

# **The Texas Inmate Families Association**

## **Can we have restorative justice for all involved?**

Presented by:

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## **TIFA's Mission...**

TIFA is a non-profit organization whose mission is to help break the cycle of crime by strengthening families through support, education, and advocacy.

# TIFA's Goals

- Work with TDCJ to improve visitation facilities
- Improve communications between inmates and their families and provide programming for children
- Help to improve medical services, education, and overall well-being of inmates
- Advocate for criminal justice reform (including probation and parole)

# TIFA's GOALS (continued)

- Reduce the potential for further drug abuse and lower recidivism by increasing rehabilitation and treatment programming
- Aid in the difficult transition back into society after release, (linking with agencies for jobs, housing, social programs)
- Be a support network to families with incarcerated loved ones

# Family Hardships/Family Support through TIFA

- Through 20 chapters, provides help with issues
- Loved one has lost his/her freedom and lives often in hostile/dangerous environment
- Understanding TDCJ - how to advocate for loved ones
- Some family members unsupportive about maintaining ties with incarcerated

# Hardships/Family Support through TIFA (continued)

- ❑ “You are not alone” –stigma, shame and guilt attached to incarcerated person, their spouse, children, friends
- ❑ Stress of incarceration on premarital and marital relationships
- ❑ Parents more likely have children by multiple partners

# Children and the Families of Incarceration

- 1991-1999, number of children with parent in federal or state prisons increased by more than 100%, from approx. 900,000 to approx. 2,000,000 (about 350,000 in Texas alone in 2005)
- Another 8 million children experience parental incarceration at some point
- 55% of male prisoners and 76% of female prisoners report have children under 18.
- 44% of men and 64% of women lived with their child prior to being incarcerated.



# ...Breaking the Cycle of Crime: Six Out of Ten Children Follow Parents To Prison

- 8 times more likely than other children...





# Ages of Children Affected by Incarceration

**BJS Parents in state and federal prison, 1997**

Less than 1 year	2.1%
1 – 4 years	20.4%
5 – 9 years	35.1%
10 – 14 years	28.0%
15 – 17 years	14.5%
Mean	8 years

# Financial Stress on Families

- Inmates generally not paid for their work.
- Many inmates indigent & rely heavily on family to buy basic items
- In 2001, 19,321 Texas non-custodial record in the Child Support System
  - average back child support owed is **\$28,534**
  - **19,321 x \$28,534 = \$ 551,305,414**  
(March 2001)



# Family Friendly Visitation

- Strategies needed to bridge the gap between child the incarcerated parent
- Visiting an inmate may be frightening
- TIFA working to change policies to support more family friendly visitation
- Identifying supportive resources

TDCJ Go Kids website :

[tdcj.state.tx.us/pgm&svcs/gokids/gokidshome.htm](http://tdcj.state.tx.us/pgm&svcs/gokids/gokidshome.htm)



# Visitation by Children ...

- Number of visitors allowed
  - 2 adults (16 or older are counted as adult)
  - No limit to number of children, but crowded environment
- Child Conduct
  - Can't disturb others
  - Can't bring anything to visitation
- Efforts initiated to involve children, inmates, caregivers in joint educational opportunities
- If parents not married
  - denied contact visitation



# Family visitation & recidivism

- Research yields
  - Inmates receiving no visits
    - 6 times more likely to return to prison than those with regular visitors
  - Those with regular visitors
    - 70% were arrest free for year after released
    - Have better mental health
    - Increased likelihood of family reunification
    - More success with Parole success



# TIFA helping children deal with parents' incarceration: the Storybook Project

- Encourage reading in the inmate population, caregivers, and children
- Connect inmates with their children
- Foster inmate sense of self-worth and purpose
- Develop effective parenting skills of inmates
- Community involvement with incarcerated parents and foster volunteerism.



# Storybook Program (continued)

- Provides parents with an opportunity to select storybooks for their children
- Volunteers assist the inmates in audio taping the book, along with a personal message
- Books and tapes are mailed to children
- Family literacy events for inmates, children, caregivers







# Coming Full Circle: Reentry Roundtable

- Building successful strategies for Offender Re-entry in Austin/Travis County
  - Started under DA Ronnie Earle
  - Catalyst, Jeremy Travis, The Urban Institute
- TIFA Involvement

# Coming Full Circle (continued)

- Restorative Justice approach
- TDCJ Agency staff, community leaders, offender families, public servants, law enforcement representatives, victims, victim families and community

# Roundtable Committees

- Policy and Laws
- Housing
- Employment
- Support Services
- Funding
- Evidence-based practices
- Transition Preparation
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health
- Victims

# Support for Reform in Probation

*Example:*

Travis Community Impact Supervision  
(TCIS) Model

Dr. Geraldine Nagy

Dr. Tony Fabelo

Mark Carey

# TCIS Model

## Effective Assessments to Classify Population

**Low Risk  
Offender**

**Social Problem  
Offender**

**High Risk – “Last  
Chance” Offender**

**Minimum  
Supervision**

**Programs and  
Progressive  
Sanctions**

**Surveillance  
Approach**

**Report on time, pay  
fines and fees**

**Change behavior**

**Quick sanctioning  
and revocation**

## Differentiated Supervision Strategies

# Challenges for such Initiatives

## Need for :

- **developing & implementing differential supervision strategies for populations**
- **programming based on cognitive-behavioral approaches, use of community and neighborhood resources, and appropriate sanctions**
- **effective feedback systems of accountability based on effective research, use of information, and management reports**

# Challenges (continued)

## Need for:

- **organization with clear functional lines of authority for better coordination of management and accountability for outcomes**
- **seamless system of assessments leading to development of effective supervision plans**



# Advocating for Criminal Justice Reform:

## Building Coalitions

- Organizations worked together for criminal justice reform - 79<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature
- Coordination role, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC): *Campaign to Save Texas Families*
- Family Advocacy Day
- “formless army” strategy
- Regularly updated website on key issues: [www.solutionsfortexas.info](http://www.solutionsfortexas.info)

# Building Coalitions (continued)

- Major success : probation reform bill, but vetoed by the governor
- Help with securing \$80M for probation & parole substance abuse treatment
- Phone Access Bill: Victims and inmate family groups working together (though passage blocked by governor)
- Mobilization of TIFA members to contact key legislators