

Strengthening Incarcerated Individuals Webinar

September 23, 2015

Operator

Good day, and welcome to the “Strengthening Incarcerated Individuals and Their Families Through Healthy Relationship Education” conference call. Today’s call is being recorded. At this time, I’d like to turn the conference over to Jessica Otto. Please go ahead.

Jessica Otto

Great. Welcome everyone, and thank you for joining us today for the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families webinar entitled, “Strengthening Incarcerated Individuals and Their Families Through Healthy Relationship Education.” My name is Jessica Otto, and I will be helping with the logistics for today’s webinar along with my colleague, Jen McHenry.

Before we get to the content for the webinar, we are going to go over a few logistical items. The webinar today will last an hour and a half, ending at 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time. Audio for the webinar will be broadcast through your computer. Please make sure your speakers and volume are turned on. If you have any technical issues, problems seeing or hearing something, you can send us a message in the Q-and-A box on your screen or call the number appearing on the slide, and we will be sure to assist you.

After the presentation today, we will have an online question and answer session. We encourage you to type in questions you think of at any time while presenters are presenting by typing them in the Q-and-A pod located in the bottom right corner of your screen and clicking Enter. We will collect the submitted questions and then address those during the Q-and-A session at the end as time permits. If your question is for a specific presenter, please reference that when typing your question if possible.

Throughout the webinar, presenters may reference materials or links relevant to their presentation. You can browse Web links by clicking on any of the links in the Web Links pod. You can download materials by selecting Files in the Files pod, both on the right-hand portion of your screen. We will be including several poll questions throughout the webinar and encourage you to participate.

We are excited for the content that will be shared today. The webinar agenda includes brief introductions of our presenters, an introduction to the challenges faced by ex-offenders during the reentry process, and discussion of the importance of providing healthy relationship education to inmates while incarcerated. And finally, three program examples of providers in the field providing healthy marriage and relationship education to incarcerated inmates and their families. Following the end of the presentations, as I mentioned, we will have an online Q-and-A session.

Without further ado, our presenters today:

- Robyn Cenizal. Robyn is the Director of the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families.
- Norman Robinson. Norman is the Deputy Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC). He began his career in 1996 as a parole officer and has since served the Department in many capacities, including as the Assistant Regional Administrator of Adult Parole Authority, a deputy warden and warden, and in 2014, was chosen to serve as the Deputy Director of the Office of Reentry. Norman holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor's Degree in Social Services.
- Wendi White. Wendi is the Engaging the Family Program Coordinator for the New Jersey Department of Corrections. Wendi joined the Department in 2008 as an institutional social worker, and then transferred to the Office of Substance Abuse Programming and Addiction Services in 2010 to work for the Engaging the Family program, taking on the position of Program Coordinator in 2014. In addition to her work at the New Jersey Department of Corrections, Wendi has taught courses at Drexel University and has worked as a therapist in a number of roles. She holds a Master's Degree in Creative Art Therapy and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology.
- And finally, Darryl Grayson. Darryl is the Fatherhood Director at Urban Light Ministries located in Springfield, Ohio. Since joining Urban Light Ministries in 2006, Darryl has been instrumental in revamping and growing Urban Light's fatherhood program. In 2010, Darryl became the Fatherhood Director and in 2015, the role of Chief Operating Officer was added. Darryl holds a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering, and enjoyed a long career in the fuel industry before pursuing his interest in fatherhood programs, training and facilitation.

And with that, Robyn, I will turn it over to you to get us started and set the context for today's discussion.

Robyn Cenizal

Thanks, Jess, and welcome to all of you who have joined us today, and welcome to our presenters. I'm really excited about today's presentation from these folks, talking about various aspects of reentry and some of the challenges that the families face, and the services that are being provided.

It's very interesting, with the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families -- Our focus is really connecting healthy marriage education skills and safety net services as part of an integrated approach to strengthening families. And we have been providing training and technical assistance around the country. We've been in, I believe, 22 states so far. And as we've provided these different trainings, we've had wonderful opportunity to hear some of the interesting things that are happening on the ground and to support some of those efforts.

The Resource Center provides outreach through our conferences and our social media, Twitter, and our monthly newsletter. If you haven't signed up for our monthly newsletter, please be sure to do so. We also provide an array of stakeholder-specific products. If you look in the box that says Files to the right of the screen, you'll see one of our resources that I think you'll find very interesting on today's topic.

Additionally, as I mentioned, we do provide training and technical assistance. And a large portion of that has been the Integration Institutes that we've been hosting around the country in addition to the follow-up training that we provide, and support to agencies who are making an effort to integrate relationship education skills into their service delivery systems, and our presenters today are going to talk about some of those efforts. You're going to hear from Ohio where we have been. You're going to hear from Norm, and we're also going to hear from Darryl who is also in Ohio, and then we're going to hear from Wendi from New Jersey and hear the work that they're doing as well from one of our Integration Institutes.

We also provide a robust website with over 1,000 research-based resources in the library, as well as our Virtual Training Center that has six exciting courses. Links to those are also in the little panel to the right of the screen. You can see those links where it says "Web Links," so feel free to click on those if you have not visited those before.

The skills that we focus on when we talk about healthy relationship education skills are healthy relationship skills like interpersonal skills, communication and conflict resolution. Now, these are the interpersonal skills that are just as important in the family environment as they are in the workplace. They are important in couple relationships, parent-child relationships, coworker, community relationships, and we focus on those skills as being some of the core areas.

The other important areas that we focus on are critical skills like parenting and financial education. Parenting issues and finances are two of the number-one stressors that impact all families, regardless of socioeconomic status, but the challenge is often greater for low-resource families who don't have the resources to reach out for assistance when they need it. What's also important to know about these four core areas is that these skills can be integrated individually or collectively as part of a structured curriculum to help strengthen families and provide them some of the tools that they need to be more successful and move to self-sufficiency.

Today's topic is really going to be around services related to incarcerated individuals and reentry. And it's really important to understand the connection between family strengthening and successful reentry. More than 80 percent of the men reentering from incarceration receive some kind of family assistance, and most name family support as the most important factor in helping them stay out of prison. Family support, acceptance and encouragement for formerly incarcerated individuals is associated with more success in finding employment, reduced criminal behavior, and less substance abuse. And moreover, prisoners who maintain family relationships while incarcerated are less likely to commit a new crime or violate parole when they are released.

Some of the stuff that you're going to hear today that's innovative and exciting is the fact that previously, the focus of reentry efforts have been on folks who are about to leave prison. We are going to hear from Norm today talk about what they're doing, some exciting stuff in Ohio, to make sure that family strengthening is a focus from the time inmates enter the reception into the inmate system. So I think there's going to be some really exciting information today that you're going to hear, and I look forward to the question and answers at the end of today's presentation. And with that, I am going to

turn it over to Norman Robinson, Deputy Director, Office of Offender and Reentry.
Norm?

Norman Robinson

Good afternoon, everybody, and Robyn, thanks for the introduction. Here at ODRC, one of the things that we pride ourselves on is bringing the family engagement into our corrections. And what this means is that when a person is incarcerated, we try to do our best to keep the family engaged at reception all the way down to reentry. And one of the things that we like to do is really look at the operation of our institutions, and really look at, how can we engage the family? How can we bring families in -- whether it's mothers or fathers, grandmothers, but mainly the children -- how can we bring them in and engage them with the offenders while they're in?

And the reason why we do this is because there's such a disconnect when a person does an amount of time -- they don't have family engagement, maybe they don't have visitation -- there's such a disconnect when they come back home. They really don't know this new person that's coming back home, and it takes a little bit of time of adjusting, which could hinder the reentry process.

So when we look at the core, DRC's approach is, reentry calls for a broad system approach and managing offenders returning to community. And like Robyn said, when we talk about reentry, we talk about community relationships, community partnerships, and trying to connect individuals with those resources. We mainly do that through what we call reentry coalitions.

But we began looking at family engagement in the Office of Reentry after I had went to a conference that Robyn was hosting last year, and we really got the idea to say, "Hey, you know, what this company has to really provide to us is a really good resource and really moving the needle when it comes to our family engagement." So Robyn and I talked, I had my team come down to the Hilton, and we really started kind of planning out, how can we have the Resource Center and DRC collaborate, but also bring in all the different stakeholders that are impacted by reentry and family engagement?

One of the things that we've done at the Department is we've really worked with our governor's office and we've also worked with the director, and we have been able to drastically reduce our telephone rates to five cents per minute. This was huge because now, we are providing offenders more opportunities to call home for much longer times. But the back-end opportunity to this is that we are able to have families not be hit with such a cost and collect call cost and all the other impact that it has on a family's income, to really reduce that down. And our partner of GTL is engaged with us. It has given us additional funds in the housing units so people can further engage and keep that communication with their families.

We also have something called JPay, which is video visitation. And video visitation is very similar to what we use in just webcams and Skype. And they are able to Skype from the dormitories to the homes of their families and have interactions. So we're trying our best to keep that family unit engaged, intact. And not only that: the offenders can talk about their progress, whether it's in programming or progress in maturity or any type of medical or mental health.

So when Robyn and I sat down, I had a staff member named Rona Dorsey, who just recently retired on me, and she was really a big family guru. You know, we really looked at the programs Inside Out Dads --we have the RIDGE Project that I'll get into a little bit later that really does a lot of family engagement piece. But we really wanted to dive into looking at the questions family members face before we go out and address our stakeholders.

And let me tell you a little bit about our stakeholders. We have governmental entities. We have job and family services that was involved. We have child support that was involved. We had the Goodwill that was involved. And we brought in some of the faith community, too. And we wanted to bring all these individuals in so we could hear what the perception at DRC is in visitation. Me being a DRC deputy director, I could sit here and tell you we do a great job. However, until we get that feedback back from the community, we really don't know where we're at and where we stand. So that's one of the things we were looking at.

But one of the questions that they face is, what do communities and agencies have that can assist with improving family engagement? What are the challenges facing the family members in their ability to stay engaged, and if someone is being released, what things do they need to be successful in coming back in the community?

So why is family engagement so important? Family engagement is so important just because, like what I've talked about before, family engagement, and I'm going to speak from a couple different hats that I've worn from parole. From parole, when you go out and you do that initial placement interview, the family wants to know, "What has he or she done? What type of program have they done? They've hurt us by stealing. We don't want to be stolen from again." They want to have more interaction and engagement about who are they going to get.

On the inside, the offenders are asking, "Well hey, I don't know, I'm new, I'm changed, how do I make that transition?" Well, family engagement is so important that those questions can be answered when we let folks come into our institutions when we have the video visitations. So they can relay this information and there's not a gap in any communication.

So a couple things that we do that's really unique. I'm at Northeast Pre-Release Center today, and one of the things that they did was a date night. And the Northeast Reintegration Center is a female facility, but they did a date night and they invited the husbands in, and they had popcorn and a movie, and just had a date night which is really unique. And it's really unique in such that when you talk about prisons, historically, prisons haven't done anything like that. But that's how serious we are as an agency when it comes to family engagement and maintaining the family structure.

So let me talk about these family engagement forums. When Robyn and I got together, we really talked about engaging these individuals. We really talked about getting everybody together in a room and hearing what they had to say. And we asked six main questions. And we had wardens in the audience. We had unit staff. We had just various stakeholders, internal and external stakeholders, that really answered a lot of good questions that we were asking about how we are doing, what could we be doing better,

and engaging them and saying, “Hey, these are things that we are going to consolidate and give a report and a recommendation to our director to say, ‘Hey, this is where DRC needs to go when it involves family engagement.’”

We had one at the north forum and in our state, we divide it in two. We had one at the north forum, which is in Akron, Ohio, then we had a similar one down in Columbus, Ohio. And like I said, it was well-attended and there were different folks there. There were also some folks from the faith community that was represented there as well.

So like I said, we are partnering with the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriages to facilitate the discussions and map out the process. The prison focus groups -- we also have a prison focus group that targeted 40 currently-incarcerated men representing cross-sections of the prison population. Remember earlier in our presentation we talked about the inmate inside. What is it that they would like to see? Where are we coming up short? And I could put my warden hat on and say, “The best thing that I could do is go out and do rounds.” And when I went out and done rounds, I could understand how good and how effectively we were running the institutions.

Well, this is kind of the same thing. We’re going out to the institutions with the assistance of our unit management team, and we are going out and we are asking similar questions to what we asked in the community: “What could we be doing better? How can we efficiently manage this?” And we’re doing that, so again, we’re going to push all that information and data up, and that’s going to be a tremendous point in where we look at the final, overall product.

A couple of things that I kind of wanted to kind of focus on is our national fatherhood initiative, which is Inside Out Dads program. And this is designed to help dads learn how to be better dads to children while inside the institution. This program is recognized to where they have a certification, and when they get out, they have to know that they’re going to stay out. And one of the things that we focus on is the cycle of family incarceration and how that impacts. So when the father goes and the child sees that and they start mimicking some of that behavior, then what you ultimately see is the father and the son in the same prison compound as inmates. That’s the cycle that we stress on the Inside Out Dads to really focus on so they won’t have to come back. And again, this all affects recidivism. This all affects recidivism. If a person can come back to a healthy environment, a healthy home, then this will definitely impact recidivism.

The last thing I have, and I said I was going to talk a little bit about the RIDGE Project, they are a good partner with us, and they actually do a great job in really moving the needle when it comes to some of their concepts and initiatives. Now, I’m just going to really name a few things that they do. They have a TYROs Dad project that individuals are taught and encouraged to be taking responsibility for our actions. And one thing about the RIDGE Project: it is ran by a restored citizen and his wife. So they are actually taking some of their personal experiences and really implementing it into some of the curriculum and things that they do.

So we have RIDGE Project, I believe, in, they told me I think about 14 institutions, I believe that they are in, and they are a really good partner with us. And they actually,

again, moved the ball down the field when we look as far as DRC and family engagement.

Once again, I talked about collecting all the data in regards to family engagement programs that are conducted at the prison, and eventually on the outside. We surveyed over a thousand incarcerated parents, printed and released a research paper on those findings. We compiled the feedback for approximately 190 participants in the first two community conversations, as I stated before. So we have a really good sample of information to be able to make decisions and make recommendations to our director in corrections.

Okay. I don't know if I ask questions at this point or if we do the question and answers later. So I will then -- that's the end of my presentation. I will then pass it on to Miss Wendi White.

Wendi White

Thank you, Norm. Good afternoon, everybody. Today, I'm going to share with you about Engaging the Family and the recovery process for max-out offenders, a community center approach. This program has been funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance since 2006, and is facilitated within the New Jersey State Prison.

I'd like to highlight some demographic information on the offenders that we work with so you have an understanding of our population.

Jen McHenry

So we are going to ask a question and see what you as the audience think the percentage of offenders in New Jersey who are currently incarcerated for violent offenses. Take a moment to weigh in and answer that. We'll actually show you what everyone is thinking. Your options are 17 percent, 27 percent, 37 percent, or 57 percent. And again, this is the percentage of offenders in New Jersey who are currently incarcerated for violent offenses. We've got some people weighing in. One more second.

All right, and it looks like most people think that it's 27 percent, so Wendi, why don't you let us know what the answers are. And again, as people come up with questions, if they have questions about the data coming up and the rest of the presentation, they can ask that in the Q-and-A box.

Wendi White

Great. So the correct answer is actually 57 percent. I think this is a pretty significant number, especially when you consider violent crimes to be homicide, sexual assault, aggravated and simple assault, robbery, kidnapping, and other sex offenses. And in comparison, only 17 percent of all offenders have been committed for narcotic law violations, and this includes possession, sale, and distribution. I actually would think that this number would be a bit higher because of the amount of offenders in the system that present with some type of substance issue, but violent offenses are committed about three times the amount of drug offenses.

Now, these demographics, of course, do not capture how many people were on drugs when they committed their violent acts, but that certainly can be a factor in the crime itself. And I do believe that incarceration for drug offenses has also decreased greatly over recent years as the result of Governor Christie's push to expand the eligibility of offenders in our drug court system, and this has had some really positive outcomes.

In terms of ethnicity, 61 percent of the inmates are black, 22 percent white, 16 percent Hispanic, and one percent are Asian.

In regard to age, 36 percent of all inmates are 30 years of age or younger, with the median age being 35 years old. So a fair amount of our population is pretty young. And the median total term for offenders is six years. The participants that we work with in Engaging the Family are at the end of their sentence. Usually they'll have three to six months of their term is when we will interact with them.

A recent analysis conducted by the Department indicated, at a minimum, 58 percent of the male offender population, and 70 percent of the female population reported having at least one child. In addition, over 15 percent of New Jersey's offender population has an outstanding child support issue. It's safe to say that family is a corrections issue, and obviously a very pressing social issue that needs to be addressed. Research shows that a strong family connection is a criminal element in reducing the likelihood that incarcerated parents will return back to prison.

So based on this, the New Jersey Department of Corrections designed a program to engage the [families] of offenders as support mechanisms towards the reintegration back into the community, and as allies in the end of the criminal and addictive lifestyle of their loved one.

Our target population for Engaging the Family includes incarcerated parents that are in a committed relationship, have a substance abuse issue, and are near the end of their maximum sentence. There are very few continuing and support services available for this population, which makes this program pretty unique and, I think, pretty special. Parolees receive support, structure, often treatment, employment services, housing. But when an offender maxes out, we usually say good luck and hope we don't see them back in custody. So Engaging the Family assists this population in reestablishing ties with both family and community, addresses their substance abuse issues, and provides continuous support services prior to and after release from the Department of Corrections.

During incarceration we develop a treatment plan with the inmate, assist with contacting family and establishing visitations, and conduct weekly case management sessions to begin planning for post-release. Planning for reentry while still incarcerated, as opposed to dealing with it once they are home, can make the process of reintegration a more manageable transition, and helps to increase individuals' chances of success.

We also facilitate programming that uniquely involves the participation of the partner inside the prison. So we actually invite the co-participant to join for a two-hour group each week, and we conduct workshops in healthy relationship strengthening, parenting skills, and financial literacy. Having the partner participate in these groups is really valuable because it gives the couple an opportunity to learn skills together, communicate

about these important topics, develop a co-parenting plan, and express needs and expectations for the return home.

Engaging the Family also utilizes the Living in Bounds substance abuse curriculum. However, there are other various addictions that impact our population and lead them to incarceration, so we do explore areas of addiction such as money, guns, street life, power -- that's a just a few of the areas that we do touch upon. It's really important, of course, to make the curriculum that we use in the program relevant to those that we're working with.

As the inmate is nearing his release date, a discharge plan is developed based on his biopsychosocial needs, and referrals are made to support agencies in areas such as substance abuse, mental health treatment, family counseling, housing, vocational training, and parenting education.

Once the inmate is released, we maintain contact for at least six months with the ex-offender and family, and continue to provide support and needed referrals. The case manager serves as a bridge between prison and the community, provides guidance, helps the offender make connections, and assists with family reunification.

Maintaining post-release contact is also a very unique concept for corrections. We found that it makes a positive impact on the inmates' transitions back into the community, and that solutions lie within coordinated systems of care. I find that many correctional departments don't necessarily want to go down this road where they maintain contact post-release, but I think it would be a really great practice if more departments of corrections throughout the nation would follow this.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections feels that partnerships are a key factor in the success of a program and the participants that we serve, so the Office of Substance Abuse Programming and Addiction Services developed an MOU with the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Office of Child Support to authorize the Responsible Parenting Program. RPP case managers meet with the ETF participants to address their child support concerns which, unfortunately, most of our participants do have. Many times, it's the case that the co-parent has requested welfare benefits and the county has placed the inmate on child support, but usually that offender is not even aware of the situation, so RPP will inform the inmate and assist in the noted areas with arrears, pro se motions, detainers, decrease in payments, and attorney and visitation concerns.

Research also shows that having employment is another critical piece in reducing recidivism. So the Department has partnered with three employment agencies located in each region of the state. They offer vocational training, job coaching, as well as case management services. Our contract involves fee-for-service based on a performance benchmark system. The agencies receive payments for conducting assessments, assisting with and obtaining and retaining employment for 30, 60, and 90 days. There are one-time bonuses for full and permanent employment and securing stable housing. The Department also provides incentives to the agencies for providing vocational workshops and certification programs. We also offer incentives to the participants for achieving the 30-, 60-, and 90-day benchmarks. We have found that the fee-for-service and the incentives have generated motivation of the employment agencies to assist our

participants, and the incentives that we offer to the participants also have increased engagement with the agencies as well.

So on September 30th, 2015, exactly one week from today, the community-centered Responsible Fatherhood grant that funds Engaging the Family is coming to a close, but I'm very happy to say that as of October 1st, Engaging the Family will be sustained by the state of New Jersey. We are very fortunate that the New Jersey Department of Corrections saw value in this program. We have received recognition nationwide. We have received an award from the ECA, and have generated a lot of positive outcomes. So our department sees this grant funding as seed money for new programs and initiatives, and with the growth and enrollment in branching out to the post-release, we were actually able to convert 11 grant staff positions to full-time seed positions. If anyone knows anything about state government, this is really a huge accomplishment.

OFA funded programming in six of the state institutions, but we do plan to expand into all 13 state prisons. We also hope to incorporate more participants by expanding the eligibility criteria to include inmates within a year of the max date as opposed to within three to six months. Children can be of any age -- currently they have to be under 18 -- and we are also expanding our co-participants to include a supportive family member, not just an intimate partner. So they can invite their mother, their grandmother, the person that has custody of their child, whoever the inmate feels will be a good support for them and that they want included in their reentry process.

So I'm really excited to see how Engaging the Family will grow and evolve and continue to impact our participants, and I really hope you enjoyed hearing about what New Jersey is doing. I thank you very much for listening, and now I'm going to turn it over to Darryl Grayson.

Darryl Grayson

Good afternoon, everyone. How you doing? [pause] Hello, is everybody okay? Can you hear me?

Audience

Yes, we can. Thanks.

Darryl Grayson

Thank you. I just want to verify. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Darryl Grayson. I'm glad to be on this call. We're going to share what we call the "Successful Fatherhood Program for Incarcerated Fathers, the Madison Experience." Madison Correctional Facility is one of the places that we work with incarcerated fathers.

Jen McHenry

And we are going to ask another poll question here before Darryl gets into the kind of program that he does. "What kind of aspects of programming do you think is most important?" For those of us in the audience today, what aspect of programming do you think is most important? [unintelligible] intake, curriculum, location and staff. And there may be others that are certainly influential, but of these four, which is the most important

to you? We'll take one more second to let people chime in, and then Darryl will share about his program and how they effectively incorporate many of these things.

And it looks like the top vote-getter has been "staff". And Darryl, I'll turn it back over to you.

Darryl Grayson

Thank you. It's interesting to see that the poll came out with the numbers they were. We believe all of them are important, and some of them have a higher priority than others, but we really believe what drives our process, though, is the factor of intake. If you have a great intake process, and we're going to talk about that, we expect the staff to be at a certain level. We have curriculum that's been research-based, and what we believe that drives the process of successful program is the intake.

Anyway, we intend to share some information about our experience at Madison. We're going to talk about effective and efficient processes. Of course, we heard the theme of strong partnerships with our fellow colleagues that presented already. Then we're going to talk about staffing. We believe all of these are critical to the success and vitality of a fatherhood program.

Urban Light started our fatherhood program in 2006. We had our first class then. Since then, we've been providing programming to more than 1,900 fathers across the Miami Valley. We have had over 1,000 graduates and, in 2008, we started our partnership with the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood. And since then, over 1,200 fathers and about 660 graduates with about -- those fathers had 2,500 children --[that] have been touched.

We were fortunate because of our partnership with the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, and we were invited to come and be a part of the Madison Correctional Experience. We had previously done some work at Madison Correctional on a personal basis, but we were fortunate, by virtue of our partnership and work, that we were able to come, and we started our first fatherhood class at Madison in October of 2013.

So since that time, we've had 257 fathers who have 690 children that have been enrolled. We've had 148 graduates. Those graduates had to attend a minimum of 30 class hours, so each one of our NFL [Nurturing Fathers for Life] sessions or program or rotations, to be considered to graduate, they had to attend a minimum of ten classes which were two and a half to three hours long, and we had 148 fathers who have done that.

We have an average enrollment of 65 persons in classes, a 65-graduate class. The high was 96 and that was last spring. We had a first class of 37 graduates, and then just recently, in the May graduation, our high was 57 fathers.

One of the things we like to share is that our curriculum is based upon some things that most of us have used and heard. We have a whole menu of programming, including Nurturing Fathers for Life, that's with Mark Perlman; On My Shoulders; we have an internal treatment or, we call it introductory fatherhood program called Pops 101; we have used in the past Why Not and then we developed a Why Not [unintelligible]; and then we have Basic Training for Men and then, of course, Wise Guys, [a] premature fatherhood prevention program. At Madison Correctional, though, we are using explicitly

and exclusively NFL. And all of our curriculum is multimedia-based. That means they are PowerPoint presentations.

We believe that successful program goals start with participant intake. So if we're going to have an effective and efficient process, we need to make sure that we are intaking, onboarding the participant appropriately. So each one of the participants in our program goes through a self-identified need. Every one of these documents are reviewed by staff. They're reviewed by not only practitioners, but then the staff. As we review those documents, though, we communicate what we find to the staff at the facility. So at Madison Correctional, we communicate, of course, with the unit managers and the case managers and all the teams that are there.

But Urban Light, we try to handle some of the external things, the external needs that we see that we can help dads with. So we really use the documentation that we get back from each of the participating fathers to help provide the services they need.

What we also do during this time of the intake, we take time to start to build the relationship. We believe if we're going to be successful, we need to begin to tear down some of the barriers and begin to build some bridges. We communicate the goals, our aims and purposes of the program from a self-interest perspective. If the fathers don't have buy-in, if the fathers don't feel that this is in their best interest to participate, it's not going to have the impact we desire. So we talk about why is it important, and what is our interest in this program. And ultimately, we always take it back to being a better father, husband, man when they return back home. We talk about the strength of our partnership, and we talk about the roles and expectations and we clarify them, so that everybody knows from the beginning what our expectations, what are their roles, what are their expectations, and then we answer their questions.

This is just one session. We don't try to do no programming here. We don't try to do teaching here and no materials are shared. All we're doing here is beginning to start the relationship, build the relationship, answer their questions, a lot of that -- steel their nerves. Some people are nervous. They've been wondering what the program is about, and we try to answer all those questions so that at the end of that first session, they're feeling pretty confident that they made the right choice and the right decision to be a part of the program.

Our process is simple, and this is a pictorial depiction of our process. Whether a father is incarcerated or in a community, they always go through intake assessment. And then we refer the participant to the proper services that are internal for the father that is incarcerated or external -- if they're in the community, we try to refer them to the community assets and then take advantage of the resources and leverage those resources that are throughout the community and the facility. Of course, we provide the fatherhood workshops, and that's key. You have to have the right information being disseminated that's going to be in a practical way. But then at the end of this thing, we do an outtake assessment to gauge the progress of the participant, to gauge the validity of our program to see if we're making the impact that we desire. That feedback is part of the closing the loop so that we can continuously improve what we do, how we provide and what we share.

So we begin, as I was saying, with strong partnerships. If we're going to be successful, we need to have strong partnerships. Partnerships with the administration of the facilities, partnerships with the unit managers and their teams and their staff. Also, you've got to have partnerships with the guards; they let us in. And we believe these partnerships are key, because they are the gatekeepers. Each one of them, respectively, are gatekeepers at a certain level. And they are key to our access, key to internal information, and key to providing us a way to really support the participants in the program.

We were fortunate at Madison Correctional; from the warden all the way down to the guards, we get excellent support. And they would do everything they can to help us provide the greatest environment, greatest atmosphere we can for the fathers participating in our program. But we are fortunate, and some people don't have that type of support, but we are really, really fortunate that we have that. From the warden down to the very guards, they know who we are, they know what they're getting from us, they will do everything they can to support us and our work with the fathers.

We also need to have partnerships, though, with the fathers. Because again, we need their participation. We need their investment in and commitment to the process. We need their buy-in, and we need to hear their experiences and voices. They bring experience to the table. And right off the bat, what we share with the fathers when we come in, one, we really salute them for making the choice to be in our program. We approach it in the context that we know they're bringing experiences and backgrounds and histories as fathers, as men, to the program. And we basically say we just come to try to sharpen the tools already in their box, try to sharpen the axes that they have in their box.

And then, by virtue of the time that we spend with them, hopefully we've added some things to their toolbox. So it's not just one way, because they bring experiences to the table. Their sharing with us those experiences allows us to grow as a program and grow as facilitators and practitioners, and we're very fortunate that that's taken very well and done some really good high impacts to fathers and families.

And so what we believe is, while all of us having a great process and having partnerships and having buy-in and all of this stuff is key, if you don't have the right staff to move the needle or to make the process work, it's going to be very tough being successful. So you need to have the right staff. Now, everybody goes through vetting the right staff. We want to make sure they're good communicators. We want to make sure they're professionals. We want to make sure they're able to stand and be able to negotiate all the challenges that one may have with that population.

But, in order to be successful, we discovered over our work that the staff must be able to reach the participants where the participants are at. They've got to be able to hold the participants' attention. There's nothing like standing in front of somebody and you really can't grab their attention, and you lose them, particularly if you're doing a two-and-a-half or three-hour session.

They also must bring practical knowledge and experiences to the table. It's hard teaching about fatherhood and being a good father if you have not experienced that, if

you don't have practical knowledge about the struggles, the challenges, the issues that fathers go through, as well as the joy and the euphoria that comes from growing as a father and man. We also make sure that they're subject matter experts. If you're going to participate or present, you must have the information to present and know it. So if the projector's not working, if your computer crashes, if somehow we're not allowed to bring in all of our multimedia, can you still be able to teach effectively, present effectively, allow that class, that particular time to be value added?

We also know that, if you're going to work with incarcerated dads, you've got to be comfortable in working with that type of population. Everybody's not very comfortable working in an environment where they lock the door behind you and you've got several gates you've got to get through. Some people are very nervous in that environment but we found that if you have the right staff that are comfortable in that environment, that will translate to the fathers there, and the fathers will be comfortable with you as well.

Of course, you know the staff's got to be gifted. They must be focused. They must be compassionate and sensitive. They must be good listeners, because they'll hear things as a practitioner working with the fathers that the case managers may not hear, the unit managers may not hear, other folks that are on staff at the facility may not hear. You'll be able to hear and then be able to hear what the real intent is. And of course, they must be multitalented.

Our experience at Madison has been wonderful. And I'll leave you with this one little story. We had a father who, at one point, thought he would never, ever get to see his kids again. He was incarcerated and he and the mother had had a rocky and tumultuous relationship. He was saying to our practitioner that he did not believe that he would ever see his child again. Our practitioner basically said, don't speak that into existence. You never know what can happen down the road.

Not even three days later, he gets contacted by the paternal grandmother of his child who says, "We want your child to know you, and you and him to have a relationship. And I'm bringing your child to visit you next week." The following Tuesday, when we came back, he told the story. Everybody in that room stood up and clapped, because what we shared with them is part of being responsible, but holding out hope that no matter where you're at, things can get better.

What you see on the screen now is a picture of our first graduation. You see we have staff here from Urban Light as well as staff from the facility, including the warden and the unit managers, and the group of our first fathers that graduated. I wish I could share with you a picture from our previous graduation where we had families and fathers and staff all together. And that's what makes the engagement work. We are fortunate that Madison's engagement plan calls for this, so they allow us on our last session, we call it graduation, to celebrate the fathers, to bring the families in and allow the work that we've done to be celebrated. And we give them unique information around what's going on.

And so we are fortunate and really excited about the work we did there. As a matter of fact, just yesterday we went and started our next rotation at Madison, and so we're expecting to see somewhere around 80 to 85 dads again throughout our program.

At this time, I just want to say thank you for the opportunity. We hope we provided some good information, and we'll turn it back over to those that are in charge.

Robyn Cenizal

Thanks, Darryl. This is Robyn again, and I want to thank all of our presenters -- Norman, Wendi, Darryl, thank you all for the information that you shared. Before we move into our question-and-answer, I just want to recap a few things that I heard that I thought were particularly interesting and thought-provoking for those of us who are working in this area.

You know, Darryl mentioned partnerships and the importance of partnerships, and we heard that from Norman and from Wendi. Darryl's organization is actually a partner in the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, and Ms. Kimberly Dent, who is the executive director of that commission, was hugely instrumental in helping to bring community agencies to the table whenever Norm and the others were, when we were coordinating these community focus groups. So the partnerships really are a huge asset.

One of the other things that I heard, especially in thinking about the Ohio focus groups, is the importance of engaging all the stakeholders. It is important to engage the community organizations, the incarcerated individuals themselves, and the family members of those who are incarcerated. When we did so in Ohio, we found some really interesting things. I remember at one of the sites, a father who is a father of a young man who is incarcerated, he had come to the focus group because he really didn't feel like the Department of Corrections cared. And he came up to us after the presentation and said he just really appreciated the opportunity to be there and to have his voice heard, because it really did let him feel like the Department of Corrections actually does care about the individuals in its care, so I thought that was really important.

We also heard some other interesting things. A recently-released individual mentioned one of the things that he thought would be important for reentry programs to keep in mind. In his case, he had been locked up for over 20 years, and he mentioned technology. He didn't know how to use a cell phone. How many of us take that for granted, right? So he mentioned that as being important.

And some of the other things that we hear are these ideas of thinking outside the box. As we heard, in Ohio, they addressed the issue of the cost of the phone calls. It wasn't a major undertaking, but it was a simple thing that meant a lot to the individuals who were incarcerated, as well as to their families, to allow them to increase that contact.

One of the other things we heard in Ohio was that staff interactions, when families come to visit their inmates and they don't feel they're being respected by the officers in charge in the visitation area, that that kind of creates a negative impression. So it's important, and this is one of the first things that Norm and his team decided they were going to look at, is how can they make sure that all of the staff who are in the visiting hall understand the importance of customer service and who their customer is?

So sometimes it is the simple things that can be done. We heard Wendi talk about demonstrating the value, because she was, in her program they were able to demonstrate the value of the work that they're doing. They're now receiving funding from the state, so I think that's a really important lesson in learning how can we demonstrate

value, so I would encourage you to ask Wendi questions about what are some of the strategies that she used in order to do that. I think that's important.

I also think that, going back to this whole partnership piece, I think that's a really important thing. Be sure to ask questions around partnership. But there are almost 700,000 individuals a year being released from the prison system back into the communities. And this idea that if we get on the front end, as they refer to it in Ohio as the reception, if we can start focusing on family engagement at the reception of individuals into the system, it's a whole lot easier to maintain those relationships with their families and maintain that support system throughout the incarceration than it is to start from scratch, in some cases, to try to rebuild families at the end of their time served.

So I hope that you all enjoyed the presentation. We're going to open it up for questions and answers now, and I look forward to hearing your questions. So with that, I'll turn it over to Jen.

Jen McHenry

Great. Thanks, Robyn. So we'll now move forward to the question-and-answer portion of the webinar. Thank you to all of you who have already submitted questions and, as a reminder, you can ask a question by typing it in the Q-and-A pod located in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen and clicking Enter. We will wait just a few moments to give you all an opportunity to submit questions before we present them to the speakers. Thanks. [pause]

Jessica Otto

Okay. So partnerships were key in each of your presentations. So from the Department side for Norm and Wendi, and from the community organization side for Darryl, what would be your top tip or piece of advice on having a successful partnership? Norman, we'll start with you.

Norman Robinson

Okay. One of the things about successful partnership is really engaging the institution and the warden and his administrative, or her administrative staff. Here in Ohio, the wardens are the catalyst that, or actually the stick that actually stirs the pot. So we haven't mentioned that yet in this webinar, getting in touch with the institutional staff, but if you're a community organization that looks to want to come into an institution and then visit offenders with their families, get the institutional staff on board.

Like Robyn said, that prime entry officer is really vital. Because, like I said, when I was a warden, I saw families that came in that were very scared on their first visit. They didn't know what to do. They had never been in a prison. And really, how we handled them really sets the tone for their visitation. So definitely engaging the administrative staff at the institutions.

Jessica Otto

Great. Wendi?

Wendi White

I think communication with the partners are really important. With all of the employment agencies that we contract, we go to the agency every single month. We do an audit of the files just to make sure that they're maintaining their end of the contract. But we also communicate, how are the participants doing? What services are they asking for? How can we assist you? Continue that partnership constantly. How can we work with you and you work with us?

And everything that we do has to benefit the participants that we're working with, so it's really key to kind of be on the same page and constantly have communication about what are the struggles, the obstacles, what joys are they experiencing, and how can we continue the process of success for all the individuals involved?

Jessica Otto

Great. Darryl, do you have anything to add?

Darryl Grayson

Yeah, just a few things. The partnerships are so, so key because, as I said to you, they'll provide you with resources and information that you normally don't get if you don't have it. So what we try to do is say, okay, to a dad, we know you are leaving here at some point. How do we connect you to the right entity that could help you in your transition home? How do we help you while you're here now? And we only can do that if we have partnerships. So we can reach out to, in our particular county, Clark County Department of Child and Family Services, and assist those dads in Clark County while they're incarcerated. Because of our partnership, though, we can reach out to other entities across the state. Because we're part of this wonderful, we call great relationship with the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood, we already have other partners that have other connections or better connections than we have in other areas of the state. So we can really, really leverage the resources.

And I just want to copy what Wendi had said, too, and Norm. Communication, internal and external, is key, meaning we share information between the staff that's there from the warden down. Because again, if the warden's not on board, or if you leave the warden in the dark, they can't support you. And when they see you and the warden working as a tandem to enhance their experience and to bring their families and them together, they have a different perspective on what's going on. Yes, they are incarcerated, but then they get to see that even though I'm incarcerated, I can still be proactive in my kid's life. I can still have engagement with my family and children. And that gives them a whole fresh perspective, because we utilize that as a context to say, "You don't want to be in a place that somebody tells you when you can spend time with your kids or not," or, "You don't want to be in place that you're limited in regards to the reach you have and where are your children."

So now we begin to give them that self-interest perspective and that self-benefit perspective and knowing that now the warden is trying to help me do that, or the unit manager or the staff is trying to do that, the guards are allowing this group of folks to come in and make it accessible to us. They get a whole different perspective on the institution and how that works.

Jessica Otto

Great. Thank you. We've had another question come in about partnerships: "Do the partnerships that you all have described rely on formal memoranda of understanding or MOUs or contracts of any sort?" I'll open that up to the group.

Darryl Grayson

Who do you want to start first? I'll go first. This is Darryl.

We have formalized MOUs with organizations. There are a couple of folks that are on this call representing one of our partners, Marriage Works Ohio. We have non-formalized ones because we've been through a relationship with them or been in a relationship with them so long that we've just been really partners in a sense. So some of them are formalized MOUs. Some of them just want a handshake agreement because we know each other, been working with each other. As required, though, by our funders, when we need to we will formalize them and submit those as part of our applications to funders.

Wendi White

As I indicated, our partnerships with the Responsible Parenting Program and the employment agencies have an MOU. We sub-grant the employment agencies, and RPP is funded through the Office of Child Support. So those partnerships, yes. But also, when we refer our participants to other social service agencies for post-release services, that does not involve an MOU. That's where we're just relying on the kindness of those agencies to support our participants once they go home.

Jessica Otto

Okay. Norman, do you have anything else to add to that?

Norman Robinson

No, not at this time. I think everybody covered as much. I'd just be repeating what they said.

Jessica Otto

Okay. I actually have one question for you, Norman. "How did you go about advocating for the reduction in fees for phone calls? That's a big issue in our area."

Norman Robinson

We were actually at a meeting where the governor said we needed to fix this at any cost. And our director said he agreed, and we went ahead and, I believe, moved some money around to make this happen. And it was just one of those top priorities that had to be done. And when we were talking about shifting money, we had to shift a large amount of money because that money that we were getting off the phone revenue generated our Recovery Services Department and their budget.

So it really took from the executive level of the government to really help us move the needle forward on this. And I can tell you, we see a lot of benefits, particularly from an institutional level, on the behaviors and attitudes and rule infraction violations. You know, we've seen a good benefit in that. Now, once again, GTL, our partner, has installed more

phones. But we don't have any data as far as [unintelligible], but when people get a chance to use the phone, they inherently act better and different.

Darryl Grayson

Hey Norm, can I add to that for a minute, just from a practitioner perspective? What we found out is that fathers live for that moment. So when we're engaging them, when they can communicate with their kids, we've seen the change from a father that didn't have no date to be able to reach out to their child via those phones. Some of those dads live for that moment. They live for that opportunity and don't miss. In a good way, they will find a way to be able to make that call and/or be able to connect with each other. Even when there's a lack of resources. Even when things are tight, they'll find a way to do it and, from a practitioner's standpoint, to hear from the feedback that they're beginning to share what they're learning with their families, that's invaluable.

Jessica Otto

Great. So I have a question that's come in for, I think, all of the presenters but Wendi, we'll start with you. One of our attendees says, "I'm a therapist with a clinic that works on maternal mental health. We're hoping to increasingly focus on incarcerated fathers and the pipeline from cradle to prison. We're looking for any recommendations on how to best partner or where to begin."

Wendi White

That's a great question. I think you really need to speak with your participants and see what their particular needs are. I think a lot of times it's based on where you are located and the demographics of your agency. So it might be different for your particular population. But a lot of what we spoke about I think is really valuable, in terms of family. You said that you work with mental health. The mental health and substance abuse, those different agencies that can help assist in those areas would be so valuable. So you have to see what's around you and how they can assist.

Now, in terms of incarcerated fathers, it's really important to get the Department on board, and that's not always easy. If you want to work a specific prison, you can speak to the administrator or the warden, but you might have to contact the actual commissioner of the Department and see if they're willing to allow you to come in and kind of make that partnership and that connection. I'm going to say it's not always easy, but I would keep pursuing it and if you can show them the value of how it can help not only the people you're working with, but the community as a whole, they usually will jump on board.

Jessica Otto

Great. Thanks. Robyn, I wanted to give you a chance to weigh in as well, and also, the opportunity to speak about any resources the Resource Center might have on either this topic or the topic of partnerships.

Robyn Cenizal

Sure. The Resource Center does, actually, offer a good bit of information around partnerships, including some discussion around different types of partnership structures, organizational readiness, and there are some tools that are available. There are also some sample MOUs. I heard that mentioned earlier. There are some partnership agreement templates, and also, performance-based contract examples that organizations can feel free to take advantage of.

All of these resources are located on the Resource Center website under “Integration Strategies” in the section referred to as Level Two on Partnerships. So do feel free to take advantage of all of those tools, as well as there are some other resources there on the Resource Center’s website under the tab marked, “Resources” that can lead to some other potential partnerships that might be of use to organizations who are trying to connect the dots within their communities to better serve either incarcerated families or their individuals on the outside. So please feel free to take advantage of all of that.

Jessica Otto

Thank you. We’ve gotten a number of questions about eligibility. So Darryl, we’ll start with you and work up the list. For your program, could you talk a little bit about how you determine eligibility?

Darryl Grayson

Well, we serve any father or father figure that –
[Pause]

Jessica Otto

Darryl, did we lose you?

Darryl Grayson

I’m still... hear me? Got me? Hello?

Jessica Otto

We can hear you now. Go ahead.

Darryl Grayson

Okay. I’ll go back. We serve dads from any age bracket as long as they are a father or father figure. We have some constraints around funding and how we juggle funding to serve dads or non-custodial dads or fathers that have children that are older than 18, but we’ll serve any male that’s coming through because we want to teach the principles of healthy, responsible fathering.

And so, whether they’re a father or grandfather, or maybe a great uncle, we want to make sure those principles are shared, because a father can provide and share those principles with other men, with their children, nephews, nieces. Those healthy principles are key. So for those restrictions we have from our funders, we abide by those, but then we have this other funding stream that allows us to work with fathers that don’t fit the constraints that we may have with the funder.

Jessica Otto

Okay. Great. Wendi, could you talk a little bit about your eligibility determination process?

Wendi White

Sure. Well, for the next week while we're grant-funded, all our participants must be a parent of a child under the age of 18. They must be in a committed relationship. They must be within three to six months of their max date, and they also have to have an addiction severity index score of above 3.

We find our participants by going through our inmate management system and running a participant pool to see what inmates are currently incarcerated and fall under these eligibility criteria. However, post-grant, as of October 1st, as I indicated, we're going to work with all incarcerated parents that have a child of any age. So like was just mentioned, if they're a grandfather, they can participate. You can, just because your child is 30 or 40 years old doesn't mean you don't need to work on that parenting relationship. So we're not going to discriminate based on the age of the child.

We're also going to invite -- they don't have to be in a committed relationship. As I said, it can be any support member of their family. And as far as the Addiction Severity Index score goes, we're going to use that as a preference because we are, as I said, I work for the Office of Substance Abuse Programming and Addiction Services, so that isn't one of our focuses is addiction. But it's going to be a preference if they have a high ASI score. We have found, even if they don't present as having an addiction, a substance abuse issue, everybody that comes into the prison system is usually dealing with some type of addiction. Something brought them into the facility, so we are going to address all those addictions. So we're not going to put such a focus on the ASI score.

Also, as I indicated, for the grant, they have to be three to six months from their release date. Post-grant, we're going to work with people that are 12 months from their release date, so it opens the program up to a larger amount of people. And we also have a longer amount of time to work with them while they're inside and prepare them for that journey home.

Jessica Otto

Great. Thank you. Norman, would you like to share --

Norman Robinson

Yes. When we look at programs, there's a couple factors for our department when we look at determining eligibility. First of all, we want to know what is the location of the program? Where are you coming from? Are you going to be able to serve the capacity of offenders coming back to your area? Are you going to have any type of post-release?

We also look at the needs of the offenders and if their program design fits that need. So, when we look at eligibility from a global aspect, and I know someone asked a question about MOUs, MOUs are really good because the MOUs spell out specifically what your program addresses as far as the needs. And then we'll be able to say, as institutional staff, we probably need to get this demographic of individuals to make sure that they're

eligible to go into that. And that's really important is to have that assessment piece, because we don't want to put the wrong offenders in the group. So there has to be some sort of delineation of where you want to put individuals.

Also, when you start talking about funding and things like that, our department doesn't have any funding for this as of yet. However, we are big in writing letters of support supporting MOUs for funding. So for example, we have two or three entities that have sought federal grants, and we have written letters of support supporting their MOU to come in and do services for us.

Now, one thing I also kind of want to talk about is resources. If you're a community agency, and let's say the institution is 60 miles away, you want to ensure that you have the resources, and I mean staff and money, to be able to come in and do what you say you're going to do. So often, one of the things that we see that fail programs is that everybody comes in with these great ideas and the program is moving really good and steady, but they run out of funding. They run out of funding, or somebody quits and the program just drops off. The damaging effect to that is, particularly when you're dealing with families, is that you're impacting the child or the spouse, and you're impacting the inmate. And really, it just would have been best to leave it all alone. So ensure that you have the capacity to deliver when you do write up that MOU.

Jessica Otto

Great. And Norman, I have another question for you: "What types of certifications are inmates receiving in Ohio, and how many hours roughly do they spend completing and receiving the certifications?"

Norman Robinson

Well you know, I'm up here at the Northeast Reintegration Center, and I won't say certifications, because we have a lot of different certifications when it comes to employment certifications and things of that nature. But what I will talk about are some of the specialty units we have in Ohio that prepare people for being released, like our reintegration dorms with a minimum eight to 10 hours of meaningful activity. And also, within the reintegration dorms, there are programming tracks. So think of it like a college curriculum that they can go into employment. They can go into wellness. They can go the faith-based track. We also have what's called a veterans unit, where we are teaching people the core responsibilities of being in the service. And up here at Northeast Reintegration, they're looking at having recruiters come in and see who's eligible to be recruited into the armed services.

We just heard from the Aramark program to where they are teaching people culinary arts and how to serve food and to get their state certification. So in Ohio, we just have a lot of different units that actually prepare individuals, and if there's a certification involved in the track that they're looking at, we try to achieve that certification.

Jessica Otto

Great. Wendi, I've got a question that's come in for you. "What effects have you seen from adding family engagement into treatment?" So what kind of personal impact do you

see versus inmates who receive treatment without involving their partner or family, if you have some thoughts on that?

Wendi White

I think it's made a great impact. A lot of times the offenders have burned a lot of bridges. So this, as I indicated, it gives the opportunity to kind of start mending those fences and have discussions about what happened and where do we go from here. And, you know, we do a lot of work in relationship strengthening. As Jessica said, it's not just about intimate relationships. Those skills can apply to parent-child and your boss, and even the CO's and their bunkies inside the facility. But those skills that they learn resonate in so many different places, and that really helps mend those relationships with their family that are so very important to them pre- and post-release.

I have also seen a lot of decrease in depression. Having made connection with your family, it does a lot for your self-esteem and also gives you hope. So that's been pretty amazing. Seeing them with their children, because there are times where we invite the children to come into the prison, that's been incredible. It also has given us an opportunity to be role models for them in how to interact with their children and give them some insight into how healthy communication with their children is.

I think it just really has established strong ties which, as we've talked about, there are so many powerful places that can go. It could end the cycle of incarceration. A lot of times, when the parents are inside prison, their children end up in prison. So if we start teaching them ways to communicate and end the cycle and become stronger families, it really makes a huge impact within that family and then within society. So I think involving the family is just key to changing something so much bigger than just that family. It's really pretty powerful.

Jessica Otto

Thank you. Darryl, I wanted to give you a chance to weigh in there as well, and maybe talk a little bit more about your graduation celebration that you have in your facility.

Darryl Grayson

I would love to –

[No audio]

Jessica Otto

Darryl? Do we have you?

Darryl Grayson

Yes. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I had [unintelligible] and I apologize.

[No audio]

Jessica Otto

All right. Sorry Darryl, I think we may have lost you. If we get you back, we'll ask you the question again. Wendi, another question for you: "What parenting skills-based education program do you use in New Jersey?"

Wendi White

It's a program called "Active Parenting in Three." I believe it's written by Michael Popkin. It's three chapters -- that's why they call it "in three" -- and it focuses on communication with your children, punishment versus discipline, how to encourage your children, how to help them thrive and grow, have mutual participation and respect. I think it's a great curriculum that we use, but also, the case managers always throw in their -- I always tell them, make sure you add your spice. So a lot of them have different creative activities that they use and worksheets, but we use the Active Parenting in Three as our guideline for the information that we give to the participants.

Jessica Otto

Okay. I had a question come in about domestic violence. And maybe Norman, we'll start with you on this: "How do you address participants with a history of domestic violence in your programming?"

Norman Robinson

That's one of the things that we do with all of our family programming. In the previous question, I was asked about the eligibility. We screen everybody who is interested in our program, and our victim services is very involved in that. Not to say that we haven't had anybody who are victims of domestic violence, but that would be one of the things in a collaborative decision with our Office of Victim Services. For most programs, they try to steer away from that, but so often, we may not be able to see that until we do start the programming. So once again, we address it at that point. But for the most part, most of the criteria is [that] they haven't any charge of domestic violence and they are the victim.

Jessica Otto

Okay. Great. Wendi, I've got one question for you: "What are the number of hours in the New Jersey workshop?"

Wendi White

So the program is 12 weeks long. The participants meet for group twice a week -- each group is two hours long -- and they also do individual case management. For relationships, we spend about six weeks or 12 sessions on relationships, and then there's three weeks on parenting, so that's six sessions, and then the rest is devoted to financial literacy and preparing to go home. And then the substance abuse piece is actually for all 12 weeks.

Jessica Otto

Okay. Great. And I just realized, I didn't give the other presenters a chance to weigh in on the question about domestic violence. And again, the question was how do you address participants with a history of domestic violence? Wendi or Darryl, do you have any thoughts to add on that?

Wendi White

Yes. Part of our relationship programming, we do do one session, sometimes two, on domestic violence education. We talk about the definition, how it affects families, phases

of the violence cycle, red flags, and then how does domestic violence impact the family. And we give a talk beforehand, just like [unintelligible], we also, in our intake process, ask questions about this so we have a little understanding of the individual and their family background. But while we're giving this lesson, of course we mention if anything is brought up that you need to talk about further, certainly the case managers are willing to meet with them individually and talk about that. We have referral resources that we can give them in regards to domestic violence.

But if any of our co-participants have a restraining order against the inmate participant, they actually are not allowed to come to the facility. So depending on where that relationship is at and if they share children, we might be able to communicate to that co-parent to help facilitate a relationship for the parent, but they would not be able to participate if there is a restraining order.

Jessica Otto

Okay. Go ahead. Darryl, go ahead if you have some thoughts to add.

Darryl Grayson

Yes. I was saying, what we ended up doing when it comes to incidents is to go back to the intake documentation. We ask questions in regards to history of domestic violence. And that then begins to trigger a couple things. One, if we have a large group of fathers that show that as an issue, we'll bring in some of our community partners who are experts in that area to provide training. And we'll actually give them a whole session and/or two if we need to, and more to address that issue if we find that to be something really, really deeply needed.

We also cover a lot of that with our facilitators and staff. They go through domestic violence training. They go through all the different training certifications. As part of our partnerships, we're allowed to take advantage and leverage those things so that we have a domestic violence response plan. So our staff is trained to see what those things are and then respond accordingly. And so we provide those services as necessary. We'll get the father to, if he needs battering, we'll get him to a particular batterers place. If it has been identified that the mom, let's say she is the victim, of course, we provide referrals to community services as well, all a holistic approach trying to address the issue of [DV]. But we have a plan in place to address those issues that allow us to do it both internal and external. If we note that, we communicate that, of course, with the staff at the particular facility.

Jessica Otto

Okay. Robyn, did you have anything to add there? The Resource Center may have some resources available on domestic violence.

Robyn Cenizal

The Resource Center does, actually. We have a very, very nice Family Violence Prevention Toolkit that provides a lot of really great resources and information related to family violence. Anytime we talk about healthy relationship education, safety is always paramount. It's always important to make sure that everyone is safe in the family, whether it's domestic violence or child maltreatment issues. Sometimes the perpetrators

are incarcerated because of domestic violence, and sometimes it's because of child maltreatment issues. And so there are lots of things to consider there. But the Resource Center has lots of resources, so again, visit the website and check those out, particularly the Family Safety tab, and download that Family Violence Prevention guide.

Jessica Otto

Okay, great. Thank you. So I think in the interest of time, we're going to go ahead and wrap up. So I wanted to thank our presenters and our attendees for sharing your willingness to share your expertise. And as the webinar concludes, there will be a brief survey that pops up on your screen. Please remember to provide your feedback using the survey, as it helps us with planning for future webinars.

If you have any additional questions, you can send them to us at info@healthymarriageandfamilies.org, and to check out more resources and information, you can go to our website at www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org. Thanks again for joining us.

Operator

And that does conclude today's conference call. We appreciate your participation.