The Texas Inmate Families Association

Can we have restorative justice for all involved?

Presented by: Dr. Joan Burnham
November 2005
IIRP Conference
Manchester, U.K.
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 martial 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BJS Parents in state and federal prison, 1997</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 – 4 years</td>
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<td>5 – 9 years</td>
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<td>10 – 14 years</td>
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<td>15 – 17 years</td>
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<td>Mean</td>
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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 and 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]
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
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 - 79th 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
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