisoners' chances of post-release success, including reducing the level of future criminal activity.

While no research has yet examined the impact on children of visiting their incarcerated mothers and fathers and participating in prison-based programs designed to enhance family relationships, our experience in Project H.I.P. (based on staff observations and numerous reports from inmates, family members, and children themselves) confirms that the experience has helped children reduce their sense of loss and enhance their relationships with their incarcerated parents. In some families, the child's participation in the program has also served as a catalyst for improving communication between the incarcerated parent and the child's caregiver.

Determining any relationship between the child's participation in the program and improvement in behavior, school performance, or other problems which may be linked to the parent's incarceration, was beyond the scope of this project. Outcome research is needed to explore the long-range impact of family-focused programs.

Advocates suggest, and our own experience confirms, that well-designed and -executed family-focused programs within the correctional system can help prisoners maintain family ties. It has been widely recognized that trends in our culture (including increased mobility, divorce, and more parents working outside the home) have diminished the family and community support system once available to adults as well as children. Family-supportive policies and services are now nationally recognized as necessary responses to many of our culture's serious problems, particularly those pertaining to children and youth.

The need for family-supportive services is particularly acute in prison populations, where enforced separation adds yet another stress to already stressed families. Moreover, some incarcerated parents say they lacked close family relationships when they were young, and thus have no model of good parenting. The dramatic increase in our nation's prison population and in the incarceration of women in particular, and the incarceration of family members sometimes spanning generations, argue strongly for family-focused interventions and support during the period of incarceration.

# How to Get Started

A period of planning is essential. How you structure it will depend on where you are in the process. In the case of Project H.I.P., we wrote a federal grant proposal in March, received notice of grant approval in September, and spent the next six months planning. But if you don't know where the money is coming from, or if you have to begin with developing support for the idea of a parenting program, you may need more time. Start simply. Decide what's most important and what's affordable, and build from there.

## Develop a Base of Support

No matter what your role inside the prison or out in the community, you cannot develop a parenting education and support program on your own. Whether the idea for the program begins with prisoners, staff, or administrators on the inside, or an organization on the outside, you have an important role in supporting one another to make it work.

### **Suggestions for taking the first step:**

- *If you are an incarcerated parent:* Talk with a trusted member of the staff. Caseworkers or teachers in the education department are likely to be sympathetic to the idea of a parenting program. Share this handbook.
- *If you are an administrator or staff member:* Solicit support from appropriate departmental or institutional colleagues and discuss the idea with a diverse group of incarcerated parents before any organized planning begins.
- *If you are a child development/parent education professional from a university or social service agency:* Contact your state Department of Corrections or the administration of the institution with which you would like to work to determine their interest in a program. Proceed from there to involve incarcerated parents and appropriate staff in the planning.
- Before proceeding beyond informal conversations, schedule a meeting with the head of the facility to discuss basic philosophy and to elicit the administration's initial support for active planning.

## State Your Goals

Before proceeding, it is important that you state your program's goals in writing. The goals should be written simply and clearly, so there can be no misunderstanding.

**For example, Project H.I.P.'s goals are to:**

1. Strengthen and support good parenting by:
  - recognizing strengths and potential
  - increasing knowledge and skills
  - providing information about resources
  - providing opportunities for positive interaction with children in a supervised setting.
2. Reduce the losses to children and improve the parent-child relationship by:
  - providing time together in a setting where interaction/play can go on
  - helping parents to communicate better with their children, whether in person or long distance.
3. Reduce the cycle of child abuse and neglect

## Your Planning Committee

Good program planning requires a group of people representing different interests and concerns and willing to work toward a common goal. Three distinct groups *must* be part of the planning process for a prison parenting program: incarcerated parents, prison administrators representing security concerns, and child development/parenting educators. Other prison staff and community members may be useful or even essential committee members depending upon the program design, the institutional structure, and the support needed.

Choose people who are respected across departmental lines, and be sure to include representation from any department with a role in making decisions about the details of your program. Finally, be sure to designate a program director to serve as a primary contact person for others and to be responsible for planning and conducting meetings.

**Membership of the Project H.I.P. Planning Committee at the outset included:**

**Maine Correctional Center**

- Two incarcerated parents (one male and one female)
- Project director from School Department
- Security supervisor
- Caseworker
- Chaplain
- Psychologist

**University**

- Child Development/Parenting Consultant
- Project coordinator
- Process evaluator

Project H.I.P. also established a Parent Advisory Board to involve a more diverse group of parents in the planning. Membership, which fluctuated due to release and other factors, included five to ten men and women representing, when possible, the following situations:

- Single parent
- Parent with supportive partner
- Parent of children in state custody
- Parent of children living with relatives or friends
- Parent of infants and children of various ages through adolescence
- Parent receiving regular visits from children
- Parent not receiving visits with children
- Parent with long sentence
- Parent with short sentence
- Pregnant parent-to-be

The two parents on the Planning Committee also served on the Parent Advisory Board to facilitate communication between the two groups. The Parent Advisory Board, convened by the project director, included other project staff in its meetings as needed.

The parents provided essential advice and feedback about all aspects of the program. Their reports of the experiences of parents and children and the concerns of caregivers influenced adjustments in the program at every stage of its development.

## ***Decision Making***

The Planning Committee has an essential role to play in identifying the details of your program and planning every step. Don't take anything for granted. Your committee probably won't have the authority to make all decisions, but it should have the responsibility and resources for figuring out which decisions must be made and for recommending solutions. Be prepared to request what you need and to defend those needs, and then compromise when necessary. Remember that security issues will be primary.

### **Key issues which require careful planning include:**

#### **Components of the program and timetable for implementation:**

- Intake process, including preliminary interview
- Parenting education
- Parent support group
- Special visits with children

#### **Eligibility requirements to consider:**

- Security classification
- General population vs. work release
- Length of sentence and projected release date
- Referrals from correctional caseworkers, probation and parole officers, human services caseworkers, and others
- Restrictions by court or social services on right to visits from children
- Other criteria relevant to your own institution
- Waitlist priorities

#### **Space requirements for the program involving children:**

- Availability
- Safety criteria for children
- Bathroom access
- Food preparation needs
- Activity requirements
- Security concerns
- Outdoor access (ideal, but may not be possible)

#### **Rules and policies**

- Attendance requirements
- Rules about contraband
- Policy regarding participation of both parents in co-educational program if both are incarcerated
- Policy regarding participation of child's caregiver
- Formal acknowledgment of program participation
- Policy regarding confidentiality and forms for any information release

## Looking for Money

Collect fund-raising information from different sources and see what the requirements are and what is realistic given the level of institutional and community support you have for getting started. Start with your own library — the librarian will know how to get information from other places if it isn't already there for you.

The sources could vary depending on what you need and whether your institution is a jail, a state prison, or a federal prison. Some sources won't be appropriate for you at this time but might be helpful in developing support for funding down the road. You may find that the list needs updating when you get around to using it, and you'll probably expand the list as you progress.

You will have your own ideas about finding money for a parenting program. A small amount of money from a local source might be enough for a beginning.

### ***National Resources***

- *The Federal Register*. Most large libraries and state agencies have subscriptions. The Federal Register announces federal money available for special programs and the requirements, including deadlines for proposals. The turn-around time is usually about six weeks, so you have to act quickly. If you can't obtain the Federal Register locally, you may request a copy from the Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information listed below.
- *National Institute of Corrections Information Center*  
1860 Industrial Circle, Suite A, Longmont, CO 80501  
(800)877-1461 or (303)682-0213  
NIC offers training, technical assistance, and library resources. It distributes the *Directory of Programs Serving Families of Adult Offenders*.
- *Administration for Children and Families*  
370 L'Enfant Promenade S.W., Washington, DC 20447  
ACF has funded parenting programs for incarcerated parents. They can tell you about any upcoming opportunities for which you might apply. They also have information about programs they have funded which you could contact directly for more information.
- *The Foundation Center*  
The Foundation Center is a national center with regional branches. The complete list of branches appears in the Appendix beginning on page 31. Find out from the one closest to you how to access information if you aren't able to go there. Foundation center librarians can advise you about the best way

to approach foundations. They can also show you how to identify those with an interest in parenting programs, children and families, prison programs, etc. Find out if there are any state or local foundations which might have an interest in your program.

- *Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information*  
PO Box 1182, Washington, DC 20013  
(800)394-3366 or (703) 385-7565  
Federal funding for parenting education in jails and prisons has been linked to child abuse prevention. The Clearinghouse can assist you in locating information.
- *National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse (NRCCSA)*  
107 Lincoln Street, Huntsville, AL 35801  
(800)543-7006 or (205) 534-6868
- *American Correctional Association*  
8025 Laurel Lakes Court, Laurel, MD 20707-5075  
(800)825-2665  
ACA publishes a catalog of its publications, several of which pertain to family issues.
- *Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents*  
The Clearinghouse at Pacific Oaks  
714 West California Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91105  
(818)397-1300  
The Clearinghouse disseminates numerous publications pertaining to children of incarcerated parents.
- *National Resource Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NRCCAN)*  
63 Inverness Drive East, Englewood, CO 80112-5117  
(800)227-5242 or (303) 792-9900
- *Family and Corrections Network*  
Jane Addams Center for Social Policy and Research  
College of Social Work  
1040 West Harrison Street, Room 4010  
Chicago, IL 60607-7134  
FCN serves as a network for all sorts of family-related programs linked to corrections and conducts a conference every other year. The organization and its members can be a source of information and support for developing as well as established programs. FCN's members include programs which

provide parenting education and other services for incarcerated parents and their children as well as outside support programs for families.

### ***Local Resources***

- *United Way*  
Each local United Way has its own policies and procedures for considering proposals and making grants to new programs. Find out if they might be interested in your program and how to provide the information they need. They can also provide you with information about community services which might help you in developing your program.
- *Businesses*  
Many businesses, especially large ones, contribute a percentage of their profits to charitable causes. Find out about corporations in your area, whether they might be interested in your program, and how you could introduce it to them. Even small businesses which cannot make a financial contribution may be willing to contribute something they produce (i.e. food, books, art supplies) which the program needs. The state or local Chamber of Commerce may be a good resource for information about potential interest among local businesses.
- *Charitable organizations*  
Charitable organizations are often eager to identify a worthy program to support in some way. If they are interested, they may invite a representative from your program to speak to their membership.
- *Child Abuse and Neglect Councils*  
Most states have a network of community-focused organizations committed to education for preventing child abuse and neglect. They are a great source of people and ideas for programs which support good parenting and benefit children. Your state agency which serves children and families would know about these organizations.
- *Colleges and universities*  
Child development and education departments are sources of referrals for trained parent educators and child development specialists. Colleges and universities may also have faculty members or special departments which can assist in developing proposals for federal, foundation, or corporate funding.

- *Religious institutions*  
Spiritual communities of various denominations may make financial contributions to causes they support. They may also be a source of volunteer help.
- *Child care centers and counseling agencies*  
These and other social service agencies in your community may also be a source of local people and programs which might be helpful to you in developing your own program.

# Program Model

Project H.I.P. developed the following program model which was implemented after a six-month planning period. We continue to adjust aspects of the program to meet changing needs.

Reviewing family support programs, including parenting programs at prisons around the country, will help you establish priorities and identify programs on which to model your own.

## Parent Education

This component of Project H.I.P. consists of two parenting education courses (see Curriculum Outlines below), one pertaining to young children and the other to adolescents. Course participation is voluntary. Parents with minimum or medium security classification are eligible to participate, providing they have enough time remaining in their sentences to complete the course. The courses are for the incarcerated parent only.

Each course meets one weeknight a week for eight weeks, with Parenting I scheduled more often than Parenting II due to the prevalence of inmates with young children. The first meeting is an orientation session conducted by the Program Director. The second session, on Parenting Rights and Responsibilities, is conducted by a legal services attorney. The remainder of the sessions for each course are conducted by a qualified parent educator from the community.

## Support Group

The support group serves a twofold purpose. It provides ongoing support for parents who continue in the program, especially those with long sentences, and it builds on learning from the course(s) through continuing education.

Parents are eligible to participate in the support group after they complete one of the parenting education courses. The size of the group usually ranges from six to twelve members. The group meets twice a month for a two-hour session.

Special topics have included self-esteem, stress reduction, communication, child development, separation and divorce, and family traditions. A chronology

of support group meetings and topics is included in the final report at the end of this handbook.

Parents who participate in the support group are eligible to participate with their children in the monthly workshops.

## **Parent-Child Workshop**

The monthly Parent-Child Workshop combines free play and structured activities in an atmosphere conducive to interacting with children. For parents whose offenses were related to substance abuse, as were the majority in our program, these workshops may be the first time they really focus on the needs of their children. For some fathers in the program, the workshop may be their first time alone with their children, or their first time being the person primarily responsible for their children's care, especially basic care for infants.

The workshop, which is held one Saturday a month for three hours, is open to participants of the parenting class, the support group, and their children. Since this is a special time for the incarcerated parent to focus attention on his or her children, we have a policy of not including partners or other relatives in the workshop. It was controversial at first, but most parents in the program appreciate the benefits to them and their children of their time alone.

Therefore, the children, their transporters, and the incarcerated parents all visit briefly in the regular visiting room before the transporters leave and the children and incarcerated parents move up to the program area. At the end of the program, the exchange occurs in the same location.

Each workshop lasts three hours, long enough so parents and children can experience the benefits of shared time and participation in activities, yet not so long that children become restless from being confined too long in a room. We provide a good supply of books, creative arts materials, toys, and games that are appropriate for children of different ages and developmental levels.

Our space is shared with other institutional programs, so equipment and materials must be set up, taken down, and stored for each session. Our investment in equipment includes:

- child-size tables and chairs
- lockable cabinets on wheels which can also serve as room dividers
- sand/water table
- climbing equipment
- rocking chair
- changing table
- bean bag chairs
- rugs and pillows

Any space consideration must include safety for children of all ages, and bathroom and water access. A kitchen area is ideal, but may not be possible. Without a kitchen, the serving of food and clean-up convenience are obviously limited and will influence your program. If you have the potential for an outdoor play area and a plan for meals, you may be able to consider a program more extensive than ours.

The options for special activities are endless, but it is important to include activities which could also be done at home without much difficulty or cost. Parents planning for release, especially those who did not get much positive attention from adults when they were young, may welcome ideas for interacting with their children when they are home again. And caregivers may be interested in repeating activities enjoyed by children at the workshop. Written notes about workshop activities could help to make follow-up more likely.

Workshop staff include the child development specialist who coordinates the workshop, the program director, and the university intern. Depending upon the number and ages of children present, additional staff may volunteer to help with the workshop. A security officer is also present.

One of the biggest challenges to our programming efforts has been meeting the needs of older children, especially adolescents, in one large room which must be shared by all. Parents whose children range widely in age face similar challenges. We have conducted a few special workshops for teenagers. One, conducted by Project Adventure on group problem solving, utilized large obstacles to define challenging physical situations; another, conducted by staff and youth from a local substance abuse treatment program, focused on communication with parents. Older children are outnumbered by younger children in our program and our space and financial limitations have resulted in a stronger and more comprehensive program for the younger age group.

## **Special Events**

In response to inmates' requests that the program recognize the entire family, Project H.I.P. sponsors a family event twice a year to which the caregiver (usually the child's other parent, step-parent, aunt, or grandparent) is invited, along with the incarcerated parent and his or her children. These events, one during the summer and the other in early December, take place in the gymnasium. Successful events have included carnival games, a contradance, a magic show, and various children's performers. If you use a gymnasium for your events, you will need to experiment with activities, especially those involving music, to reduce acoustical problems.

# Curriculum Outlines

PARENTING I - YOUNG CHILDREN	PARENTING II - ADOLESCENTS
<b>ORIENTATION</b>	<b>ORIENTATION</b>
<b>PARENTING RIGHTS &amp; RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>PARENTING RIGHTS &amp; RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
<p><b>OUR PARENTING INHERITANCE</b></p> <p>Where did we learn parenting? We take a considered look at how our childhood and family of origin have affected how we parent.</p>	<p><b>EXPECTATIONS: OUR PARENTING CAREERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the personal characteristics you would like your child to develop?</li> <li>• What influences the way children grow up?</li> <li>• What can you do about it?</li> <li>• How did you learn to be a parent?</li> <li>• What did your childhood teach you?</li> <li>• What would you like to do differently? The same?</li> </ul>
<p><b>SEEING THE FAMILY AS A SYSTEM</b></p> <p>We look at how families work, how they don't work and how children and parents are influenced by the needs and hidden rules of the system.</p>	<p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words are only the beginning...</li> <li>• Are you saying what you mean? What you feel?</li> <li>• How to communicate more effectively</li> <li>• Drugs, alcohol and violence</li> </ul>
<p><b>BUILDING HIGH SELF-ESTEEM</b></p> <p>Children behave what they believe. How we behave teaches children what to believe about themselves.</p>	<p><b>INFLUENCING YOUR CHILD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivating children to cooperate</li> <li>• Can you allow some differences between you?</li> <li>• Choices and consequences: learning from experience</li> </ul>
<p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p> <p>Words and feelings can build or destroy. What and how we communicate contributes significantly to what children believe about themselves.</p>	<p><b>NOBODY'S PERFECT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why children misbehave</li> <li>• Responding to broken promises, rules, bargains</li> <li>• Acknowledging our own mistakes without giving up</li> <li>• Peer pressure</li> <li>• Sexual issues</li> <li>• Suicide prevention</li> </ul>
<p><b>RAISING THE RESPONSIBLE CHILD</b></p> <p>Rules, choices and consequences are directly related to the ability to be responsible.</p>	<p><b>PARENTING UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents in prison</li> <li>• Divorce; abandonment; rejection.</li> <li>• Parents in recovery from substance abuse</li> <li>• Handling the guilt, sadness, anger</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEARNING THE DISCIPLINE OF LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES</b></p> <p>To discipline is to teach. Punishment doesn't teach. What do we want to teach our children?</p>	<p><b>SELF-ESTEEM; WHAT IS IT, REALLY?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why it's so important for your child...and you</li> <li>• What can you do now? Plenty!</li> <li>• Reparenting yourself.</li> </ul>

## Sample Budget

Below is a sample one-year budget for a modest parenting program based on the model of Project H.I.P. at Maine Correctional Center. It includes consultant fees for individuals, but does not include indirect cost rates which are added to most contracts with agencies and institutions. The budget also does not include the cost of class handouts and copying. Maine Correctional Center has been willing to provide some release time for a professional in the School Department who is assisted by a parent in the program and a university intern who receives academic credit for the work. Some institutions provide special training and supervision for inmates to assume responsibility for various functions in their program.

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Parenting Education Course — consultant fees for five six-week courses per year at \$100 per class	\$3,000
Parent Rights and Responsibilities Contract with legal services — one session per course at \$100 each	\$500
Child Development Specialist for Saturday Parent-Child Workshop — twelve monthly three-hour workshops at \$100 each	\$1,200
Support Group Facilitator — bi-weekly support group at \$100 each	\$2,400
Security officer for workshop — approximately \$21 per hour at overtime rate, including benefits, for twelve three-hour workshops	\$756
Child development supplies and some start-up equipment	\$2,000

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Note: Maine Correctional Center reduced its consultant rate of pay for Project H.I.P. due to limited funds after the federal funding period. Providing a parenting program based on this model for less than \$15,000 a year requires consultants who will accept this rate of pay and an institutional commitment to contribute approximately one day a week of release time for a dedicated educator to administer the program. Skilled inmate parents can assist with this effort to the extent that institutional policy allows.

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## **Other Considerations**

### ***Communicating With the Child's Caregiver***

It's critical to provide information about your parenting and other family support programs to the children's caregivers well in advance of the first workshop, so the caregivers have some background about the program and its purpose. Try to solicit their support of the incarcerated parent's participation.

Your policies about communicating with families and individual family situations will help determine whether the incarcerated parent or the program delivers the initial information to the caregiver. In either case, be prepared to speak with relatives and other caregivers on the phone. Some will be hesitant, angry, or afraid. In talking with caregivers about a child's visit, it often helps to make the following points:

- Most children are relieved to see that their parents are okay.
- Most children have a picture of prison that is worse than the reality they see.
- Children of all ages, whether they are renewing or developing a relationship with their parent, usually benefit from the positive interaction which occurs during the program visit.
- The program is well supervised and includes activities and experiences appropriate to the ages of the children visiting.

Be prepared for different reactions. Some family members will be enthusiastic and supportive from the start, but others may need time to develop trust in the motives and commitment of the incarcerated parent. Inmates with a history of substance abuse, especially fathers who were not active as parents, may need to demonstrate to their families their readiness to assume some parenting responsibility — a task that is not easy to accomplish from the inside, and one that may take some time.

Some caregivers may be unable to appreciate an incarcerated parent's enthusiasm about parenting techniques, while they are at home struggling with the day-to-day responsibilities of caring for young children or teenagers. A relative on the outside is likely to feel resentful about the incarcerated parent's absence rather than supportive of his or her learning, while the incarcerated parent may feel frustrated and discouraged about being unable to share information and influence change at home.

Project H.I.P. staff and parents have planned information and support meetings for the caregivers of the children of incarcerated parents in the program. If you identify a similar need, as you probably will, try to include incarcerated parents in deciding how to help their children's caregivers understand and support their program.

## ***Collaborating With the State Agency Serving Children and Families***

If your program includes any children who are in the custody of the state, you will need to work closely with the agency responsible for serving children and families. The number of children in the state's custody is likely to be low, since most children of incarcerated parents are cared for by relatives and friends.

If the incarcerated parent is entitled to and receiving regular visits from his child or children, a change in visiting schedule may be required. That can be complicated for an agency with limited resources and large caseloads. Sometimes parents who are entitled to visits from their children are not receiving them, either because of insufficient resources or because of the caseworker's concern about children visiting a prison. The community caseworker's job is to protect the child; s/he may have a cautious reaction to prison from lack of experience. This situation calls for the same sort of advocacy and education that you use to help family caregivers accept the idea of children visiting a parent in prison.

### **Here are some suggested responses to problems you might encounter:**

- Invite the caseworker to observe a children's workshop.
- If the child's caseworker is reluctant to approve the visit, ask if you can discuss your request with the supervisor.
- If the caseworker is supportive, but indicates an obstacle such as transportation or the foster family's schedule, explore alternatives to make the visit possible.
- If a particular visit cannot be arranged, discuss what you can do to work it out for the next time. Remember, it might be difficult to gain support for the program initially, but it is important to keep the door open. One caseworker who has been supportive might help another to become more accepting of the program.

## ***Transportation***

The location of the institution, whether it is urban or rural, its access to public transportation, and the distances families must travel are important factors to consider when considering whether and how to address the issue of transporting children to and from the institution. Whether or not your program becomes involved in the transportation issue, establishing the caregiver's support and willingness to allow the child's participation is a necessary first step.

Project H.I.P. tried to develop a volunteer transportation program by establishing contact with a network of churches throughout the state. While the program was moderately successful, we found it extraordinarily time-consuming to

arrange individual transportation and to facilitate communication between caregivers and transporters for even a small number of families. Currently, parents who need transportation for their children are encouraged to develop their own support systems. Some assistance with telephone communication is provided by correctional caseworkers and by staff members in the school department.

Information about successful transportation programs, including van services with specific pick-up and drop-off points, might be identified by contacting individual state correctional departments and members of the Family and Corrections Network at the address given on page 12.

# Role of Correctional Center Departments

Any corrections-based, family-oriented program requires collaboration between the security-focused corrections system and the professionals outside the system representing the needs of children and families. The process of program planning and administration requires reciprocal education, thoughtful listening, and a willingness by corrections and child development staff to re-evaluate policies and practices and to cooperate in positive decision-making.

The approach and content of a parenting education program and workshops involving children belong in the hands of the consultants who are specialists in working with children and families. However, the unique restrictions of a correctional facility must inform all program planning and will necessarily impose some limits on decision-making.

Individual departments within Maine Correctional Center provide important functions in Project H.I.P.

## **School Department**

The School Department houses Project H.I.P., oversees all components of the program, and handles all logistics, from review of inmate files and intake to completion of the program. The School Department now also handles all administrative functions, including those for which the University, under contract with the Maine Department of Corrections, was responsible during the federal funding period. These functions include monitoring the budget, initiating and managing contracts with consultants, establishing the calendar, and communicating with other institutional departments, families of inmates, and the broader community.

An institution's School Department may include vocational programs or industries that may be able to provide your program with some services (such as printing and construction of equipment) quite economically.

## **Security Department**

The support and cooperation of the Security Department are essential to any program for incarcerated parents. Active participation in planning by an influential security administrator and the presence of staff at events involving children and families helps to develop a good working relationship between the Security Department and the program.

The attitude about the program conveyed by security administrators to officers will influence the attitudes of individual officers and their behavior toward inmates attending program activities. Some officers appreciate the opportunity to observe inmates interacting positively with their children and develop respect for the goals of the program with regard to inmates and their children. While some corrections staff are initially cautious about supporting programs which appear to be "soft on criminals," those who have an opportunity to observe and participate in programs for inmates and their children see another side of the prisoner and witness the positive effects of a program which brings parents and children together, briefly interrupting an often painful period of separation.

A security official with authority must participate in planning movement details of a parent-child workshop, including arrival of children, meeting with parents, progression to the workshop space, and departure. While joint planning by program staff and security is done in advance at meetings or by telephone, and security problems are likely to be rare, the presence of an officer on the day of the workshop to assist with movement and to be on duty in case of a security problem benefits the program.

## **Social Services Department**

Caseworkers can support the program by referring inmates to the program and providing services such as telephone assistance and personal support to those who are enrolled. They are also aware of special circumstances such as state agency or court restrictions on individual visiting rights. Participation by a caseworker in initial and ongoing program planning provides an important personal perspective about the range of needs among incarcerated parents and their families.

## **Chaplaincy**

While no pre-defined role exists for the chaplaincy, representation from the department provides a human dimension in planning a program and considering inmate and family needs. The chaplain may also provide an important link to community resources such as specific services or potential funds, or to state and local religious institutions which might assist with transportation or help provide family support to family members on the outside.

## **Treatment Programs**

Any treatment programs which exist in your institution, particularly substance abuse and sex offender treatment, may be sources of referrals to the program. Treatment staff are important resources and potential planning committee members. They can help to work out policies with regard to sensitive issues, such as participation by prisoners who may have victimized children, but who have no court or state agency restrictions on visits from children.

## **Recreation Department**

The gymnasium and any other facilities overseen by the Recreation Department represent potential resources for a program with children. While access will, most likely, be limited, it's worth exploring options for the times when children are present and physical activities would enhance a program.

## **Further Assistance**

We hope that this handbook has been helpful to you in planning and developing a program for incarcerated parents at your institution. If you would like more information, please feel free to contact us at the addresses below:

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Program Director  
Project H.I.P. (Helping Incarcerated Parents)  
Maine Correctional Center  
17 Mallison Rd.  
Windham, ME 04062  
(207)892-6716

Karen Tilbor  
Research Associate  
Edmund S. Muskie Institute of Public Affairs  
University of Southern Maine  
96 Falmouth St.  
Portland, ME 04103  
(207)780-4430

## References

Fishman, Susan Hoffman (1982). Impact of Incarceration on Children of Offenders. *Journal of Children in Contemporary Society*, 15(1), 89-89.

Hairston, Creasia Finney (1991) Family Ties During Imprisonment. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 18(1), 87-104.

Hairston, Creasia Finney (1988). Family Ties During Imprisonment. *Federal Probation*, 52, 48-52.

Harm, Nancy J. (1992). Social Policy on Women Prisoners: An Historical Analysis. *Affilia*, 7(1), 90-108.

Johnston, Denise. Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents. Information communicated by telephone on June 10, 1993.

# Appendix

## Foundation Center Cooperating Collections Free Funding Information Centers

The Foundation Center is an independent national service organization established by foundations to provide an authoritative source of information on private philanthropic giving. The New York, Washington (DC), Cleveland, and San Francisco reference collections operated by the Foundation Center offer a wide variety of services and comprehensive collections of information on foundations and grants. Cooperating Collections are libraries, community foundations and other nonprofit agencies that provide a core collection of Foundation Center publications and a variety of supplementary materials and services in areas useful to grantseekers. The core collection consists of:

**Foundation Center's Guide to  
Proposal Writing  
Foundation Directory 1 and 2,  
and Supplement  
Foundation 1000  
Foundation Fundamentals  
Foundation Giving**

**Foundation Grants Index  
Foundation Grants Index  
Quarterly  
Foundation Grants to  
Individuals  
Guide to U.S. Foundations,  
Their Trustees, Officers,  
and Donors**

**Literature of the Nonprofit  
Sector  
National Directory of Corporate  
Giving  
Selected Grant Guides  
User-Friendly Guide**

Many of the network members have sets of private foundation information returns (IRS Form 990-PF) for their state or region which are available for public use. A complete set of U.S. foundation returns can be found at the New York and Washington (DC) offices of the Foundation Center. The Cleveland and San Francisco offices contain IRS Form 990-PF returns for the midwestern and western states, respectively. To check on new locations or current information, call toll-free 1-800-424-9836.

## Reference Collections Operated by the Foundation Center

The Foundation Center  
8th Floor  
79 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10003  
212-620-4230

The Foundation Center  
312 Sutter St., Rm. 312  
San Francisco, CA 94108  
(415) 397-0902

The Foundation Center  
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 331-1400

The Foundation Center  
Kent H. Smith Library  
1422 Euclid, Suite 1356  
Cleveland, OH 44115  
(216) 861-1933

# Final Program Report

GRANT #90-CA-1398  
Project H.I.P. (Helping Incarcerated Parents)  
Maine Correctional Center  
Windham, Maine 04062

October 1988 - December 1991

Submitted by:  
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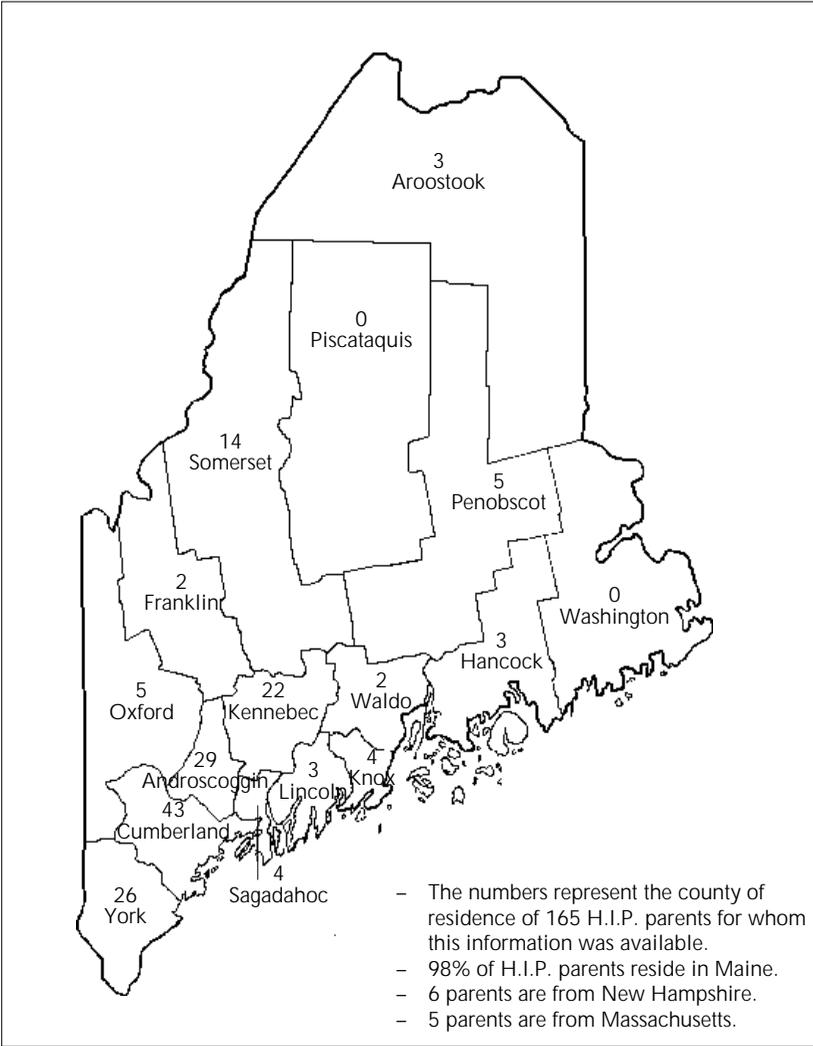
# Introduction

The development of Project H.I.P. (Helping Incarcerated Parents) was made possible through a three-year federal grant from the Office of Human Development Services to the Maine Department of Corrections. The Department of Corrections contracted with the Edmund S. Muskie Institute of Public Affairs (formerly Human Services Development Institute) at the University of Southern Maine for assistance with all stages of program development and implementation. The original funding period of three years, October 1988 to September 1991, was extended for three months, at no cost, to allow for continued data collection. This report documents project activity through March 1992, three months following termination of the federal funding period.

Project H.I.P., a multi-faceted parent education program located at Maine Correctional Center in Windham, serves men and women of minimum and medium security classification whose sentences range from several months to several years and average two-and-a-half years. Ninety-eight percent of the program participants have been Maine residents. Their geographical representation among Maine's sixteen counties is represented on the map which follows for those whose residence was known.

Support from the Office of the Commissioner of Corrections was essential to initiate this program. Commitment to the program by Maine Correctional Center administration and staff, program staff and consultants, incarcerated parents and their families made the program a reality. All program planning and implementation was accomplished through careful collaboration between Maine Correctional Center, the Muskie Institute and the Child and Family Institute, also at the University of Southern Maine. Undergraduate Criminology interns from the University of Southern Maine played a significant role coordinating program logistics within the School Department at Maine Correctional Center.

Project H.I.P., based in the Maine Correctional Center School Department, consists of parent education courses focusing on young children and adolescents, a support group for parents who have completed one or both courses and a Saturday parent-child workshop. The Maine Correctional Center currently provides the financial support necessary to sustain these three components of the program and has done so since the termination of the grant funding period in September 1991. An Advisory Board consisting of Maine Correctional Center staff, University staff and incarcerated parents continues to meet bi-monthly to provide guidance and address program issues.



The figures below document program participation during a three year period from the pilot implementation in March 1989 through March 1992, three months following completion of the federal funding period.

## Education Courses

Courses	Inmates Completed			Contact Hours instruction hours delivered x # participants x courses completed
	Fathers	Mothers	Total Parents	
Parenting I (Young Children) Twelve 7-week/14 hour sessions	125	36	161	27,048
Parenting II (began Year II) (Adolescents) Four 7-week/14 hour sessions	26	6	32	1,792
Both Courses Sixteen sessions (224 course hours)	151	42	193	43,232

### Other Participant Information

- 179 parents completed one course
- 14 parents completed both courses
- 29 parents left program before completing course due to medical reason, transfer, release, program conflict or other reason beyond individual's control
- 13 parents quit before completion due to unknown personal reason
- 4 parents will complete course pending missed class make-up
- 239 total enrolled in program March 1989 - March 1992

### Workshop Participation by Incarcerated Parents

- 366 Total number of inmate parent workshop visits
- 179 Parents participated in one or more workshops
- 60 Parents completed a course but, for various reasons, did not participate in workshops with children
- 11 Parents, of the above 60, did not participate in workshops due to Department of Human Services or court restrictions on right to visits by children

## Parent-Child Workshops

Date	Inmate	Children	Caregivers
02/15/92	10	13	
01/18/92	7	11	
12/14/91*	20	32	20
11/16/91	14	19	
10/19/91	7	12	
09/28/91	17	37	
08/17/91*	20	30	20
06/15/91	9	27	
05/18/91	9	23	
04/13/91	9	17	
03/16/91	6	10	
02/23/91	5	10	
01/19/91	7	12	
12/08/90*	22	37	25
12/01/90	11	26	
10/27/90	16	22	
09/29/90	11	17	
06/30/90	16	24	
06/16/90	13	21	
06/09/90*	28	63	28
05/12/90	15	24	
03/24/90	16	26	
03/03/90	21	33	
01/13/90	4	4	
12/09/89	5	4	
11/04/89	9	13	
10/14/89	11	16	
07/08/89	8	12	
06/10/89	8	9	
04/15/89	7	10	
03/15/89	5	7	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>93</b>

\* Represents semi-annual family events to which caregivers are also invited.  
The regular workshops are attended by children and incarcerated parents only.

- 621 Total number of workshop visits by children
- 234 Number of individual children who participated in one or more workshops
- 179 Number of children of parents in program who attended no workshops

## Support Group

The Support Group for parents who complete a parenting education course began half way through Year I, in June 1989, and met monthly through December, with the exception of November when no meeting occurred. Evaluation by the participants and the facilitators resulted in a recommendation that the group meet twice a month. A decision was made that, as of January, one monthly meeting would focus on a particular topic and the other would be primarily for personal support. The chart below records the topic for each meeting as of January 1990. Four to fifteen inmate parents participated in each group meeting.

### Year II, 1990

Date	Topic	# Participants
January 10	Self-esteem	4
January 24	Personal Support	10
February 7	Communication	4
February 21	Personal Support	4
March 14	Video "Parenthood" and discussion	7
March 21	Personal Support	5
April 4	Support Group	9
April 18	Support Group	9
May 2	Stress Reduction Techniques	8
May 16	Support Group	6
May 30	Ages & Stages of Development	5
June 13	Support Group	6
June 27	Ages & Stages of Development	8
July 11	Personal Support	9
July 25	Film: Parenthood	11
August 8	Personal Support	11
August 22	Video: "Everybody Rides the Carousel" (based on Erik Erickson's theory of human development)	12
September 5	Personal Support	6
September 26	Establishing Boundaries	7

## Year III, 1990-1991

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b># Participants</b>
October 10	Support Group	4
October 24	Family Traditions and Rituals	2
November 14	Support Group	11
November 28	Making Christmas Gifts	12
December 5	Childhood Impressions of Adulthood	7
December 19	Support Group	7
January 23	Communicating with Children & Caregivers	6
February 6	Dealing with Children's Emotions	3
February 20	Support Group	4
March 6	Support Group	3
March 20	Separation & Divorce	6
April 10	Support Group	6
April 24	Self-Esteem	5
May 8	Support Group	6
May 22	Friendship & Trust	9
June 5	Support Group	8
June 19	Children's Emotions/Approaches to Discipline	9
July 10	Support Group	8
July 24	Communicating with Young Children, Their Teachers & Their Caregivers	8
August 7	Support Group	5
August 21	Separation & Divorce	7
September 4	Support Group	6
September 18	Understanding Children's Play	6

## Year IV

Date	Topic	# Participants
October 9	Support Group	8
October 23	Self-Esteem	8
November 6	Support Group	12
November 20	Support Group	12
December 4	Stress Reduction	15
December 18	Support Group	6
January 15	Support Group	13
January 29	Support Group	9
February 12	Birth-Family Relationships and Commitment	7
March 4	Support Group	7
March 18	Support Group	7

### Followup Data Collection

The follow-up study was designed to conduct interviews by telephone or mail with Project H.I.P. participants six months after their release from Maine Correctional Center to inquire about their perception of their current role as parents and the impact of Project H.I.P. on their parenting behavior. Although parents routinely agreed, prior to their release, to participate in a follow-up study, the majority could not be located (as indicated by returned letters) and others either did not receive or did not return contact forms to schedule interviews.

Multiple letters were sent to forty-one former inmates approximately six months after their release. Their actual time of release varied from approximately one week to eight months after completing the parent education program. Nine parents responded that they were willing to participate in an interview and seven follow-up interviews were actually conducted. One was never scheduled due to continued difficulty making contact. The other was received in writing from a parent who had not yet been released, but had transferred to another institution within the state and, thus, was not yet able to resume an active parenting role. Among the seven completed interviews, all but one required two mailings and two to four telephone calls to schedule the interview. Among the remaining thirty-two former inmates to whom letters were sent, one responded that she was unwilling to participate in any communication relating to the correctional center. All letters sent to sixteen program participants were returned by the post office and those sent to another fifteen received no response whatsoever, so it is not known whether or not they were received.

Reports from six of the seven released parents interviewed were positive regarding their own parenting role at that time and the impact of the program. The seventh parent reported no change in his own parenting behavior and no impact of the program. Among the six who viewed themselves as having improved as parents, all described their current relationships with their children in positive terms and referred to giving more “focused attention” to their children. Five of the six referred to understanding their children better and changing their approach to discipline. Specific references were made to more talking and negotiating and use of logical consequences.

The outcome of the follow-up study regarding number of responses and completed interviews was extremely discouraging. Project staff have realized the need for a longer term follow-up study with incentives to encourage program participants to respond and maintain contact with the program. Careful consideration must be given to study design and adequate funding to obtain outcome information over a longer period of time. Thorough consideration must also be given to the barriers to obtaining follow-up information about a parent education program. Some individuals resist any contact with the institution where they were incarcerated. Other barriers relate to the need for housing and employment to meet basic needs as well as the need for specialized services and community support after release. A parent education program can make an important difference for, at least, some individuals during and following incarceration, but it does not provide the range of individualized support and services which many require for lasting change.

The limitations of Project H.I.P.’s follow-up study notwithstanding, project staff have been strongly encouraged by the subjectively reported and observed impact of the program on the parenting role of dozens of incarcerated parents. Many inmates and their family members have offered unsolicited enthusiasm about positive changes in the incarcerated parent’s attitude about parenting and his or her parenting behavior. Corrections staff have expressed support for the program based on their own perceptions and reports from participating incarcerated parents.

We regret that we cannot provide convincing program impact documentation, but we do believe that the parent education program has made a positive difference in the parenting behavior and parent-child relationships of many incarcerated parents. Our experience supports the need for further study to measure this impact.

## Dissemination

During the project period, information about Project H.I.P. was disseminated by conference presentations, newspaper and magazine articles, radio, television and one teleconference. In addition to the disseminations listed below, numerous informal presentations occurred within the State of Maine. The audiences included University staff, Maine Correctional Center staff, Maine Association of Child Abuse and Neglect Councils, Daughters of Isabella and the Maine Ecumenical Council. Project staff also responded to requests for information from family members of inmate parents and to clinical and correctional professionals from throughout the United States.

### Presentations

Date	Event	Location
March 3, 1989	Maine Adult Correctional Education Conference	South Portland, Maine
April 15, 1989	Poster Display Maine Chapter-International Association of Infant Mental Health	Augusta, Maine
June 2, 1989	ACYF Youth Services Network	Boston, Massachusetts
August 2, 1989	Department of Human Services Training	Castine, Maine
October 21, 1989	Maine Adult Correctional Education Conference	Rockland, Maine
April 5, 1990	New England Conference for Prevention Practitioners	Worcester, MA
September 14, 1990	Private and Public Agency Children's Services Conference	Saco, Maine
July 9, 1991	International Correctional Education Conference	Washington, DC
September 23, 1991	Family and Corrections Conference	Topeka, Kansas
September 24, 1991	Family and Corrections Conference	Topeka, Kansas

### Radio

Date	Station	Reporter
May, 1989	Maine Public Radio	
May, 1990	Maine Public Radio	Tom Verde

NOTE: Project H.I.P. staff and parents were also interviewed by Casey Mallinckrodt, a volunteer in production at WERU, a non-commercial radio station in Blue Hill, Maine. Her program about incarcerated women is due to be completed for a broadcast.

## Newspaper and Other Publications

<b>Date</b>	<b>Publication</b>	<b>Reporter</b>
January 13, 1990	Kennebec Journal (Augusta, ME)	Michele Charon
May 12, 1990	Portland Press Herald (Portland, ME) and Associated Press	Dirk Beveridge
April 7, 1991	Boston Globe (Boston, MA)	Tom Verde
Spring 1991	University of Southern Maine Alumni Magazine, <i>Mainstream</i>	Susan Swain

## Teleconference

<b>Date</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Participants</b>
December 11, 1990	National Child Welfare Resource Center for Management and Administration University of Southern Maine	Child Welfare and Corrections Professionals

## Television

<b>Date</b>	<b>Station</b>	<b>Reporter</b>
September 21, 1989	WCSH (Channel 6)	Noel Nordquist
October 14, 1989	WCSH (Channel 6)	Noel Nordquist

The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Management and Administration at the University of Southern Maine will disseminate the Handbook for Developing an Effective Program for Incarcerated Parents which is in the process of being finalized.