



“I’ve been locked up for six years. This is the only program I have ever been in that lets me apply what I am learning in parenting class.”

**Incarcerated Father
4-H LIFE Program Participant**

Program Outcomes

The original MU Extension 4-H LIFE Program in Potosi focused its evaluation efforts on assessment of the life skills of the children of offenders. The evaluation was conducted by Dr. Elizabeth G. Dunn and J. Arbuckle. They concluded that participating youth appeared to have statistically significant life skill gains related to problem-solving, communication and self-esteem.

The MU Extension 4-H LIFE program is partnered with the Missouri Department of Corrections, the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board and evaluation consultant Dr. Joyce Arditti, VA Tech, to implement a rigorous study of 4-H LIFE Program outcomes. The 30-month research study assessed the correlation between parent-child-family relationships and successful offender reentry.

Measures of parenting stress, co-parenting, social support and prison visit satisfaction data have been collected from approximately 100 subjects via:

- offender & caregiver interviews (control and program groups, male and female)
- corrections staff interviews (three data collection sites)
- 4-H program staff focus groups

Findings

Child Impact:

- Improved decision-making skills
- Increased communication skills

Parent Impact:

- Improved parent-child relationship
- Improved parenting skills and parenting competence

Caregiver Impact

- Reduced stress during prison visits; increased satisfaction with family visits
- Improved co-parenting behaviors with the incarcerated parent

The University of Missouri Extension continues to search for funding to further research family programming for families impacted by incarceration. Specific topics include impact of family relationships on reintegration, offender leadership and positive youth development opportunities for children with incarcerated family members.