4-H LIFE Evaluation Methodology

The research on the impacts of the 4-H LIFE program was guided by a program logic model (PLM) that provided a conceptual framework for evaluating impacts. The PLM, developed jointly by program staff, participants, community stakeholders, and the program evaluators, listed the inputs, activities, and outputs of the program, and illustrated how the program was expected to lead to program impacts.

Several research methods were used to evaluate the impacts of the 4-H LIFE Program. First, basic information on program participation was maintained in an output tracking system. This on-going data collection effort provided reliable information on the number of program participants, their demographic characteristics, and alerted program staff to any changes in program participation that might be occurring over time.

The evaluation also included focus group research in which the 4-H LIFE fathers were interviewed about the perceived impacts of the program on their children. The results of that research, described in the focus group report, indicated that the program has intermediate effects on the parent-child relationship that translated into long-term benefits for the child. These research findings were illustrated in selected video footage from two documentaries that focused on the 4-H LIFE program and incarcerated fathers.

A third component of the program evaluation focused on changes in the life skills of the children and youth that participated. This component relied on a survey, which was administered twice a year and covered seven categories of life skills: academics and learning, goal setting and goal achievement, decision making, problem solving, communication, social competencies, and self-esteem. The results indicated both the areas of greatest positive impacts as well as potential areas for improving the 4-H LIFE Program.

This research was conducted under the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Project at the University of Missouri. The project evaluation was done by Dr. Elizabeth Dunn and J Gordon Arbuckle.
CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS AND ENHANCED VISITATION PROGRAMS: IMPACTS OF THE LIVING INTERACTIVE FAMILY EDUCATION (LIFE) PROGRAM

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DR. ELIZABETH DUNN
J. GORDON ARBUCKLE
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The estimated 1.5 million children of incarcerated parents are often overlooked in policy debates related to the correctional system. Yet, children who are separated from parents by prison can experience feelings of abandonment, sadness, and anger, which may lead to eating and sleeping disorders, lower academic performance, and disruptive behavior. There is also the potential for negative long-term impacts, such as an increased lifetime risk of incarceration. The Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) program is designed to alleviate some of these negative impacts by providing incarcerated parents and their children with an enhanced visit setting organized around 4-H activities. The purpose of this paper is to report on the impacts of the LIFE program on the children who participate.

Prison Visitation

Studies show that frequent, regular visitation is beneficial to children of incarcerated parents. Children who visit their incarcerated parents score higher on measures of well-being, intelligence, and emotional and behavioral measures. However, traditional visit settings can be hard on children and incarcerated parents. Visitors experience long waits, crowded facilities, and behavioral restrictions. Conditions in the standard visit setting are generally inappropriate for children and are not conducive to meaningful parent-child interaction. Enhanced visitation programs can reduce the negative impacts of parental incarceration by allowing children and their parents to interact more closely in child-oriented environments.

The Living Interactive Family Education Program

The LIFE program is an enhanced visitation program operating at the Potosi Correctional Center (PCC), a maximum-security prison in Missouri. Incarcerated fathers and state 4-H staff developed the LIFE program. As a partnership between University Outreach and Extension and the Missouri Department of Corrections, the program is funded by a grant from the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) initiative of the CSREES-USDA.

The overall objective of the LIFE program is to promote a strong, healthy, and nurturing family environment for children of incarcerated fathers, while helping those fathers become positive role models and mentors. The LIFE program provides children and their fathers with a low-stress, child-friendly environment in which they work together on 4-H activities based on youth and family development curricula. All LIFE fathers also attend monthly parenting skills classes.

Research Approach

The primary objective of this study was to determine the impacts of the LIFE program on the children who participate. A program logic model provided the research framework by indicating how the inputs, activities, and outputs of the LIFE program lead to positive impacts. The research approach included a review of literature, preliminary interviews with fathers, and a formal focus group interview. In these interviews, fathers discussed program-related changes in their relationships with their children and changes that they have observed in their children as a result of the program. This report is based on what fathers had to say about these changes.
Characteristics of the LIFE Program

Fathers identified several program characteristics that lead to positive impacts on children. The less restrictive visit setting allows everyone to move more freely, express themselves physically, and interact spontaneously. The curricula-based projects and activities provide the opportunity for fathers and children to work as teams in order to achieve constructive goals. Outside the 4-H meetings, fathers attend classes to improve their parenting skills. These characteristics can be viewed as program inputs: they are the elements of the LIFE program that contribute to the program’s effectiveness in having positive impacts on the children and youth who participate.

The LIFE Program’s Impacts on Children

The positive impacts that fathers attribute to the program can be grouped into five categories:

1. Stronger relationships  The development of stronger parent-child relationships through discovery, the development of mutual respect, and program activities that promote bonding.

2. Improved communication  Improvements in the lines of communication between parent and child.

3. Family unity  The creation and reinforcement of a sense of family unity between fathers, children, and caregivers.

4. Life skills  The development of important life skills in the children, such as leadership, empathy, and self-control.

5. Improved behavior  Improved behavior and academic performance by the children.

According to the fathers, the enhanced interaction in LIFE 4-H meetings leads to a process of learning and discovery and fosters the development of deeper bonds between parents and children. The curricula-based projects and activities help parents and children develop mutual respect as they develop life skills. The parenting meetings give fathers new parenting skills and tools, and a greater understanding of what it means to be a father. These changes lead to better communication and overall improvements in parent-child relationships. The deeper bonds, mutual respect, and improved lines of communication have allowed fathers to become positive influences in their children’s lives. Taken together, these positive impacts lead to improvements in the children’s social and academic adjustment and overall well-being.

There are a number of studies to indicate that the children of incarcerated parents experience negative impacts, and there are a few studies to indicate that enhanced visitation programs can have beneficial effects. The results of this evaluation of the LIFE program indicate that it has led to substantial positive impacts on the children who participate. If enhanced visitation programs can significantly help the children of incarcerated parents, then the LIFE program provides a model for improving the lives of some of the large number of children affected throughout Missouri and the rest of the country.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of several individuals who made this study possible. First, we would like to thank the incarcerated fathers who voluntarily participated in the informal and focus group interviews. In addition, Mr. Rick Secoy, Institutional Activities Coordinator at Potosi Correctional Center, provided both insights and logistical support for the research. This study would not have been possible without permission from the administration of the Potosi Correctional Center and the Missouri Department of Corrections. It was also reviewed and approved by the Campus Institutional Review Board at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

A special thanks goes to Lynna Lawson and Rob Wilkerson, who facilitate the LIFE program on behalf of University Outreach and Extension. Their help was critical to the evaluation in many ways. Finally, the authors would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of Tammy Gillespie and Brenda Procter, co-directors of the Family and Community Resource Program, and the financial support of the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) initiative of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (CSREES-USDA).
I. INTRODUCTION

The children of incarcerated parents are often overlooked in debates about criminal justice and the correctional system. Yet, these children can be negatively affected, both immediately and in the long run, by their parents’ incarceration. The Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) program at Missouri’s Potosi Correctional Center is designed to reduce some of these negative impacts by bringing children together with their parents in an enhanced visit setting organized around 4-H activities. The LIFE program, funded by the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) initiative of the CSREES-USDA, is an innovative approach for reaching children and youth with incarcerated parents.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the impacts of the LIFE program on the children of incarcerated fathers. This first section briefly discusses, in general terms, the problems faced by the children of incarcerated parents and provides additional information on the LIFE program. Section two describes the qualitative research methods used in this evaluation, which consisted of in-depth and focus group interviews with incarcerated fathers. The results in sections three and four are based on information provided by the incarcerated fathers participating in the LIFE program. Section three describes specific features of the LIFE program that distinguish it from traditional visitation and lead to positive impacts on the children who participate. Section four details the types of positive impacts that the LIFE program has on children and youth, including improvements in parent-child bonds, communication, family unity, life skills, behavior, and academic performance.

A. Children of Incarcerated Parents and Visitation

It is estimated that there are some 1.5 million children of incarcerated parents in the United States (Mumola 2000, p. 1). Children can be negatively affected by the incarceration of their parents, sometimes resulting in long-term problems. Separation from parents by prison can result in feelings of abandonment, sadness, and anger, and can lead to eating and sleeping disorders, lower academic performance, and disruptive behavior (Johnston 1995a; Block and Potthast 2001).

Studies show that frequent, regular visitation is beneficial to children of incarcerated parents: children who visit their incarcerated parents score higher on measures of well-being, intelligence, emotional adjustment, and behavior. In a review of child welfare literature, Johnston (1995b, p. 138) concludes that visitation produces beneficial effects for several reasons:

- Visits allow children to express their emotional reactions to the separation. The more disturbed children are by the separation, the more important it is that visits occur.
- Visits help parents to deal with separation and loss issues, increasing their ability to help their children deal with the same issues.
- Children who are separated from their parents can have irrational feelings and fears about their parents. Visits allow children to deal with those feelings and fears, and help them to form a more realistic understanding of their parents’ circumstances.
- Visits allow parents to model appropriate interactions for children who react negatively to the separation.
• Visits allow parents and children to maintain their existing relationship, which leads to more successful reunification after incarceration.

Despite evidence that regular visits can have beneficial impacts on children, child protective services workers, caregivers, and incarcerated parents often do not support visitation because they perceive that visitation in the prison setting could have negative effects on children. In addition, prisons are often far away, making it difficult for caregivers to transport children for visits. When visits do occur, traditional visit settings can be inappropriate for children, providing little opportunity for meaningful parent-child interaction (Block and Potthast 2001).

B. Traditional Visitation and Communication

Visitation between incarcerated fathers and their children in the traditional visit setting can be difficult for fathers, children, and caregivers alike. Hairston (2001, p. 157-158) explains some of the problems associated with traditional visits in prisons around the country:

Prison visiting is both psychologically and physically demanding for children and adults, as the visiting environment in most prisons is poor. . . . Standing in line for hours to be cleared for a visit that lasts less than half the time spent waiting, being subjected to pat and frisk searches and rude treatment, and visiting in crowded, noisy, dirty, overheated facilities, or with parents and children separated by a glass barrier, are hardly conducive to promoting family bonds.

Aside from the uncomfortable environment, regulations also affect the quality of visits. Rules governing the timing, conditions, and duration of visits restrict social interaction between parents and children pose obstacles to parent-child attachments (Hairston 2001).

Telephone and mail communication can be problematic as well. In some prisons, policies about collect calls can result in high telephone bills for children’s households. Hairston (2001, p. 158) found that collect calls from prisoners cost five to ten times more than they would if they were placed from a private phone line. Prisoners and their families may have no other options than to pay the maximum allowable rates. For families with limited resources, calls can generate resentment and otherwise cause friction, especially when fathers no longer have strong relationships with their children’s caregivers. Communication by mail may have a high social cost, since correspondence from some prisons is stamped with a visible warning that it is from a correctional institution. Caregivers may discourage fathers from communicating by mail to avoid the stigmatizing public warning label (Hairston 2001).

It is important to note that these are general observations that do not necessarily reflect the actual practices and procedures at Potosi Correctional Center (PCC). The telephone and mail privileges at PCC are not as restrictive as described above. And, while the atmosphere in the traditional visiting room is governed by strict rules, these rules are clearly posted and professionally enforced. For example, fathers are required to limit physical contact with their children and remain seated with their hands visible on the tabletop. Because PCC is a maximum-security institution, the rules are necessary to ensure the safety of visitors, staff, and offenders.
C. Enhanced Visitation Programs

Although there are not many studies on the impacts of enhanced visitation programs, the ones that exist indicate that these programs can reduce the negative impacts of parental incarceration on children. Frequent visitation in a non-threatening environment can lead to improvements in parent-child relationships, which can, in turn, lead to reductions in anti-social behavior and increases in self-esteem among the children of incarcerated parents (Johnston 1995b).

Enhanced visitation programs address the need for extended physical contact between children and their parents. In contrast to restrictive traditional visit settings that allow only a minimal amount of physical contact, enhanced visitation programs allow children and their parents to interact more closely in child-oriented environments, which reduces the amount of stress experienced by parents and children during visits (Johnston 1995c).

In essence, enhanced visitation programs seek to normalize interaction between incarcerated parents and their children. They often provide more flexible visiting schedules, play areas with toys and activities, and longer, more meaningful contact times (Block and Potthast 2001). Such programs view visitation as a beneficial, low-cost intervention that can ameliorate the negative impacts of separation, play a key role in children’s future development, and help reduce future anti-social behavior on the part of the children (Johnston 1995b).

One of the few enhanced visitation programs that has been evaluated is the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) program. In GSBB, incarcerated mothers and their daughters meet twice monthly for structured troop activities and one-on-one private conversation. An impact assessment of the program found that, compared to a control group, GSBB mothers averaged more visits from their daughters per year (11.6 vs. 6.1) (Block and Potthast 2001, p. 104). In interviews, caregivers indicated that they had observed substantial positive impacts among the children in their care since the girls began participating in GSBB. These improvements consisted of better communication and understanding between incarcerated mothers and their daughters, a reduction in anti-social behavior at home and at school, and higher self-esteem. The study concludes that child welfare professionals should consider enhanced visitation programs as a means to support parent-child relationships and reduce some of the problems caused by parental incarceration.

D. The Living Interactive Family Education Program

1. The Program

The Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) program is an enhanced visitation program at the Potosi Correctional Center (PCC), a maximum-security prison in Mineral Point, Missouri. The LIFE program was developed jointly between the incarcerated fathers and state 4-H staff to address the needs of the children. It is a partnership between University Outreach and Extension and the Missouri Department of Corrections. The program is supported by a New Communities Project grant from the CSREES-USDA Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) initiative. The planning for the LIFE program began in late 1999, and the first meetings were held in March 2000.
There are two main components to the LIFE program: 4-H activities and parenting training. The 4-H activities are held monthly at the correctional facility. These meetings provide children and their incarcerated fathers with a comfortable visitation atmosphere that is conducive to positive physical and verbal interaction. At the monthly meetings, children and their fathers work together on traditional 4-H club activities such as arts and crafts projects and curricula-based activities that focus on subjects such as conflict resolution, substance abuse resistance, teamwork, and character development.

All fathers who participate in the LIFE program also attend monthly classes in parenting skills. The parenting training component seeks to help fathers learn to be a positive influence in their children’s lives. Classes focus on areas such as communication, anger management, teamwork, and positive discipline. The overall objective of the LIFE program is to promote a strong, healthy, and nurturing family environment for the children of incarcerated parents, while helping incarcerated parents become positive role models and mentors to their children.

2. Program Participants

Membership in the LIFE program was originally open only to fathers, grandfathers, and stepfathers who were incarcerated at the Potosi Correctional Center, their children and grandchildren, and the legal guardians of the children and grandchildren. Eligibility criteria were subsequently modified to “include incarcerated men who have a significant role model relationship with nieces, nephews, and other close relatives between the ages of four and 19” (LIFE Program Constitution and By-Laws, p. 2). 1

The members of the LIFE program play an active role in managing the program. They developed the formal program bylaws, which set strict rules for membership. Current members screen potential LIFE participants to ensure that they meet a range of admissions requirements: participants cannot be sex offenders, they must not have committed any serious institutional violations, and they must be drug free. The group’s executive committee decides membership through a voting process. Current members are selective about who can join the program, because they do not want to take the risk of having anyone abuse the relaxed environment and, thus, place the future of the program in jeopardy. The elected officers also perform a range of other program-related responsibilities.

II. RESEARCH APPROACH

The primary objective of this study was to learn about the impacts of the LIFE program on children. The approach was to look at these impacts as seen through the eyes of their fathers. Direct interviews with participant children and their caregivers were not attempted due to logistical and administrative constraints. While a separate research activity was conducted to

1 While there are a variety of family relationships between the adults, youth, and children who participate in the program, this report refers generally to the incarcerated adults as “fathers” and to the youth and children as “their children.” This choice of language was made to simplify the wording of the report, and not to imply that father-child pairs are the only important participants in the program. When the report refers to individual participants, the specific nature of the family relationship is stated.
measure how participation in the 4-H activity affects the life skills of the children and youth in the program, additional research is still needed.

The research findings reported in this paper came from preliminary interviews with fathers, conducted more informally, followed by a formal focus group interview. The information coming out of these interviews provides a rich and detailed description of the fathers’ perspectives on the ways their children and family have been affected by the program.

A. Field Observation and In-Depth Group Interviews

The evaluators met twice with the LIFE program fathers during the preliminary stages of the research. The first meeting was held in November 2000 during which the evaluator interviewed four LIFE program fathers in the presence of the PCC Institutional Activities Coordinator. The purpose of this meeting, which lasted about 45 minutes, was to learn the history and rules of the LIFE program and to find out what fathers saw as the important features of the program and its benefits for both the fathers and their children.

The second interview was held in August 2001, and it occurred immediately after a parenting meeting. The objective of this visit was to learn about the LIFE program, first through observation of fathers during program activities and second through an in-depth interview. This second meeting was held in the prison chapel and included seven fathers, the PCC Institutional Activities Coordinator, three UOE staff who manage the LIFE program, and the evaluator. The parenting meeting, which focused on positive discipline, lasted nearly an hour. The in-depth interview lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

The primary objectives of the interview were to 1) learn about the differences between visits in the traditional visit setting and the LIFE program setting and 2) determine which aspects of the LIFE program were particularly valued by the fathers. The in-depth interview followed a loosely structured interview guide. The first questions focused on the traditional visit setting, and were designed to elicit responses about visit atmosphere, the types of interactions that occur, and how fathers and their children feel during and after the visits. Following discussion of the traditional visit setting, fathers were asked similar questions about the LIFE visits. Detailed notes were taken at both of the preliminary interviews and used to design the focus group protocol.

B. Focus Group Interview

A focus group was conducted with LIFE program fathers in April 2002. It lasted for approximately one hour. The focus group meeting was held in the PCC prison chapel. There were seven people present: five LIFE program participants, the PCC Institutional Activities Coordinator, and the evaluator.

The focus group discussion was guided by a formal protocol consisting of questions about the LIFE program and its impacts on the children who participate in it.² The primary objective of the focus group interview was to elicit discussion about the LIFE program and the ways in which the fathers feel the program has affected 1) their relationships with their children and 2) their

² The research protocol is included as an appendix to this document.
children’s well-being. Fathers were encouraged to discuss how their relationships with their children have changed since they joined the program, describe any changes that they have observed in their children as a result of program participation, and explain what they consider to be the reasons for those changes.

The focus group interview was tape recorded and later transcribed. The transcript was searched for information that could be coded into two categories: 1) characteristics of the LIFE program that contribute to positive impacts on children and 2) the types of positive impacts that children experience due to their participation in the LIFE 4-H activities. That information was then organized into categories, which is the way that it is presented in the next two sections. All of the names used in this report have been changed to protect the privacy of the program participants.

C. Research Limitations

The research methods used in this study were limited to the subjective assessment of impacts, as expressed from the fathers’ perspectives. In other words, the results reported in the following sections were derived entirely from what fathers reported during the in-depth and focus group interviews. An alternative assessment of the impacts of the LIFE program is also available from a separate, but complementary, study that evaluates changes in the children’s life skills. This study uses a survey to measure changes in children’s skills in important areas such as goal setting, decision making, problem solving, communication, social skills, and self esteem.

These research findings could be strengthened by interviewing the children and other significant adults in their lives, such as caregivers and teachers, to determine their perspectives on the impacts of enhanced visitation programs. In the long run, valuable information on the impacts of enhanced visitation programs would be gained by following groups of children over several years to determine whether participation in different types of visitation programs is associated with any behavioral differences between the groups.

III. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO IMPACTS

Fathers identified three types of program characteristics that lead to positive impacts on the children and youth who participate:

1. Atmosphere The atmosphere at LIFE program 4-H meetings allows for a more natural interaction between parent and child than occurs in the regular visit setting at PCC.

2. Constructive Interaction The 4-H activities promote constructive interaction between parent and child.

3. Parenting Education The parenting education component helps fathers to improve their parenting skills.
These characteristics can be viewed as program inputs: they are the elements of the LIFE program that make the program effective in leading to positive impacts on children. Each of these three characteristics is discussed in more detail in this section.

A. Visit Atmosphere

Fathers consider the setting and atmosphere to be of critical importance to the effectiveness of the LIFE program. Because PCC is a maximum-security prison, interaction in the regular visit setting must be strictly regulated. Children older than six are not allowed physical contact other than a brief hug at the outset of a visit. The correctional officers are close by, and both fathers and children can be preoccupied with concerns that the children might unintentionally break the rules. The visiting room can be crowded and noisy, and the setting is generally not conducive to communication. Fathers described the setting and atmosphere as “unnatural,” “uncomfortable,” “restrictive,” and “stress-creating” for both them and their children.

In contrast, descriptions of the LIFE visit setting were positive. Rules governing interaction are relaxed in LIFE meetings: there are no correctional officers present and participants are free to move around the room. The relaxed rules allow fathers and their children to interact in what they termed a “more natural” way. They compared the LIFE visit setting to being in a “living room” with their children. Fathers expressed that “children are more comfortable and open up” and that they and their children “can talk better and listen better,” and stressed that the relaxed, comfortable atmosphere in LIFE program meetings is conducive to positive interaction.

Physical contact is less restricted, so spontaneous hugs and sitting on laps are allowed. This contrasts sharply with the single hug that fathers and their children are allowed in the regular visit setting. Fathers especially value this aspect of the program because it allows them to express their feelings toward their children in a physical way.

Robert, who has a son and a nephew participating in the program, described the difference in atmosphere between the regular and LIFE visit settings:

On a prison visit, it's kind of cold. These children – I don’t care if your child is five years old or 20 years old – he notices that you act different because it’s stressful. I mean, he’ll be down picking with his feet, you know, pulling his sock up or whatever. And I’ll tell him, “Don’t do that, they’ll have me over in a cage and they’ll be watching me.” Staff thinks that everything’s done for drugs, know what I’m saying? So I say, “Don’t be fidgeting under the table, fix your sock before you come up in here. Don’t be doing that.” He knows that’s a stressful type environment.

And then he’ll get a little rambunctious, he’ll want to . . . he’s 13 years old, but we’ve never had the chance to bond because when I got locked up he was five. He still wants to crawl on my lap, grab me around the neck. You can’t do that in a visit, not on the regular side you can’t. He understands it but he don’t know why. But when you go to 4-H, it is a little bit more relaxed. He can slide over there and put his arm around me. Or maybe take an old slug shot. You know,
they understand the differences in the meetings. It’s important to them to have that.

B. Constructive Interaction

The LIFE program 4-H activities are selected to promote constructive interaction and co-learning between fathers and children. The activities are based on 4-H youth development curricula or other, similar youth and family development materials. They generally require teamwork, allowing fathers and children to set goals and accomplish them together. Recent meetings have included activities covering the following thematic areas:

- **Trust**
  Participants played pin the tail on the donkey, with children and fathers directing each other.

- **Diversity and tolerance**
  Participants read excerpts from Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and discussed what the speech meant to them and how diversity and tolerance are important in society.

- **Love and appreciation**
  Participants made Valentine’s Day cards to express appreciation for one another and other family members.

- **Creativity**
  Participants decorated Easter eggs together.

It appears that by organizing interaction around these themes, the 4-H activities help fathers and their children to relate to each other on a different level than when they simply sit across from each other in the regular visiting room. One father described how he feels after working on LIFE activities with his son: “You feel fantastic because you’ve done all these activities, you feel so much closer.”

The activities give fathers the opportunity to provide guidance to their children. One father stated, “It feels like being a father. You’re sharing a father-son relationship and accomplishing something with him.” Fathers expressed that working on projects with their children helps them to feel closer to them than they do in the regular visit setting, and stressed that the activities help to solidify their relationships with their children.

C. Parenting Education

Fathers value the parenting component of the LIFE program and feel that their parenting skills have improved since joining the program. They expressed that the classes have helped them to learn more effective communication skills, better discipline strategies, and other skills that have had positive effects on their relationships with their children. In addition to the classes, LIFE fathers say that they support one another outside of the program, helping each other to work through family problems in a positive way.
In the following quotations from the focus group, David explains how lack of parenting skills is common among incarcerated fathers, and Grant describes how the LIFE program has helped to address that problem:

*David:* I personally learned that Randy don’t need no friend, he’s got enough friends. He needs a parent. . . . There’s many guys that came in here and said, “We’re all consistent with one thing: we don't know how to be parents.” This is probably, you know, this is one of the first things that the administrators insisted that we go through, and it still remains probably one of the more important aspects of the program.

*Grant:* It’s given us a unique opportunity to be better parents. You know, you take a lot of us; we’ve never had the chance to be parents. We got locked up when we was young. Through this program we learn to become better parents by interacting along with each other and with our children. We’re getting better. You can feel it when you’re on visit up there. You see dudes doing things we never dreamed of doing. They had me up there doing some cards. I never dreamed I’d be up there making no Valentine’s cards [laughing]. It was good, it was good, you know?

**IV. FATHERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON IMPACTS**

Fathers believe that participation in the LIFE program has led to significant positive impacts for their children. They feel that the program has helped them to forge stronger relationships with their children and given them the tools and opportunity to become a positive presence in their children’s lives. The specific types of positive changes that fathers attribute to the LIFE program can be grouped into five categories:

1. **Stronger relationships**  
   The development of stronger parent-child relationships through discovery, the development of mutual respect, and program activities that promote bonding.

2. **Improved communication**  
   Improvements in the lines of communication between parent and child.

3. **Family unity**  
   The creation and reinforcement of a sense of family unity between fathers, children, and caregivers.

4. **Life skills**  
   The development of important life skills in the children, such as leadership, empathy, and self-control.

5. **Improved behavior**  
   Improved behavior and academic performance by the children.

These five categories of impacts are described in more detail in this section, with examples provided by the fathers.
A. Stronger Relationships

Many of the LIFE 4-H activities help children and their fathers to learn more about each other, develop respect for one another, and establish more significant bonds. Working together as a team on 4-H projects gives children an opportunity to show their fathers that they are able and intelligent, and gives fathers an opportunity to show their children that they can provide capable and caring parental guidance.

Spontaneous activities are also important. Through unstructured interaction, children and their fathers can reveal their “fun” sides. Physical expression is particularly important: children and fathers are able to express their love for each other through hugs and other physical demonstrations of affection. The overall result is that children and their fathers develop healthier relationships based on mutual respect and love.

Robert, whose thirteen-year-old son was only five when he was incarcerated, feels that the LIFE program has helped him and his son (and his nephew who also visits) to learn more about each other:

All they knew was dad or uncle Robert on a [regular] visit where you just sit there. They don’t get to see you actually . . . they don’t get to see the side of me that they see in 4-H. They actually get to know you better. You know, whether it be through the crafts, or the games that we play. You know, my kid ain’t never seen me lay down on the floor and pour water on my head. He just thought that was the greatest thing. Because when I came to prison he was only five – now he’s thirteen. He just thought that was the greatest thing. Because when I came to prison he was only five – now he’s thirteen. He just thought that was the coolest thing in the world – he’d never seen that side of me. . . . You come up to the [regular] visiting room and all you do is sit there and you look at each other and you don’t really get to say anything. Then when he sees that side - like I'm a big ol' kid - you know, that’s shocking to a child who’s never seen that in his father.

You have a bigger type of a bonding situation. Like, when you meet them for a [regular] visit, you know, you’re [only] allowed a hug. You know, in 4-H your kid can sit there with you, and lean on you. It’s just more interaction and you have a bigger bonding process between father and son. And like my nephew . . . he doesn’t have a . . . the only father figure he has in his life is his grandfather, who’s my dad. And you know, now I’m starting to be more of a male role model in his life.

Robert sees the LIFE program as a discovery process for him and his child. The constructive interaction during activities and spontaneous physical interaction allow them both to express themselves in ways that would not be possible in the traditional visit setting. Robert appears to believe that this process of discovery has helped to solidify their parent-child bond.

David has had a similar experience with his child. He feels that the LIFE program has helped him to earn his son’s respect:
In my case, I’m a stepparent, and Randy didn’t even know me until he was seven years old. So, I wanted to be a positive influence on him, and this program has made a big difference in that area. Because accomplishing things as a family . . . he respects me more now and he’s more inclined to listen to what I have to say, because he knows I can help him actually accomplish something.

David feels that the 4-H projects have given him the opportunity to earn his son’s respect by demonstrating that he can help him to accomplish goals. By earning his son’s respect and trust, he has put himself in a position to be a positive influence in his son’s life. While LIFE program fathers are similar to fathers on the outside in the ways they want to influence their children, LIFE program fathers also have a unique concern: they do not want their children to end up in prison. Therefore, LIFE program fathers want to influence their children to choose a different path than the fathers themselves chose.

B. Improved Communication

Fathers related that the comfortable visit setting, the constructive interaction during activities, and the parent-child communication strategies they learned in the parenting meetings have helped them to establish improved lines of communication with their children. Since movements are not restricted, it is easier for children to engage their fathers in private conversation to talk about personal problems and issues or ask for advice. They can also express themselves through spontaneous physical interaction. Overall, by providing a more “natural” setting in which children and their fathers are free to interact in constructive and spontaneous ways, the LIFE program fosters the development of more meaningful communication.

Several fathers described how the LIFE program has contributed to improvements in their ability to communicate with their children. For Wade, who has two teen-age sons, asking for time alone with his children in the traditional visit setting can cause an uncomfortable situation. In the LIFE meetings, it is easier for him to pull his children aside for private conversation:

You know, you had to ask whoever brought them “Why don’t you all go get something to eat?” . . . you got to do this in front of them which makes you feel bad because it’s like you got to run them off. Now, if [the caregiver] is doing something [for a 4-H activity] [the child can whisper] “I want to talk to you.” or . . . “Let’s go see what’s in the [vending] machine.” And you just stand there hitting buttons, slowly putting quarters in so you all can have a discussion. . . . They’re like [whisper] “Hey man, check this out, the other day . . .” and then, you know, [the caregivers] are looking like “What’s up?” And you’re like “Nothing, we were just talking about the game.” “Y’all wasn’t talking about no game.” You know what I’m saying? But it's cool, because now they’re wanting to talk, they’re wanting to have that secret bond just you and them, and that's kind of cool, you know? . . . I was able to take my son away from my mother and wife and sisters and say, “Hey look man, I know you will be tempted to do this and do this” . . . In other words, you got that privacy . . .
Wade believes that the chance to have private conversations has created a stronger bond between him and his two sons and helped him to have more positive input into their lives.

Another father, Grant, explained that the parenting meetings and the LIFE meetings both have played a role in helping him to communicate with his son on important issues:

We’ve had problems within the group with certain individual kids. We come together [in the parenting meetings] and discuss the matter, you know, and come up with solutions. . . . Couple of weeks ago, my oldest boy was having girl problems. And you know, he won’t talk around his mama. So I was able to pull him off and talk to him about it. And anything I don’t know about I can get somebody else [in the LIFE group] to help me with. You know, they’re getting up in age and there’s a lot of questions.

I’ve had a better relationship with the boys [since joining the program]. They tell me about everything. They tell me more than they tell their mama, and she doesn’t like that. Any kind of problem arise, if I don’t call, they hold it until I do call, so they can tell me about it. If it’s one of them kind of things like talking about girls or something, they’ll take the phone because they don’t want their mama to know they messing with girls. They’ll go in the other room. You know, they have little questions, you know, they don’t want her to know what it is - they go in another room. So she be mad - she don’t like that.

Grant gains knowledge and support from the parenting meetings, and the LIFE 4-H meetings provide an environment in which he is able to apply his parenting skills and help his sons work through normal teen issues just as a father on the outside would.

Wade also attributes some of the improvements in his communication with his sons to the parenting meetings. He explained:

The parenting classes . . . would create an instance like “your son comes to you and says so and so and what do you do?” Break his neck. You know, you want to reach out and shake him: “Boy, you’re crazy—you’re going to end up where I am.” And the class would be: “OK, here’s another way to deal with this.” Which, you always knew that way existed, you just never really gave it consideration because you felt other than hands-on confrontation that it wasn’t going to work. . . . Where, like I said before it was like “Come here!” You know? The class has really - it calmed me down.

. . . my children now, where before I would say “look, your grandmother told me this or your aunt told me that or your mom said this” and they’re like “yeah daddy, but man!....” Now it’s more a thing like “Well, OK, but could you at least . . . ?” You know what I’m saying? It’s more of a listening and “why don’t you work with me on this” where before it was like “you don’t understand because you’re there [in prison].” Now we have the opportunity to remove that gap, like, [the child says] “I’m living it” [and I say] “OK, come up here and tell me about it.
Let’s work through this,” you know what I’m saying? That’s the big difference. That bonds you with your child or nephew or whoever.

This passage implies that the parenting classes have helped Wade learn to listen and discuss issues and problems with his children rather than to react in a way that will close down the lines of communication.

David feels that as his stepson has learned more about him and come to respect him through interaction in the LIFE program, their ability to communicate has improved:

Now he wants to talk to me, you know? “Let me talk to David about this, let me talk to David about that.” It wasn’t that way at first. Of course it was a trust issue, you know, him coming into my life the way he did. But now, actually, that’s getting to be more and more frequent every day. I mean, it’s generally about stuff that he knows his mother’s not interested in, like lifting weights, or stuff like that, or fishing, or something like that. That just really blesses my heart to be able to be a part of his life like that. I can remember when I first got involved with her and stuff. I’d call and say “Does Randy want to talk to me?” and he’d just straight out say “No, not really.” You know? I mean, he didn’t know who I was. He doesn’t do that anymore. Now it’s a totally different relationship, and a big part of that is of course time, some of it’s time, but a lot of it has to do with this program. Like I said before, accomplishing things as a family has been a big part of that.

C. Creation and Reinforcement of Family Unity

Since the LIFE program also involves the children’s caregivers, it strengthens the family ties between children, their fathers, and other family members. For some families, LIFE meetings have become anticipated events, and children, fathers, and caregivers have incorporated the LIFE visits into their family customs. Memories from past meetings and anticipated events in future meetings become an important focus of discussions between children, fathers, and caregivers. Even extended family members become interested, with cousins, aunts, and others asking for the opportunity to get involved. Families who participate in the program live with the grim reality of an incarcerated family member, some even facing the death penalty, and the LIFE program provides them with a positive focus around which to rally.

Wade spoke of how the LIFE program has had positive impacts on family unity:

. . . the children see us and our spouses or parents or whatever in a whole different light. . . . They have that mentality now like we ARE a family. You know what I’m saying? That’s what it does. It pulls that family unity out that you can’t do in the visiting room.

. . . I have two sisters, and they have children. They are now like “We want to go see uncle Wade.” They’re not worrying about the regular weekend; they want to come up to the 4-H visits. Because they’re going back telling them “Man we so
My ex-wife and I are actually talking more. We are not trying to get back what we had or anything, but it’s one of those things, [she’ll ask] “when you all having that meeting, because I don’t want him yelling that I forgot to get him ready” and this kind of stuff. So, we actually talk more. She called my mother and [said] “Tell Wade I haven’t forgot his birthday, I just been kind of slow.” And she hasn’t sent me a birthday card in 11 years. And, I can call when they’re not there and “How you doing? What’s going on?” With his immediate caregiver, now, we’re kind of tearing down that wall where when I would call [in the past] its like “Hey, how you doing? I’m OK. The boys? There, just a second.” That was the end of my conversation. Now, you know, we’re a little more social.

David feels that one of the most important impacts of the LIFE program is the creation of family memories:

. . . he sees his parents in a normal loving environment, you know. I mean, a kid should grow up seeing his parents hug and stuff like that, you know, and just have physical interaction. . . . A big part of the memories that Randy is ever going to have of me are going be created right in this program. I mean, aside from sitting in an antiseptic environment in the visiting room where I go to the vending machine occasionally and get a hamburger, his only physical memories of me as an individual are going to be what he gains in this program. You know, this is going to be with him for the rest of his life, just like memories you have of your childhood will be with you for the rest of your life.

Wade added his thoughts on the importance of family memories:

For those people on death row, you know, this may be the last and only interaction we have. Unless some kind of reversal comes, this is it. And like David said, do you want him to remember you just, “That was my dad” or, “You remember when we was up in the visiting room and we wasted all that water on dad’s face?” or, “When dad tried to hula hoop?” We create memories every time, no matter how minute, we create a new memory every time we see them.

The fathers believe that the LIFE program has helped to strengthen family bonds. Children and their caregivers look forward to the LIFE meetings and the associated activities because they provide families with the opportunity to interact in a positive way and create fond memories.

**D. Development of Life Skills**

The LIFE 4-H activities are drawn from established curricula that focus on developing leadership skills, assertiveness, social skills, self-control, and awareness of others. Through these activities,
children and their fathers learn about and reflect on important life skills. These co-learning experiences provide children and their fathers with a foundation of knowledge that they can refer to as they work their way through life challenges and issues.

David shared his opinions about how the LIFE program and related activities contribute to the development of life skills among children:

Not only do I see a difference in him, but I see a difference in every child that participates in this program. All you have to do is just set back. I’ve seen kids come into this program who were totally antisocial for the first couple of meetings, you know, because they are expecting the same kind of behavior as in the visiting room, and they are told to respect the rules, you know, and everything, and they just open up, it’s really an amazing thing to see a kid open up after he’s been all, you know . . . [My son] Randy’s more assertive, I think. A little more outgoing, I think, because of this program. He’s always been the kind of child that’s kind of shy. This program has kind of helped him with that social side to some degree. He’s more assertive. He takes his role as secretary seriously. You know, he keeps roll, and does his thing there, and that’s important to him.

For Robert, the planned activities provide an opportunity for him to help his son develop a sense of how his (the son’s) actions affect others. His son is beginning to think about how what he does can make others feel, which has led him to exercise greater self-control:

As we sit back and analyze our kids, it gives us the chance to point out how they talk and interact with other people. Because 13-year-olds nowadays are buck wild. They say what comes to the top of their head. 4-H gives us a chance to provide input, to tell him, “If people aren’t following along at the pace you want to go, just be patient, let things flow.” So he’s learning to watch his own self, and I guess mature with the things he says and does. Because, [in the] past few months he just pops off what’s on top of his head. And now he’s learning to control what he says. You know, think about what he says before he says it.

I think my son realizes how important the meetings are to me. I think that’s the biggest change. He knows that these are really important to me. The last meeting he didn’t get to be here. . . . and the first thing he thinks of is “my dad’s going to be really mad.” Not mad. A little disappointed. He knows I’m going to be disappointed, you know? So he didn’t get to come and he knew that it was important to me. That’s a big change for a kid to know that things are important to his father.

David described how his son has learned important lessons from LIFE activities:

We have a two-hour period to work with and we try to use that time period as productively as we can. We got to give the kids some time to assert their meeting thing and to work as a group, and maybe put a life lesson in there in the process. Whether it’s through a puppet show or whatever it is. I use the puppet show for
an example because that was a life lesson that we used in 4-H that actually worked on Randy. He was going through this selfish phase. And so, I had the opportunity to help him to be the selfish puppet in the puppet show and it helped him to realize what being selfish was about . . . about how it had an impact on the other puppets, and it really had an impact on him. It may seem simple, but 20 years from now that life lesson might have something positive to do with his decisions.

E. Improved Behavior and Academic Performance

Each of the changes described above—stronger relationships, improved communication, greater family unity, and improved life skills—can have positive impacts on the social and academic adjustment of children who participate in the LIFE program. As communication and relationships between children and their fathers improve, children are more likely to discuss social and academic issues with their fathers, and fathers are better able to help their children work through those issues constructively. When family unity is strengthened, fathers and caregivers are more likely to cooperate in promoting their children’s social development and education. Life skills training provides children with tools and knowledge that they can use in their daily lives.

Grant explained how his children’s overall behavior and academic performance have changed since they began to participate in the program:

My kids used to stay in trouble at school, you know? Lately their grades have gone up. And it is all because of 4-H, you know what I’m saying? That interaction that we have with the kids, and stuff. Them being able to communicate with me a little better. Other than being on the telephone, or in the other visiting room. It’s just made it a lot better for them, you know? Their grades are up, they’re staying out of a lot of little bull that they’ve been getting in. Had been getting in, rather. It’s because of 4-H. Although it’s just once a month, it is still working.

Like six months ago, one of my sons got caught vandalizing a car [and] we talked about it. I brought the problem in and we talked about it. We talked about it, and went over solutions and everything. I tried the solutions, got rid of the problem, and it was all because of that being able to discuss it with everybody, you know? And he made a turnaround. You wouldn’t believe how that little talk changed it around. And that was six months ago. I mean his grades are up. He ain’t getting into no more stuff. I mean, it’s a hell of an improvement. It’s because I had that talk with him, but I got all my information from that meeting. Parenting classes are a great help.

Support from the other LIFE fathers and the parenting classes appear to have contributed to Grant’s ability to communicate effectively with his sons, allowing him to help them work through issues and solve behavioral problems.
Wade feels that the program has given him the opportunity to be a role model for his son by demonstrating that good behavior has its rewards:

To stay in the program you must stay in good standing with the institution. So it also makes us aware that, hey, if you want to continue this relationship with your children, you have to be on your best behavior, even under stressful conditions that we face on a daily basis. . . . They realize that at some point we make sacrifices so that this can be. I’ve told my middle son, twice, that “Man, do you know that I bite my tongue and turn the other cheek?” you know what I’m saying, I walk away more now than I have ever in the past, where I would be quick to say “Man I don’t want to hear that.” You know, and not looking for physical confrontations of any sorts. You know, I haven’t had a violation for 2 years, trying to stay in this program - not even a small one.

By modeling self-control, even under stressful conditions, Wade sets a positive example for his sons. He summed up his feelings about why the LIFE program has positive impacts on children’s (and fathers’) behavior, “Because if you feel you’re loved and you’re part of something, you’re less likely to get off into something that’s going to get you into even more trouble. That’s really what this is about.”

V. CONCLUSION

There are a number of studies to indicate that the children of incarcerated parents suffer negative impacts and that the opportunity to visit their parents can have beneficial effects on these children. While there have only been a few research studies on the impacts of enhanced visitation programs, the findings from these studies suggest that such programs may lead to even greater benefits for children.

The LIFE program combines a less restrictive, more natural visit setting with structured activities designed to promote children’s healthy development. Children and their fathers are allowed to move freely, express themselves physically, and interact spontaneously. The 4-H meetings include structured projects and activities that are based on proven youth and family development curricula. Outside of the 4-H meetings, fathers work on their parenting skills in both formal meetings and by informally supporting each other.

According to the fathers, participation in the LIFE program leads to numerous positive impacts on children. Fathers feel that the enhanced interaction in LIFE 4-H meetings has facilitated a process of learning and discovery and fostered the development of deeper bonds with their children. The curricula-based projects and activities help children and their fathers to learn about each other as the children develop life skills. The parenting meetings have given fathers new parenting skills and tools, and a greater understanding of what it means to be a father. This has led to better communication and overall improvements in their relationships with their children. The deeper bonds, mutual respect, and improved lines of communication have allowed fathers to become positive influences in their children’s lives. Taken together, these positive impacts
mitigate some of the harm done to children from their parents’ incarceration and help to improve children’s social and academic adjustment and overall well-being.

The results of this evaluation of the LIFE program indicate that this enhanced visitation program has led to substantial positive impacts on the children who participate. The results are strong enough to warrant further study. If, as this study indicates, enhanced visitation programs can significantly help the children of incarcerated parents, then the LIFE program might provide a model for reaching and improving the lives of at least some of the large number of children affected throughout Missouri and the rest of the country.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDIX:

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

This research centers on the University Outreach and Extension’s (UOE) Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) program at the Potosi Correctional Center (PCC). The objective of this study is to assess the impact of the LIFE program on the quality of parent-child relationships and the well being of participant children. It is hypothesized that enhanced visits contribute to the quality of parent-child relationships. Better parent-child relationships, in turn, lead to happier, more successful, better-adjusted children.

Objectives: The focus group will elicit discussion of the LIFE Program and the ways in which the fathers feel the program has affected 1) their relationships with their children and 2) their children’s well-being. Fathers will be encouraged to discuss how their relationships with their children have changed since joining the program, describe any changes that they have observed in their children as a result of program participation, and explain how these changes came about. Specific discussion areas will include:

- impacts on the quality of parent-child relationships
- impacts on children
  1. at home
  2. in school
  3. in the community

Description of the participants: The focus groups will be conducted with all of the LIFE program incarcerated fathers who consent to participate. Their children will not be present. If more than six program participants consent to participate, they will be separated into two or more groups. Aside from the participants, only the investigator will be present. If the Potosi Correctional Center deems it necessary, a prison official will also be present.

Informed consent: Informed consent forms will be distributed and collected by PCC or UOE staff prior to the focus groups.

Description of the focus group: The participants and the facilitator will sit in a circle or around a table for the discussion. The facilitator will begin the meeting by introducing himself and explaining that the purpose of the focus group session will be to learn about the impacts of the LIFE program on participant children. The focus group meeting will last between 30 and 60 minutes. It will be tape-recorded.

Scheduling the focus group: The focus group will be held either during the time in which parenting meetings normally take place or at another time as dictated by PCC staff. Thus, participating fathers may miss some or all of a parenting meeting. We will work with the PCC Institutional Activities Coordinator to select a time that is convenient for the participants.
Focus Group Discussion Guide: The following questions will provide the framework for the focus group discussion. While questions that are not listed here may be asked in order to follow up on participant responses, the focus group discussion will center on these main questions. The introduction and debriefing statements will be read to participants.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to find out how participation in the LIFE program has affected your children. We would like you to share your honest feelings about any changes, positive or negative, that you have noted in your children over the period of the program. Everything that you say here will be kept confidential, and your names, the names of your children, and any other identifying information will not be used in any report coming from this research.

We have a limited amount of time, so I might have to interrupt from time-to-time to keep things moving.

Opening question

Could each of you tell me your name and tell me how long you and your children have been involved in the LIFE program?

Introductory question

What motivated you to participate in the LIFE program?

Transition question

Could you name one important difference between a regular visit and a LIFE program visit and describe why that difference is important? (if responses are not forthcoming, explore specific areas - atmosphere, physical interaction, and communication)

Key questions

Do you think that being in the LIFE program has improved your relationship with your child in any way? If so, how?

Do you think that participation in the LIFE program has benefited your child in any way? If so, how?

Ending question

What are the most important changes that you have observed in your children since you joined the program?
Follow-up questions will be asked, when appropriate, to gather further information on perceived changes. If fathers assert that changes have taken place, the investigator will ask them how they think the program has contributed to those changes.

Debriefing

I would like to thank you for your participation. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any reports, displays, or other publicly accessible media coming from this research. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this research. Do you have any questions for me?
LIFE SKILLS IN CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED FATHERS

MAY 2003

DR. ELIZABETH DUNN
J. GORDON ARBUCKLE JR.
CYFAR PROJECT EVALUATORS
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

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The New Communities Projects (NCPs) and this evaluation are funded by a five-year grant from the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) National Initiative of CSREES-USDA. University Outreach and Extension (UOE) of the University of Missouri administer the grant through the Family and Community Resource Program (FCRP). UOE Outreach Development Funds provide additional funding for this work. Information about CYFAR, the NCPs, and FCRP’s programming with at-risk populations can be found at http://outreach.missouri.edu/FCRP. Contact Elizabeth Dunn at DunnE@missouri.edu with questions about this evaluation and Lynna Lawson at LawsonL@missouri.edu with questions about the LIFE program.
I. THE LIVING INTERACTIVE FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) Program was established in 1999 at the Potosi Correctional Center, a maximum security prison in Missouri. The LIFE Program is designed to help children and youth whose fathers, or other significant male role models, are incarcerated. It was started by University of Missouri Outreach and Extension, in conjunction with the Missouri Department of Corrections and a number of incarcerated fathers at Potosi Correctional Center (PCC). The program is supported by a grant from the USDA’s Children, Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR) Program.

An At-Risk Population

At mid-year 2002, the incarcerated population in the United States exceeded two million people for the first time (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2003). Many of these incarcerated people are also parents. Their children face several unique challenges related to long-term separation from the incarcerated parent, family disruption, anxiety about the parent’s welfare, and the social stigma associated with incarceration.

Because of these challenges, the children of incarcerated parents are at greater risk for a number of social, behavioral, and academic problems. Feelings of abandonment, sadness, anxiety, and anger can lead to poor academic performance and antisocial behavior (Johnston 1995, Block and Potthast 2001). A review of empirical studies indicates that the children of incarcerated parents are at increased risk for developing a variety of behavioral disorders (Gabel 1992).

Impacts of the LIFE Program

The purpose of the LIFE Program is to help children and youth successfully overcome some of the challenges of parental incarceration. The anticipated long-term impacts of the program are indicated in the program logic model (appendix 2) and include the following:

- improving children’s self-esteem and social skills,
- reducing their sense of isolation,
- helping them stay in school longer,
- helping them maintain long-term relationships with their fathers,
- helping them become better leaders and citizens, and
- reducing their risk of incarceration.

The LIFE Program works to achieve these long-term impacts in two ways. First, it provides an enhanced visitation environment for children and their incarcerated fathers. In contrast to the traditional prison visit setting, the enhanced visitation environment helps children and their fathers develop stronger and healthier relationships. Detailed information, photos, and video clips describing the LIFE Program’s enhanced visitation environment, along with the results of a qualitative evaluation of its impacts on the parent-child relationship, can be found in Dunn and Arbuckle (2002).
The second way that the LIFE Program helps these children is by involving them in 4-H programming. Four-H programming is designed to promote positive youth development by helping children and youth develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will allow them to become productive and contributing members of society. At the 4-H meetings of the LIFE Program, children and their fathers work together on traditional 4-H club activities. These include curricula-based activities focused on the development of life skills, such as conflict resolution, substance abuse resistance, teamwork, and character development.

As reflected in the program logic model, one of the anticipated intermediate impacts of the LIFE Program is that children will build character and life skills through participation in 4-H programs. This document reports on an evaluation of participants’ life skills. Section II describes the methods used in the evaluation, while section III presents the results of the evaluation. The closing section summarizes the main points and suggests how the information can be used to improve the effectiveness of the program.

II. MEASURING AND ANALYZING LIFE SKILLS

In order to monitor changes in the life skills of the children and youth participating in the LIFE Program, a questionnaire was used to assess participants’ life skills in seven categories. This questionnaire was adapted from several existing questionnaires. It was administered in July 2002 and again in January 2003. This section describes the development and implementation of the life skills questionnaire.

Background Research

The instrument (questionnaire) used to assess life skills in this study was adapted from three different instruments. Specifically, the instrument for this study draws from the following evaluation approaches: 1) the Rosenberg Self esteem Scale; 2) the 4-H Four-Fold Youth Development Model; and 3) an impact evaluation instrument for Utah's Youth and Families with Promise Program.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (SES) is one of the most widely used approaches for measuring self esteem in the social sciences. The SES was originally developed in the 1960s as part of a large-scale study of adolescent self esteem (Rosenberg 1965). It is based on the premise that self-concept is shaped by social structural positions, such as racial/ethnic status, and institutional contexts, such as schools and families (Rosenberg 1986). The instrument for this study uses several questions from the SES to evaluate self esteem.

Four-Fold Youth Development Model. The Four-Fold Youth Development Model was developed as a joint project between the Ohio State University and Purdue University (Barkman et al. 1999). The Four-Fold Model provides a set of guidelines and tools for evaluating the impacts of youth development programming, particularly 4-H programs.
The instrument used in this study adapted questions from three of the subscales in the Four-Fold Model: communication, problem solving, and goal achievement.

Youth and Families with Promise Program. Utah State University Extension's Youth and Families with Promise Program (YFP) is a mentoring program that works with at-risk youth, ages 10 to 14, and their families. The YFP Program is designed to reduce delinquent behavior while helping youth improve their academic performance, increase their interpersonal competence, and strengthen their family bonds. Changes in these types of life skills and social competencies are evaluated using a survey approach. Several questions from the YFP instrument, especially those related to academics and learning, goal setting and achievement, and decision making were included in the instrument for this study.

Life Skills Instrument

The life skills instrument consists of 36 questions, divided into two parts. The first part contains six questions related to demographics (age, gender, race, grade) and frequency of program participation. The second part contains 28 questions related to life skills and two questions that ask participants to directly rate the impacts of the program.

The life skills questions fall into seven categories:

- academics and learning,
- communication,
- decision making,
- goal setting and goal achievement,
- problem solving,
- self esteem, and
- social competencies.

There are four questions in each of these categories, which are presented in mixed order on the instrument. The questions included in each category are listed in appendix 2. Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale. Depending on the wording of the question, the responses may range from “never” to “always” or from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>not often</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>usually</td>
<td>always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instrument includes both original questions and questions that were adapted from the evaluation approaches discussed above. The instrument was pilot tested with several

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1 In 2001, CYFAR highlighted the YFP impact evaluation as an exemplary program evaluation.
children and youth before being finalized. Based on the results from the pilot tests, the language used in the questions was clarified and simplified. The current instrument is written at a fourth grade reading level, as measured by the Flesch-Kincaid scale.

Assessment Procedure

The assessment procedure is designed to protect the anonymity of the respondents. Respondents do not write their names on the questionnaire, and they are provided with identical blank envelopes. After answering the questions, respondents place the questionnaire inside the envelope, and place the sealed envelope into a “ballot box.” The length of time needed to complete the questionnaire ranges from five to 15 minutes.

About half of the children and youth who participate in the LIFE program were assessed in each round. For both of these assessments, all children and youth attending the LIFE 4-H club meeting on that day were assessed. However, because the PCC is located in a relatively remote rural area, it is difficult for many of the participants and their caregivers to travel to Potosi every month. In addition, the incarcerated fathers are sometimes prevented from participating in meetings due to violations of prison regulations. Therefore, it is rare for all participants to be present at a given meeting.

III. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

This section reports on the results of two assessment rounds (July 2002 and January 2003). Most of the respondents are males between the ages of 11 and 14. The results indicate that their scores increased by about 12 percent between the first two rounds. The results also indicate that several of the life skills categories are correlated.

Respondent Characteristics and Program Participation Rates

The first assessment occurred in July 2002. Of the seven program participants who were assessed in the first round, six were male and one was female (table 1). Almost all of the participants were between the ages of 11 and 14 and had been in the program for at least three months. The only exception was a six-year-old child who had only recently begun to participate in the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Time in Program</th>
<th>Frequency of Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Less than half of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Mixed race</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>All of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Half of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Less than half of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Most of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Mixed race</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>All of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>1 Month</td>
<td>Less than half of meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second assessment, which took place in January 2003, included nine program participants (table 2). The respondents in the second assessment share several characteristics with those in the first assessment:

1) all but one of the respondents are male;
2) most respondents are white;
3) most respondents have participated in the program three or more months; and
4) most respondents are between 12 and 14 years old, with respondents’ average age being 12 years old in both rounds.

While the responses are anonymous, it appears from the demographic and participation information that at least four of the seven respondents in the first round were probably re-tested in the second round.

Table 2. January 2003 Participant Characteristics and Attendance Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Time in Program</th>
<th>Frequency of Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17 Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Half of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>14 Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Most of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14 Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Half of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13 Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>Most of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12 Male</td>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>All of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7 Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3+ Months</td>
<td>All of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>13 Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1-3 Months</td>
<td>All of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5 Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>1-3 Months</td>
<td>All of meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>13 Male</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 Month</td>
<td>Most of meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Scores and Scores by Category

The maximum possible score for the life skills assessment is 140 points, since each of the 28 questions can receive between one and five points. The scores in the first round of the assessment provide a baseline picture of how the participants rate themselves in key life skills areas. The results are telling: the average total score for the sample was only 67 percent (94 out of a possible 140 points). This indicates that, on average, respondents did not rate themselves highly in a number of skills areas (table 3).

The average score in January 2003 increased to 75 percent (105 out of a possible 140 points). As shown in table 3, the average score for this second round was 12 percent higher than it was for the first round. This indicates that there have been some improvements in life skills among the children and youth participating in the LIFE Program. While there were improvements in every category, the greatest improvements came in social competencies (up 23 percent), communication (up 18 percent), and decision making (up 12 percent).  

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2 The percentage change in scores is calculated as follows: (new score – old score)/old score. For example, in the case of the average total score, the calculation is \((75 – 67)/67 = 12\) percent.
Table 3. Average Scores by Category, July 2002 and January 2003 (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Skills Category</th>
<th>Round 1: July 2002 (n=7)</th>
<th>Round 2: January 2003 (n=9)</th>
<th>Percent change in average scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics/learning</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting/achievement</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>+18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social competencies</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>+23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self esteem</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scores in each category provide some information about how respondents rate themselves in specific skills areas. Scores in the self-esteem category were relatively high in both rounds. This is encouraging, since it indicates that the participants have a generally good self-concept. Higher self esteem may translate into a greater capacity for improvement in other skills areas over time. On the other hand, scores for goal setting and for communication were relatively low in both rounds.

Correlations Between Skills Areas

Table 4. Correlation Between Life Skills Categories (July 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Goal setting</th>
<th>Decision making</th>
<th>Problem solving</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Social comp.</th>
<th>Self esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.234 (.613)</td>
<td>.455 (.304)</td>
<td>.441 (.321)</td>
<td>-.245 (.596)</td>
<td>.309 (.500)</td>
<td>.925 (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (.203)</td>
<td>.548 (.818)</td>
<td>.108 (.256)</td>
<td>.497 (.292)</td>
<td>.466 (.292)</td>
<td>-.148 (.752)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (.715)</td>
<td>.071 (.542)</td>
<td>.281 (.500)</td>
<td>.882 (.284)</td>
<td>.473 (.284)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (.481)</td>
<td>.275 (.552)</td>
<td>.875 (.552)</td>
<td>.274 (.552)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (.599)</td>
<td>.599 (.156)</td>
<td>-.232 (.616)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social comp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (.299)</td>
<td>.299 (.514)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in table are Pearson correlation coefficients with two-tailed significance levels in parentheses. The shaded entries represent statistically significant correlations.

An analysis of the correlations between scores in the different life skills categories (table 4) reveals some statistically significant relationships:
- There is a very strong relationship between having good self esteem and having positive attitudes about academics and learning.
- The participants with higher scores in the social competencies category also have higher scores in the decision-making and problem-solving categories.

The correlation results do not necessarily indicate about the direction of cause-and-effect relationships. For example, it is not clear whether high self esteem leads to positive attitudes about academics or vice versa. Similarly, participants with high scores in the social competency category, which measures how well participants relate to other people, appear to be better able to think through problems and consider the consequences of their actions before making decisions. It may be that improvements in one of these skills leads to improvements in the others, or it may be that they are mutually reinforcing.

IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

While the children of incarcerated parents face a number of challenges, the assessment results indicate that the LIFE Program helps children and youth improve the life skills they need to more successfully meet these challenges. More specifically, the findings indicate that the LIFE Program has helped children and youth to improve their social competencies, communications skills, and decision-making skills. These results are significant both for program managers and for the parents and caregivers of the children.

Implications for Parents and Caregivers

- Parents and caregivers should encourage and facilitate children’s participation in the LIFE Program, since it is effective in helping children improve their life skills.
- The children’s greatest strengths relate to self esteem and social competencies.
- The children’s greatest weaknesses relate to goal setting and communication.
- Because of the strong link between academics and self esteem, parents and caregivers should place extra emphasis on helping children succeed in school.

Implications for Program Managers

- The LIFE Program is meeting its objective of helping children and youth strengthen their life skills.
- The programming has been most effective in increasing children’s social competencies, communication skills, and decision-making skills.
- The LIFE program should continue to target communication skills, both because past programming has been effective and because scores are still low in this area.
- Additional programming is needed to improve goal setting and goal achievement.
- The program should provide parents and caregivers with effective tools and strategies for helping their children succeed in school.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDIX 1: PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL FOR LIFE PROGRAM

FAMILY and COMMUNITY RESOURCE PROGRAM

Program Logic Model for
Potosi Correctional Center (PCC)
Living Interactive Family Education Program (LIFE)

Inputs
Program is managed by a UOE 4-H specialist with assistance from a part-time youth education assistant and an HD specialist. It is supported by PCC staff, community volunteers, and the incarcerated fathers. Program uses PCC facilities and 4-H curricula (e.g., Family Times).

Activities
The LIFE program offers 4-H activities to incarcerated men and their children, grandchildren, or other young family members. Children are also enrolled in their local 4-H club.

Outputs
- Fathers and children meet to work on 4-H activities
- Fathers meet separately to plan 4-H activities

Initial Impacts
- Fathers and children experience more satisfying visits
- Fathers and children set and meet positive personal goals
- Fathers learn organizational and leadership skills, screening new entrants to program

Intermediate Impacts
- Fathers become a positive presence in children's lives
- Children build character and skills through 4-H programs
- Fathers experience the psychological benefits of parenting
- Fathers exercise greater self-control
- Fathers become positive leaders and role models within PCC

Long-Term Impacts
- Children's risk of incarceration is reduced
- Children's self-esteem and social skills are improved
- Children become better leaders and citizens
- Stress levels are reduced for fathers and prison workers
- Recidivism is reduced

http://outreach.missouri.edu/lcrp/evaluation.htm 9/12/01
APPENDIX 2: LIFE SKILLS CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS

Academics and learning
I read when I have free time.
I finish my school homework on time.
I like to learn new things at school.
I think that doing well in school is important.

Goal setting and goal achievement
I reach goals I have set for myself.
I plan ahead for things that need to be done.
I keep trying when things become difficult.
I set challenging goals for myself.

Decision making
Before I make a decision, I think about how it will affect me.
I say “no” to my friends if they want me to do something that is wrong.
Before I make a decision, I think about how it will affect other people.
I do things that are considered safe.

Problem solving
I think about different ways I can solve a problem before I decide.
I try to get the facts before I solve a problem.
When I have a problem, I try to figure out just what the problem is.
I try to think about what will happen if I solve a problem in different ways.

Communication
I look people in the eye when I talk with them.
I find it easy to get my point across.
I think about what I’m going to say before I speak.
I try to understand what the other person is saying before I answer them.

Social competencies
I can talk to my friends about personal things.
I try to solve problems without fighting.
I am good at cooperating with a team.
I think I am good at making and keeping friends.

Self esteem
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
I feel that I am at least as good as most other people my age.
I have a good attitude about myself.
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
The L.I.F.E. program was developed in 1999 by the University of Missouri Extension to increase children’s self-esteem and social skills through enhanced relationships with their incarcerated fathers.

On the second Saturday of every month, a small group of children, most between the ages of 11 and 14, make preparations to attend their regular 4-H Club meeting. Some are shy and withdrawn, others are noisy and boisterous, but they share one thing in common. They all have a father, grandfather, or some other significant man in their lives who is incarcerated. The 4-H meeting they attend is held at the Potosi Correctional Center, a state-run maximum security prison in Mineral Point, Missouri.

Typically, the children’s custodial parents take them out to Potosi for the meeting, sometimes traveling two to three hours. But for many of the children, there is no consistent parent or caregiver. One boy lived with his mother when the program first started, then moved in with his grandparents and is now living with an aunt. The stress of his transient life is often visible on his face and in his body language. Children who have a parent in prison can experience feelings of abandonment, isolation, sadness, and anger, all of which may lead to eating and sleeping...
disorders, lower academic performance, and disruptive behavior. They also have an increased likelihood of being imprisoned themselves at some point in their lives.

Visiting hours at Potosi are 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Most of the families come and spend the day. When they arrive they must submit to the prison’s various security measures. Then they enter the traditional visiting room which is supervised by guards who watch every move the offenders make. The visitors are allowed one hug or kiss and then the children sit at a table across from their fathers who are required to keep their hands in full view at all times.

At 11:00 AM the 4-H staff arrive and security guards escort the group into a different visiting room that is open and more relaxed. Things start off slowly, allowing for some free time for children and fathers to hug, play around a little and get reconnected. Then the formal meeting begins and runs until 2:00 PM. Every meeting begins with the Pledge of Allegiance, the 4-H Pledge, followed by the Club song and a short business meeting. After that, the children, their fathers, and other caregivers participate in: 1) educational activities that the fathers refer to as life lessons; 2) a craft project that families work on together and that the children can take home with them; and 3) a physical challenge activity focused on some positive goal, like team-building.
As the following quotes demonstrate, parents have reacted to the program very favorably:

“The situation in the [traditional] visiting room is very structured and very restricted. [The L.I.F.E. program] is a chance for my husband and his grandson to interact better and to actually be a family together.”

Edna Harden, Step-Grandmother

“I don’t want my son to think that I don’t love him—and I know the only way to really express it is to spend a little quality time with him—to share some moments together.”

Joe Powell, Father, L.I.F.E. Charter Member

“Some of the visiting room rules are lifted and we’re allowed to do things that we normally wouldn’t do on a regular visit—such as throw a ball, wrestle, horseplay—things that a father normally does with his kids. It also gives you a chance to get to know your kids better and to help them to try and not make the same mistakes that you did and maybe wind up in a place like this.”

Scott Fox, Father, L.I.F.E. Charter Member

**Key Components**

**4-H Activities:** Youth attend monthly meetings with their fathers and other adult caregivers in a comfortable visitation atmosphere that is conducive to positive physical and verbal interaction. During these sessions, children and their fathers work together on traditional 4-H club activities such as arts and crafts projects and other curricula-based activities focusing on topics such as conflict resolution, substance abuse resistance, teamwork, and character development.

**Parenting Skills Classes:** All fathers in the program attend monthly classes designed to help them become a positive influence in their children’s lives. Classes focus on such areas as communication, anger management, teamwork and positive discipline. The fathers, who have played a major role in designing the format of the program, participate in an additional meeting every month to plan upcoming program activities and help determine policies such as membership requirements. The fact that the fathers participate in planning the 4-H meeting day is one of the most significant features of the program. Most enhanced visitation programs are planned by prison staff.
According to 4-H Youth Specialist Lynna Lawson, it’s the simple fact that her organization is running a 4-H program in a prison. 4-H believes that their youth programs should be available to all young people. This includes children of incarcerated parents, a population often overlooked or completely forgotten. It has taken a lot of coordination with the Potosi Correctional Center staff to get restrictions lifted and identify fathers appropriate for the program. This was new territory for 4-H staff and there has been some controversy as to whether prison is an appropriate venue for a 4-H program. As a result of many meetings with key stakeholders, much of the opposition has faded. The L.I.F.E. program has helped people, both inside and outside the 4-H program, to see youth with incarcerated family members as deserving of services. Once participants get into their specially designated space at Potosi and the L.I.F.E. program actually begins, it looks no different from many other 4-H programs.

The overall goals of the program are:

- To help children and youth successfully overcome some of the challenges of parental incarceration such as feelings of abandonment, isolation, sadness, and anger, all of which may lead to eating and sleeping disorders, lower academic performance, and disruptive behavior.

- To promote a strong, healthy, and nurturing family environment for children of incarcerated parents, while helping the parents become positive role models and mentors.
Anticipated long-term outcomes for youth:

- Improving children’s self-esteem and social skills.
- Reducing their sense of isolation.
- Helping them stay in school longer.
- Helping them maintain long-term relationships with their fathers.
- Helping them become leaders and better citizens.
- Reducing their risk of incarceration.

The evaluation of the L.I.F.E. program was conducted by Dr. Elizabeth Dunn and sponsored by the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Project at the University of Missouri funded by CSREES, USDA. The research design included five components: 1) a literature review of the impact of enhanced visitation programs; 2) a Program Logic Model; 3) an output tracking system; 4) a formal focus group involving the fathers; and 5) a life skills survey administered at two points in time: July 2002 and January 2003. The life skills survey, which was adapted from several existing questionnaires, was designed to assess participants’ skills in seven categories—academics and learning, communication, decision making, goal setting and goal achievement, problem solving, self-esteem, and social competencies.

The Program Logic Model—developed jointly by program staff, participants, community stakeholders, and the program evaluators—lists the inputs, activities, and outputs of the program, and illustrates how L.I.F.E.’s design is expected to lead to program results. The output tracking system documents which program activities have taken place, who attended, and so on.
Youths’ scores on the life skills survey increased over time. The scores in the July 2002 round of the assessment provide a baseline picture of how the participants rated themselves in key life skills areas. The average total score for the sample was only 94 out of a possible 140 points. This indicates that, on average, respondents did not rate themselves highly in a number of skills areas. By January 2003 the average score on the life skills survey had increased to 105 out of a possible 140 points. The most significant gains were in the areas of social competencies, communication, and decision-making.

L.I.F.E. program staff have observed that many of the club members participating in the program no longer see their father as a stranger and are more likely to have a meaningful parent/child relationship with him—including being willing to take direction from him. The children also feel much less isolated; they know they aren’t alone, and they are making ongoing friendships with other children in the same situation.

In the focus groups, fathers or other significant men in their lives reported that they had observed evidence of the following outcomes:

- More satisfying relationships with their children, through the development of mutual respect and working side by side on projects and activities.
- Strengthened lines of communication among their children, the caregivers and themselves.
- A sense of family unity.
- The development of important life skills in their children, including leadership, empathy, and self-control.
- Improvement in their children’s behavior and academic performance.

Given the limited time frame of this program, the researchers were unable to determine any long-term outcomes. Instead, they looked carefully at the results of other evaluations and felt that it was reasonable to assume they would find similar outcomes in the L.I.F.E. program. The research shows that children who have healthy relationships with their
incarcerated parents avoid some of the negative effects of separation, resulting in happier, more successful, better-adjusted lives. They score higher on measures of well-being, intelligence, and emotional and behavioral measures.

**Program Tips**

Be prepared for the frustration that goes along with implementing a program in a prison. In this case, the Missouri Department of Corrections takes considerable time to make decisions and their primary concern is security. Moreover, in the five years that L.I.F.E. has been operating, there have been four different superintendents and the guidelines have changed many times. For example, after several years of providing refreshments for the program, staff were told they could no longer bring in food. Specific guidelines and policies will vary from state to state and institution to institution. Patience and perseverance are required to make such an innovative program work.

Be flexible. 4-H staff had many original ideas about program implementation that they have had to abandon along the way. For example, they had planned to include only the youth and fathers in the actual 4-H session and give the caregivers their own separate meeting. But the caregivers resisted this model, feeling that they would be missing out on the fun and family time.

Expect some opposition. Have a plan in place to educate your own organization, the community, club members and their families. Build time into the early stages of your program implementation schedule for this process. 4-H staff began designing L.I.F.E. in November 1999 and the first session didn’t take place until the following March.

Know your audience. The children of incarcerated parents are likely to have both problems and a lot of strengths. There is a burden of shame that they and their families carry and this is not something they like to talk about. It may take a little while to get them to open up and participate, because they often feel vulnerable. Staff members need to work hard to build trust.

It can be intimidating to walk into a correctional center, especially in the beginning; but once you get to know the offenders, the security guards and the staff, it gets much easier. Most institutions offer an orientation to educate volunteers and the staffs of outside agencies about security guidelines—including what can and cannot be brought into the facility—and tips for interacting with the offenders.
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE PROGRAM

Program Logic Model for

Potosi Correctional Center (PCC)
Living Interactive Family Education Program (L.I.F.E.)

Program is managed by a UOC 4-H specialist with assistance from a part-time youth education assistant and an HD specialist. It is supported by PCC staff, community volunteers, and the incarcerated fathers. Program uses PCC facilities and 4-H curricula (e.g., Family Times).

The L.I.F.E. program offers 4-H activities to incarcerated men and their children, grandchildren, or other young family members. Children are also enrolled in their local 4-H club.

Fathers and children meet to work on 4-H activities.
Fathers meet separately to plan 4-H activities.
Fathers learn organizational and leadership skills, screening new entrants to program.

Fathers and children experience more satisfying visits.
Fathers and children set and meet positive personal goals.

Fathers become a positive presence in children’s lives.
Children build character and skills through 4-H programs.
Fathers experience the psychological benefits of parenting.
Fathers exercise greater self-control.
Fathers become positive leaders and role models within PCC.

Children’s risk of incarceration is reduced.
Children’s self-esteem and social skills are improved.
Children become better leaders and citizens.
Stress levels are reduced for fathers and prison workers.
Recidivism is reduced.

Children’s sense of isolation is reduced.
Children stay in school longer.
Children and fathers maintain long-term relationships.

http://outreach.missouri.edu/fcrp/evaluation.htm
4-H LIFE Constitution and By-Laws
Potosi Correctional Center

Article I

Name and Location
A. The name and location of this organization shall be: "Living Interactive Family Education". The location will be at the Potosi Correctional Center, located at: 11593 State Highway O, Mineral Point, Missouri 63660-9660.

B. The principle office of the organization shall be located within the confinement of the Potosi Correctional Center, and under the supervision of the Institutional Activities Coordinator (I.A.C.).

C. The organization shall function within the guidelines as set forth and consistent with the Constitution and By-Laws of the organization, within the confinement of the Missouri Department of Correction’s Policies and Procedures.

Article II

Purpose
A. To provide a supportive and positive learning environment for incarcerated fathers /stepfathers/grandfathers and their child(ren) and families within the framework of the National 4-H organization. It is the aim of the L.I.F.E. organization, that working together on various 4-H projects will be a positive influence on our child(ren) and will assist all those involved in becoming better family members.

B. This 4-H club is about learning, helping others, becoming better persons, and having fun. The 4-H program is focused on the family as well as the child, and results in success because parents and their children work together. The program is designed to strengthen families that face unique problems due to incarceration of a parent. In addition to the 4-H clubs this program will help offenders and the child’s mother/stepmother/grandmother work together to provide a healthy, nurturing, happy family 4-H LIFE for their child(ren).

C. Provide members with instruction, educational materials and opportunities, which will give them parenting skills and experience to help them have a positive and improved relationship with their children.

D. Encourage members to work constructively together to complete 4-H projects, develop leadership skills and become more community service oriented. Help members to become persons of good character, live the example of the 4-H motto and to become positive influences in the lives of their children and loved ones. In order to carry out this mission, this club shall focus on:

HEAD: Clearer thinking, problem solving, decision-making, critical thinking skills, and visionary leadership. Knowledge that is useful throughout 4-H LIFE.
HEART: Greater loyalty, strong personal values, positive self-concept, productive family and peer relationships, and citizenship.
HANDS: Larger service, workforce preparedness, useful skills, science and technology, literacy, and community service.
HEALTH Better living, healthy personal 4-H LIFEstyles, promoting environmental stewardship, creating communities that are safe and nurturing for youth and their families.

Article III

Membership Qualifications

Admission
A. There shall be a three (3) person Screening Committee, composed of two (2) members who are not officers. The third member of this committee shall be the I.A.C., or designee who will serve as the Chairperson of this committee.

B. The offender must appear before the Screening Committee and be accepted as a prospective member.

C. Membership shall be restricted to incarcerated fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers at P.C.C., their children and grandchildren ages 4-19, and their legal guardian(s). Membership will no longer be restricted to offenders listed in Article III Section C, but shall include incarcerated men who have a significant role model relationship with nieces, nephews & other close relatives between the ages of 4 & 19 & their legal guardian(s).

D. Limited exceptions shall be made in special circumstances where a non-parent will be beneficial to the organization. Such an exception shall constitute a 2/3 majority vote by organization membership, and final approval by the I.A.C. and the Associate Superintendent.

Offender Membership
A. The offender applying for membership shall not have any sexual convictions.

B. Total membership shall not exceed 20 members. Any member located within the General Population of the institution shall be eligible for membership provided that person meets the requirements under the sections "Admission" and "Offender Membership":

1. Application for membership shall be completed on a standardized application form provided by the I.A.C. or designee.
2. The offender’s institutional record must be without any serious violations. Prior to submitting a membership application an offender must be free from a minor violation for 120 days, and 1 year for a major violation.
3. Every member of the organization must maintain a 4-H LIFEstyle free of drugs. If a member has a history of alcohol or substance abuse, they must complete, or be actively involved in a substance abuse programs for at least six months prior to acceptance. These programs may include, but are not limited to, AA/NA and Substance Abuse Program. Written proof must be provided.
4. The offender must be approved by the Executive Committee and the entire membership by two thirds (2/3) vote before becoming a full member of the organization.
5. The organization will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, or disability.

**Membership Training**
A. All members must attend *monthly* scheduled family strengthening and parenting classes. Topics in this segment of the program include leadership training and will provide ongoing support as needed. Materials provided by the National 4-H Club Organization will help members organize and run meetings, plan fun activities for the club and evaluate the club’s progress.

B. Other topics will include communication skills, managing stress, setting goals, child self-care/self-esteem, understanding teenagers, ages and stages of children, positive guidance and discipline, raising responsible children and children of various educational backgrounds. Incarcerated parent members will attend the training sessions a minimum of 4 weeks or until the classes are complete, prior to visitation though the 4-H Program with the child(ren)/grandchild(ren).

C. There shall be a 90-day probationary period for new members of the 4-H organization. During that time the offender must agree with and support the primary goals and objectives as set forth in this organization’s Constitution and By-Laws, the Missouri Department of Corrections Policies and Procedures and attend all meetings.

**Fees and Dues**
A. All funds will be handled in accordance with 1S9-1.3 Organizational Funds Control.

B. The **Initiation fee** and annual dues for individual membership shall be $15.00, should 6 months or less remain in the calendar year the fee shall be $12.50. Such fee shall be payable when an offender’s application for membership has been considered and is accepted.

C. **Annual dues** for active members shall be **$5.00** per person per calendar year.

D. Fund-raising:
   1. The 4-H organization shall conduct one annual and one ongoing Fund-raising project.
   2. Members of the 4-H organization shall conduct Fund-raising and appreciation activities. An annual planner shall be submitted in November for the following year outlining planned activities, training, meetings and special events.

**Discipline**
A. Discipline may include counseling, re-training, suspension, and/or removal from the organization.

B. Infractions of policy will be dealt with immediately at the group level. Individuals who are unwilling to act in the best interest of the group shall be removed as determined by the I.A.C. Breaches of confidentiality or other unprofessional behavior, including serious violations,
drug violations, sex violations, or accumulation of violations, will not be tolerated. Members found to be in violation, will be dismissed from membership immediately and without exception.

C. The following conduct will result in immediate removal from the organization: a major conduct violation, inappropriate behavior during visits, and/or failure to attend club meetings or participate in a project with the member’s child (ren). Dues will not be refunded.

D. Any member disciplined, who is not satisfied with the decision, may appeal to the membership within ten (10) days, in writing. Should further appeal be necessary, it shall be submitted in writing within ten (10) days of the latest decision, to the I.A.C., who shall review the decision and make a recommendation, which may receive final review by the Associate Superintendent.

**Article IV**

**4-H Club Visit**
A. The organization members child(ren)/grandchild(ren)/stepchild(ren) and all legal guardians of said children must be on their approved, regular visiting list, pursuant to Institutional Policy. An offender will not be called out for the 4-H Club Visit unless their family members are present for participation.

B. The organization’s full membership and their child(ren)/grandchild(ren)/stepchild(ren) and their legal guardians, shall meet once a month, on a designated day, during non-visiting hours, in the P.C.C. visiting room, or at such places and times as may be designated by the P.C.C. Administration.

**Meetings**
A. Members shall hold Regular Meeting. All active offender members must attend all meetings unless excused because of sickness, court, work, or segregation pending investigation. Two consecutive unexcused absences, or repeated illegitimate absences, shall be grounds for disciplinary action, to be determined by the I.A.C.

B. Regular Meetings shall be held once a month, or as needed, at such hour and place as the I.A.C. shall designate.

C. Training Sessions will be scheduled weekly or until the course of training is completed.

D. Business Meetings shall be held once a month or as needed, at such hour and place as the Club’s Executive Committee, and I.A.C. shall designate.

E. There shall be a Planning Session of the Executive Committee and I.A.C. These meetings may be called by the Executive Committee and scheduled at such time and place as the I.A.C. designates.

F. Emergency meetings may be called at the discretion of the I.A.C.
Quorum and Voting
A. A majority of the active offenders membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business within the organization.

B. Each active offender member shall be entitled to one vote on any matter presented to the organization membership. No voting by proxy or absentee balloting shall be permitted.

C. An affirmative vote of two-thirds majority, at a duly held business meeting, is required to conduct the business of the P.C.C. 4-H L.I.F.E. organization.

D. Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall be the final authority on parliamentary procedure.

Article V

Elections
A. Elections shall be held annually.

B. The officers of this organization shall be the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Historian. These Five (5) shall constitute the Executive Committee.

C. Nominations for executive Officers shall be submitted by any active member during the first Membership meeting of the year.

D. The President shall appoint a three (3) person Election Committee to prepare and mail out ballots of qualified nominees to members, eligible to vote. All ballots must be returned no later than the 1st of January to the I.A.C., who will then forward the results to the Election Committee. The results will be kept secret until final voting is completed.

E. The final election vote will be held during the first week of January, by secret ballot of the organization Members.

F. New officers shall take office on January 15th, and shall serve for a term of one (1) year.

G. No person shall be eligible for, or elected as an Executive Officer of this organization who has not been a member in good standing for a minimum of six (6) months prior to the scheduled election (excluding the 60-day probationary status).

H. Officers may hold the same position for only two (2) consecutive terms.

I. If the President is not re-elected to a position on the Executive Committee, that person shall serve as an advisor to the Executive Committee. That person has no voting rights on the Executive Committee.
Removal of Officers and Members
Removal of officers & members will be by 2/3 vote of the Executive Committee, and 2/3 vote of the 4-H Club’s Membership.

Special Elections
A. Any vacancy of an officer’s position must be filled within a 30-day period, following the vacancy. The remaining officers will submit nominations from the active membership to fill the vacancy.

B. The member nominated must receive a 2/3 majority vote of the organization’s Membership.

Article VI

Duties of Officers

President
1. Shall preside over all meetings.
2. Shall appoint Committee Chairpersons, Members, and Special Committees not covered in this Constitution and By-Laws as approved by the Executive Committee and the P.C.C. Administration.
3. Shall supervise and direct the operators of the Club as set forth in the organizations Constitution and By-Laws, and the Missouri Department of Corrections Policies and Procedures.
4. Shall be responsible for the preparation of the annual calendar and shall communicate same to the I.A.C.

Vice-President
1. Shall preside in the absence of the President.
2. Shall assist the President and will be responsible for planning, development, public relations and training, and other duties as assigned by the President:

Secretary
1. Shall preside in the absence of the President and Vice-President.
2. Shall have custody of the Constitution and By-Laws, and shall be responsible for keeping all documents up to date and accurate.
3. Shall be responsible for keeping and maintaining accurate minutes of the Executive Committee and all Membership Meetings.
4. Shall maintain and control all appropriate files and records pertaining to this organization and its operations.
5. Shall be responsible for handling the general correspondence of this Organization.
6. Shall be responsible for supplying copies to the I.A.C. of minutes, files, records, etc., relating to this organization.

Treasurer
1. Shall work with the I.A.C. to keep all financial documents and account books up to date.
2. Shall be responsible for giving a financial report to the Executive Committee once a month.
3. Shall be responsible for coordinating all fund raising activities with the I.A.C.
4. Shall be responsible for ordering supplies for the organization, through the I.A.C.
5. Shall preside in the absence of the President, Vice-President, and Secretary.

**Historian**
1. Shall be responsible for keeping a record of the accomplishments and activities of the organization and its members.
2. Shall keep a Historian’s book, which tells the story of the organization, collect pictures and clippings about the organization and its members, prepare and keep the book in an organized manner.
3. Shall preside in the absence of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

**Article VII**

**Committees**
A. The *Standing Committee* of this organization shall be, but not limited to, the Executive, Program, Membership, Public Relations, Social, and Fund-raising.

B. The organization *Executive Committee* shall consist of the officers of the organization named in the Constitution, with the organization President serving as Chairman. The committee shall have charge of all Business and Administrative affairs of the organization and shall consider all matters concerning the welfare of the organization. All proposed actions of the committee shall be submitted to the organization membership at the next meeting for ratification.

C. The *Program Committee* shall have charge of formulating program ideas and agendas. This committee shall assist in the utilization of program and educational materials available from the National 4-H organization. The organization Vice-President shall be the Chairman of the committee.

D. The other *Standing Committees* shall have charge of the areas assigned to them by the Executive Committee. The Vice-President shall be de facto Chairman of the committees, although each committee may be appointed an Acting Chairman.

**Article VIII**

**Policy**
At no time shall this organization and its members adopt a policy or take any action in conflict with any policy or purpose of this organization’s Constitution and By-Laws, and/or the Missouri Department of Corrections Policies and Procedures.

**Article IX**

**Compensation**
A. Members and Officers of this organization shall serve the purpose as set out in the Constitution and By-Laws without any compensation. All expenses must be approved by the Executive Committee and the I.A.C. prior to expenditure.
Article X

Amendments
A. Amendments to this Constitution and By-Laws must be proposed in writing and given, or mailed, to the members thirty (30) days prior to the meeting at which they will be discussed.

B. Amendments will be adopted upon receiving a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present. Before implementation, the amendment must be approved by the I.A.C. and the Associate Superintendent.
Offender 4-H LIFE Membership Application
Potosi Correctional Center

Date____________________________

Name________________________________ DOC Number__________________________

Housing Unit______________________ Job Assignment__________________________

Date of Birth________________________ Grade Completed in School/GED__________

Offender’s relationship to children ________________________________

Name(s) and age(s) of children _____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Number of anticipated participants ________________________________

Would your child be able to attend 4-H meetings on a regular basis approximately one time per month, located in the PCC visiting room: _______yes _______no

Have you had any prior experience in 4-H? If so, please concisely elaborate on your involvement.__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

If you have any prior experience in any organization of this or other types, please list those organizations and your involvement.__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Write a few short paragraphs about 1.) Why would you like to join 4-H? 2.) How would it enhance your relationship with your child? 3.) What would you like to see this program provide for you and your child? (Use back or additional paper if needed).

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Permission for Family Contact
Potosi Correction Center

I give permission for University of Missouri Extension to contact my family regarding the 4-H LIFE program at the Potosi Correctional Center.

Name of child participating in 4-H _________________________________________________

This child lives with (name) ______________________________________________________

Relationship to child ____________________________________________________________

Street, City, Zip  _____________________________________________________________

Day Phone   ___________________________________________________________

Evening Phone  _____________________________________________________________

Email Address   _____________________________________________________________

Will this person participate in the 4-H program with the child? __Yes ___No

If no, provide the following information for the person who will participate in the 4-H program with the child.

Name   __________________________________________________________

Relationship to child ___________________________________________________________

Street, City, Zip  _____________________________________________________________

Day Phone   ___________________________________________________________

Evening Phone  _____________________________________________________________

Email Address   _____________________________________________________________

NOTE: All 4-H LIFE program participants must be on your approved visiting list.

Are there things such as transportation or medical concerns that would make it difficult for your child to participate in the 4-H LIFE program? __Yes ___No   If no, please explain.
# 4-H LIFE Program Expectations and Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My personal strengths are:</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>My family strengths are:</th>
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<tr>
<th>These are activities I would like to do as a family:</th>
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<tr>
<th>I would like to see these improvements in my family relationships:</th>
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<tr>
<th>What I want to get out of the program as a result of my participation:</th>
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</table>
In addition to 4-H project curricula, the curricula listed below were utilized for the Potosi 4-H LIFE program. 4-H project information can be found on the Missouri 4-H website at http://4h.missouri.edu/.

Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices Program
by MU Extension (1997)

*Building Strong Families* was developed to help families build strengths, face challenges, and make choices. The program covers 13 topics and uses hands-on activities to involve participants. *Building Strong Families* is based on research that family members can make significant changes in their behavior by focusing on strengths rather than on problems.

Contact Information
Lucy Schrader
Building Strong Families Program Coordinator
University of Missouri Extension
162 Stanley Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
Phone: 573-882-4071
Email: SchraderL@missouri.edu
Website: http://extension.missouri.edu/bsf/

Family Times
(no longer available from MU Extension)
by Trisha Day, Stephen Small, Ellen Fitzsimmons

*Family Times* is an activity book that allows families to take inventory of strengths and weaknesses to decide together what they want to accomplish and to work toward those goals.

Family Times was developed by 4-H Youth Development and Family Living Education Programs, University of Wisconsin Extension and published by Wisconsin Clearinghouse.

Tackling the Tough Skills
by Rosilee Trotta, LCSW

The *Tackling the Tough Skills* curriculum includes 218 humorously illustrated pages 76 of which educators may copy and use as overheads or handouts. The curriculum was originally designed to help individuals transition from welfare to work. However, it can be used with a wide variety of audiences. While the curriculum builds from one component to the next, educators also may select individual sections or exercises to supplement other training materials. The curriculum encourages original, highly interactive group learning experiences. It provides direction for original role-plays and discussions and offers overheads, games and activity exercises to help motivate and challenge participants to get involved.

Contact Information
Rosilee Trotta
Urban Youth and Family Specialist
University of Missouri Extension
121 S. Meramec, Suite 501
St. Louis, MO 63105
Ph: 314-615-2911 or 314-615-7637
Fax: 314-615-8147
E-mail: TrottaR@missouri.edu

TRUE Colors
By Don Lowery

One popular method to explore temperament types is called True Colors™. Don Lowery developed the True Colors™ concept to help people understand and apply the research on personality and temperament assessment. True Colors™ uses colors as a metaphor to describe four major temperament types. The selection of the four colors was based on their psychological and physiological relevance to the particular temperament attributes. Through self-evaluation, individuals discover the color spectrum that describes their individual temperament. Although everyone contains elements of each of the four temperament types, a person's primary or first color will generally describe the core values, preferences and skills that are most significant to the person's self-esteem. Therefore, identifying and understanding our primary color is the key to the self-awareness.

For more information, visit the True Colors™ website at http://www.true-colors.com/TCSite1/index.htm
Missouri 4-H is….

4-H is a community of young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills.

4-H Motto
To make the best better

4-H Pledge
I pledge:
My HEAD to clearer thinking,
My HEART to greater loyalty,
My HANDS to larger service, and
My HEALTH to better living
for my club, my community, my country and my world.

4-H Slogan
Learn to do by doing

4-H Colors
The white in the 4-H flag symbolizes purity. The green, nature's most common color, represents life, springtime and youth.

4-H Club Creed
I believe in 4-H club work for the opportunity it will give me to become a useful citizen.

I believe in the training of my HEAD for the power it will give me to think, to plan, and to reason.

I believe in the training of my HEART for the nobleness it will give me to become kind, sympathetic and true.

I believe in the training of my HANDS for the dignity it will give me to be helpful, useful and skillful.

I believe in the training of my HEALTH for the strength it will give me to enjoy life, resist disease and work efficiently.

I believe in my country, my state, my community and in my responsibility for their development.

In all of these things, I believe, and I am willing to dedicate my efforts for their fulfillment.
# 4-H LIFE PROGRAM AGENDA - SAMPLE

**Activities upon Arrival and between other activities**

*Decorate name badges, scrapbooking and make cards for veterans

*Select officers for the day: President: ________________, Reporter ________________

and Song leader ______________________

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<tr>
<th>Place:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. 4-H Business Meeting (10 minutes)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Call to Order - “I now call this meeting to order.” (President)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pledges – “Will everyone stand while we do the American and 4-H pledges.” (See handouts, President/All)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Roll call - “Now we'll do roll call. Please stand and say your name and ……” (President, All)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Old Business - “We will now hear from __________(Reporter) who will tell us what happened at last month’s 4-H meeting.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “Last month we made rain sticks, did a mud experiment and ……” (Reporter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New Business and Announcements (President)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “Today’s Projects/Activities will include….” (See # 3 below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “Now _____________________________(name), our song leader, will lead us in singing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Today’s song is called_____________________________________________________. (Song leader)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Is there anyone who had a birthday this month? If yes, sing birthday song to ________________, ________________, ________________, ________________ (Song leader).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “This is the end of our 4-H business meeting.” (President)</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. Refreshments</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>3. Projects/Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Patriotic community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gardening project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flag-folding and Memorial Day activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Story time/reading activity</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>4. Wrap-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrations (All or a sampling for each project made)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group discussion and decision-making if needed (4-H LIFE staff or volunteers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thank all volunteers (4-H LIFE staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “This is the end of our 4-H club meeting. Thank you for coming!” (President).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family Activities Used at Potosi

Family Time

Sharing
One meeting focused on sharing. Members created hand puppets from lunch bags using crayons, ribbon, yarn, stick glue, “googly eyes,” etc. At their organizational meeting, incarcerated parents had written a puppet skit that pointed out the positive aspects of sharing. They assigned parts to members, who performed the puppet show. After the show, the club discussed the life lesson and how it applies to their own lives.

Love and Appreciation
In one February meeting, the topic was love and appreciation. Members made Valentine's Day cards to express appreciation for the other members of their family. (This activity came from the Family Times Curriculum’s Affirmation and Caring section.)

Trust
One meeting focused on trust. Incarcerated fathers and their children played “pin the tail on the donkey” and took turns directing each other verbally. This activity illustrated trust building and generated a discussion of trust as an important foundation for family and other relationships.

Holiday Activities

Martin Luther King Day
In January, the meeting focused on “diversity and tolerance.” Members read excerpts from Martin Luther King Jr.’s speeches. Each family discussed what the speech meant to them and talked about how diversity and tolerance are important in society. They also discussed their feelings about Martin Luther King; whether we have achieved the changes he called for, etc. Members then wrote their own “dreams” and shared them with the other members of their family. The group shared some of the dreams and discussed them.

Easter
One meeting focused on creativity. The related activity tied the topic to the holiday through Easter egg decoration with incarcerated fathers working with their children to develop designs.

Mother's/Father’s Day
During meetings in the respective holiday months, members took turns sharing ways their mothers/fathers influenced their lives. Members then made Mother’s Day or Father’s Day cards to show their appreciation for their parents. Children and youth then read their cards to their mothers/fathers and discussed what their respective parent means to them. For Father’s Day, children and their fathers decorated t-shirts for each other using paints and markers.

Communication

Getting to Know You
Using a “How well do you know your parent or child?” activity from the Family Times curriculum, children and parents were asked a series of questions about each other, and they answered as they thought their parents/children would. Families compared their answers, then discussed how well they knew the
other members of their family unit (or how poorly they knew the members). Questions included favorites (music, food, classes, etc.), best friends, life experiences, strengths and weaknesses, etc. Discussion focused on differences and similarities, reasons for needing to know family members better, advantages of communicating with family members, etc. The objective of the exercise was to help children and their parents learn about each other’s interests, hobbies, and friends.

**Telephone**

To underscore the importance of listening skills as part of communication, the group sat in a circle and played the telephone game. To play, one person whispers a sentence into the next person’s ear. That person passes the message to the next person, and so on, until the message gets back to the person who made up the sentence. The group discussed any changes and identified where along the line the message changed. They also discussed the importance of listening and understanding in order to have effective communication.

**Teamwork**

**Hula Hoop Challenge**

Members split into two or three groups. Each group takes a turn and is timed during the challenge. Members of each group hold hands in a circle and may not let go during the exercise. Two members hold hands through the middle of a hula-hoop. Members must pass the hoop around the circle as fast as they can by squeezing through the hoop. If any hands come apart, the group must begin again. Each group has at least two turns so they can compare their own times to see if teamwork efforts improved. Groups compete against each other to spur competition and heighten the need for teamwork. After the exercise, members discuss what they learned in the exercise and talk about the need to work effectively with others.

**Water Race**

Children divide into teams and line up across the room from their assigned fathers. Fathers lie on their backs on the floor, holding an empty plastic cup on their forehead. Each child holds a plastic spoon. A caregiver for each team holds a cup of water. When the game starts, the children must scoop water into their spoons, walk to their fathers, and pour the water into the cup. At the end of a prescribed amount of time (usually only a minute or two), the team with the most water in the cup wins. The children and fathers love this game, as there is a lot of spillage onto the fathers’ faces.

**Trust/Following Directions**

**Obstacle Course**

Fathers and children pair up to guide each other verbally through an obstacle course. The course consists of pieces of construction paper randomly placed on the floor. Stepping on a paper immediately ends the turn. Each pair begins with the blindfolding of one partner, who is spun around three times. The other partner must guide the blindfolded partner through the obstacle course strictly with verbal directions. Meanwhile, the other members of the group call out directions in an attempt to confuse the blindfolded person and get him/her to step on a paper and be eliminated. This, along with discussion following completion of the exercise, is designed to show the importance of trusting one’s parents and the need to listen to what they say rather than to others who may not have one’s best interest at heart.
### Part I - FAMILY BINGO

**Directions:** Spend some time getting to know your own family. Ask one of your family members if the information in any square fits them. If yes, have them write their own initials (example, JS for John Smith) in that box. Then move on to another person in your family. You should have 8 sets of initials on your bingo sheet when finished. (If you have asked each of your family members, you can start over and try to fill all 8 boxes!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woke up before 7am today!</th>
<th>Favorite color is blue</th>
<th>Has played on a basketball team</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is over the age of 20</th>
<th>Likes to dance!</th>
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**FREE SPACE**

<table>
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<th>Has a nickname</th>
<th>Is under the age of 25</th>
<th>Loves to sing!</th>
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### Part II - NEW FRIEND BINGO

**Directions:** Spend some time meeting other people in the visiting room! Ask one person if the information in any square fits them. If yes, have them write their own initials (example, JS for John Smith) in that box. Then move on to another person. The goal is to have 8 different sets of initials on your bingo sheet when finished.

<table>
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<th>Woke up before 7am today!</th>
<th>Favorite color is green</th>
<th>Likes to swim</th>
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<tr>
<td>Does NOT like to swim</td>
<td>Favorite ice cream is chocolate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has played on a baseball or softball team once.</td>
<td>Have at least 3 brothers and/or sisters</td>
<td>Is under the age of 12</td>
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Appendix

Refer to 4-H LIFE website at http://extension.missouri.edu/4hlife/guide/

14. Missouri 4-H Youth Group Enrollment Form Y631

15. Missouri 4-H Member Enrollment Form Y630
Guidelines for 4-H Single Project Clubs

Gerry Snapp, 4-H Youth Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

The traditional club model for 4-H in Missouri and much of the Midwest is the classic “Community Club.” This 4-H club model is based on a monthly club meeting composed of three parts: business session, educational program, and recreation. Membership is normally from a fairly localized “community.” Members enroll in a variety of 4-H projects for which the club finds/provides leaders. Project meetings are not part of the monthly club meeting but are held at other times.

Some states organize their 4-H program around project clubs. These clubs are composed of members with the same interest…the same 4-H project. This model is an option in Missouri but seldom utilized. 4-H horse clubs are the most common example. It is important that “single project clubs” or “special interest groups” try to incorporate as many youth development traits as possible that make the Community Club model successful.

An ideal 4-H Single Project Club would consist of the following:

1. Regular Meetings
   - If not meeting monthly, require bi-monthly meetings or even quarterly meetings.
   - Club meetings would have a business and a program session.
   - The program should not be actual project instruction although it may be closely related to the project (e.g., it should not be archery lesson #2). Emphasis would be on educational programs supplemental to the “project.”
   - Some kind of fun should be incorporated into the meeting. Recreation/songs are optional depending on the ages and needs of the club members. Treats or snacks can be served.
   - Members are expected to give demonstrations or illustrated talks at club meetings and/or project meetings, just as in other 4-H Clubs.
   - The business session should follow parliamentary procedure and include whatever is necessary.

2. Club Officers (Youth)
   - A streamlined slate may be possible. With the president, vice president, secretary, reporter, and treasurer, there may be an option to combine offices (such as secretary/treasurer or secretary/reporter)
   - Project clubs may have “special” officer needs and may create specific officer positions.
   - Club officers should be expected to participate in the county 4-H officers training.
3. Other Requirements for Club and Club Members (Full Participation)
   - Community service project
   - Same requirements/obligations as other clubs for participation in county fundraising or county work assignments for fair, achievement day, committees, etc.
   - Same dues requirement as other 4-H club members

4. Privileges/Rights of the Project Club (Full Access)
   - Full participation privileges in events, contests, etc. Members should be able to and be expected to participate in county 4-H events (demonstration contests, fairs, public speaking, judging teams, recognition nights, etc.)
   - Full privileges for participation in regional and state events
   - Representation on County 4-H Council
   - Eligible to participate in county and state awards programs

5. Enrollment/Attendance/Completion Requirements
   - Flexibility is key.
   - The member may still be required to attend 50% of the meetings (or whatever is the county requirement). The club may only have four meetings per year, so the percentage is more relevant than a specific number of meetings.
   - Members may organize and meet for only a portion of the year, not year round.
   - The member enrollment deadline date should be dependent upon the club, not based on an absolute county deadline. (e.g., Jan. 1, Feb. 1, March 1, etc.)

Reconsider the fair exhibit requirement (that some counties have) for completion of the project. Some projects do not lend themselves to “making” something. If a member demonstrates skill or knowledge learned in that project that would be sufficient (e.g., participating in a county shooting event).
Date

Name, 4-H youth specialist
University of Missouri Extension
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Name,

A youth, Name, is currently enrolled as a member of the Name of Club 4-H Club that occurs at the Name Correctional Center on the date Saturday of each month in Name County. Name’s projects at present are: (list projects)

Name and his family have given us permission to provide contact information. Could someone from your county please contact Name’s family to give them your office location and any appropriate program information. In addition, would you please add Name to any mailing lists you or your county office have.

Name
Address
City, State Zip
Phone:
Email:

If you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you very much for helping to connect this family to county MU Extension programs in their area.

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Organization

Enclosure: Membership Form
Date

Caregiver
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Caregiver,

In each county of Missouri, there are 4-H youth programs available to you. 4-H programs are part of the University of Missouri Extension.

I wanted to send contact information for the 4-H youth specialist in your home county. Feel free to contact this person to find out about clubs, afterschool programs, camps, and conferences just for 4-H members like you. The 4-H youth specialist will be glad to talk with you and give you any information you need.

The youth specialist for Name of County is:

Name, 4-H youth specialist
University of Missouri Extension
Address
City, State Zip
Phone:
Email:

I am here to help, so please do not hesitate to contact me by phone number or e-mail email address.

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Organization

Enclosure: About University of Missouri Extension
What is University of Missouri Extension?
University of Missouri Extension, commonly called MU Extension, is the outreach arm of the University of Missouri. MU Extension has free or low-cost information and programs on many topics.

How can the University of Missouri Extension help me?
As a Missourian, you can sign up for programs that help:

- **Families**
  Families can find programs and materials in areas such as parenting, health, nutrition, divorce, aging, money matters, housing and more.

- **Youth**
  MU Extension offers 4-H youth development programs that give both youth and their caregivers support through fun events like 4-H club meetings, after-school programs, camps and computer labs. The activities are fun and interesting for youth.

- **Job Skills**
  Job resumes and interviews can be hard. Extension can help build basic skills needed for getting and moving up in a job.

- **Our Land, Air and Water**
  Information is available on just about anything dealing with the earth on which we live, including how it produces food for us and how we can protect it.

If you want help finding what you need, call your local MU Extension office. There is one in nearly every Missouri county!

Extension directory at [http://extension.missouri.edu/directory/Places.aspx](http://extension.missouri.edu/directory/Places.aspx)

For information about programs for children of offenders, go to: [http://extension.missouri.edu/4hlife/](http://extension.missouri.edu/4hlife/)
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<td>503 E. Northtown Road</td>
<td>Kirksville, Mo 63501</td>
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<td>Savannah, Mo 64485</td>
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<td>201 Highway 136 E.</td>
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<td>Barry</td>
<td>700 Main, Suite 4</td>
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<td>801 East 12th Street</td>
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<td>Camdenton, Mo 65020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelby</td>
<td>106 E., 3rd St., P.O. Box 230</td>
<td>Shelbyville, 63469</td>
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<td>St. Charles</td>
<td>260 Brown Road Rd</td>
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<td>Wright</td>
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Steps to become a Volunteer in Corrections (VIC)

1. Complete a Volunteer/Intern Application from the Department of Corrections. In the section that asks why you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please provide information on a specific service that you can provide. Please specify which Institution or Probation and Parole Office you are applying to. Forms are available at www.doc.mo.gov/division/hservice/intern.htm.

2. If you will be representing an organization or religion, please include a letter of reference from an official in that organization or religion with the Application. A Department Chaplain will be involved in the interview of Religious Volunteers and will determine if there is a Religious Volunteer position available.

3. Send the completed Application and reference letter, if applicable, to the Institutional Activity Coordinator (IAC) at the institution or the Volunteer Coordinator at the Probation and Parole Office where you want to volunteer. Contact information for the institutions is located on the Department website at www.doc.mo.gov/division/adult/address.htm. Contact information for the Probation and Parole Offices is located on the Department website at www.doc.mo.gov/division/prob/ppdist.htm.

4. The Institutional Activity Coordinator or Volunteer Coordinator will review your application, conduct a background check, interview you, complete a drug screening and provide you with information and a form for Tuberculosis screening.

5. Following your interview, if approved, you will be placed on the schedule to attend a one day volunteer training at one of the Department’s Training Academy facilities located at Jefferson City, St. Joseph, or Park Hills. You will not be admitted to the training unless you have been scheduled in advance for the training by the IAC or Volunteer Coordinator.

6. After successfully completing the training and the TB screening, you will be issued a VIC Identification card and provided an orientation to the facility.

7. Welcome to being a Volunteer in Corrections (VIC). We appreciate your willingness to assist in meeting the Department’s mission and look forward to working together to provide services to the individuals whom the Department supervises. You will be expected to provide services during the year as scheduled and to remain compliant with annual TB testing, drug screening as requested, and 6 hours per year in-service training.

Questions about Volunteering with the Department of Corrections can be directed to Melissa Massman, Supervisor of Volunteer Services, 2729 Plaza Dr., Jefferson City, MO 65102, (573) 526-6491 or Melissa.Massman@doc.mo.gov.
Are you looking for a meaningful volunteer experience?  
Do you want to build your resume with professional training and “real life” experience?

Look No Further!
University of Missouri (MU) Extension is seeking volunteers for the award-winning 4-H LIFE Program, a family strengthening program that takes place in Missouri correctional centers. Current locations are located in Chillicothe, Potosi and Vandalia.

Volunteer assistance is needed to:

- Co-lead 1 hour parenting workshops with MU Extension staff.
- Assist qualified incarcerated parents and MU Extension staff in planning and implementing fun activities (e.g., crafts, gardening, team-building skills) during family visits.
- Provide caregivers with helpful community social and human service information (online).

Qualifications

- Sincere desire to help children of qualified incarcerated parents and their family members.
- Willingness and qualifications to become a Volunteer in Corrections (VIC).
- Ability to drive to the correctional center of your choice (mileage reimbursement provided).

Benefits

- Real life experience working with underserved families from around the state.
- Volunteer in Corrections training provided by the Department of Corrections at no cost.
- University of Missouri Extension 4-H youth development volunteer training provided at no cost.

For more information contact:
Tammy Gillespie, Program Coordinator
828 Clark Hall, MU Campus  Phone: 573-882-3316
Email: gillespiet@missouri.edu
Web: http://extension.missouri.edu/4hlife/
ATTACHMENT A (page 1)

MO 931-0260 (3-03)

STATE OF MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
VISITING APPLICATION

Offender DOC # HU#

has submitted your name for consideration as a visitor. If you wish to be considered for visits with this offender, please complete this form and return it to the address listed above. The offender will be notified and will be responsible for notifying you of your visiting status. Do not visit until final approval is received. If you have any questions about completing this application, please contact the institution listed above. ALL QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED FOR APPROVAL TO VISIT.

NAME (LAST) (SUFFIX: Ex. Jr, Sr, II, III) (FIRST) (M) (MAIDEN) HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP CODE

DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH/DAY/YEAR) GENDER DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER

STATE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

RELATIONSHIP TO OFFENDER

☐ SPOUSE ☐ FATHER ☐ MOTHER ☐ SON ☐ DAUGHTER ☐ BROTHER ☐ SISTER ☐ GRANDFATHER ☐ GRANDMOTHER ☐ GRANDSON ☐ GRANDDAUGHTER ☐ STEP ☐ FOSTER ☐ IN-LAW (Please indicate if your relationship above is STEP FOSTER or IN-LAW)

☐ UNCLE ☐ AUNT ☐ COUSIN ☐ NEPHEW ☐ NIECE ☐ CLERGY/SPIRITUAL ADVISOR ☐ ATTORNEY ☐ LAW ENFORCEMENT ☐ PARALEGAL ☐ SOCIAL WORKER ☐ MEDIA ☐ OTHER

CUSTODIAN/LEGAL GUARDIAN OF OFFENDER'S CHILDREN ☐ FRIEND ☐ VOLUNTEER ☐ OTHER

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN FOUND GUILTY, OR PLED GUILTY, TO A CRIME? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Most Recent Conviction Date: Arrest Date: Sentence:

County AND State of Conviction: ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

DO YOU HAVE ANY CHARGES PENDING? County AND State: Arrest Date: Sentence:

☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

ARE YOU CURRENTLY UNDER PAROLE SUPERVISION? ☐ YES ☐ NO

ARE YOU CURRENTLY UNDER PROBATION SUPERVISION? ☐ YES ☐ NO TYPE: ☐ SIS ☐ SES

HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY BEEN UNDER PROBATION SUPERVISION? ☐ YES ☐ NO TYPE: ☐ SIS ☐ SES

HAVE YOU SERVED TIME IN A STATE OR FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Location: Start Date: End Date:

Type of Release:

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN EMPLOYED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Where: Job Title: Employment Begin Date: End Date:

HAVE YOU EVER WORKED AS A VOLUNTEER IN CORRECTIONS? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Where: Job Title: Employment Begin Date: End Date:

HAVE YOU WORKED AS A STUDENT INTERN IN CORRECTIONS? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Where: Job Title: Employment Begin Date: End Date:

HAVE YOU WORKED AS A CONTRACT EMPLOYEE FOR CORRECTIONS? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Where: Job Title: Employment Begin Date: End Date:

ARE YOU NOW ON AN OFFENDER'S VISITING LIST? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Other Offender's Name: Other Offender's DOC ID#: Other Offender's Location:

Your Relationship to Other Offender:

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ON ANOTHER OFFENDER'S VISITING LIST? ☐ YES ☐ NO (If yes, please explain below)

Other Offender's Name: Other Offender's DOC ID#: Other Offender's Location:

Your Relationship to Other Offender:

I AGREE TO COMPLY WITH ALL VISITING REGULATIONS, INCLUDING SEARCH. ☐ YES ☐ NO

By my signature, I declare that the above information is true. I understand that any misrepresentation in answering these questions may automatically result in the removal of my name from the offender's visiting list.

SIGNATURE DATE

NOTE Parent or guardian must sign below if the proposed visitor is under 18 years of age. Any visitor under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an adult who is on the approved visiting list.

SIGNATURE DATE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

☐ APPROVED ☐ DISAPPROVED NAME AND TITLE DATE

COMMENTS
## Background Check Results

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**IF INFORMATION DIFFERS FROM THE FRONT OF THIS APPLICATION, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING (SELECT ONE CHOICE FOR EACH)**

**CONVICTED OF A CRIME?**

| □ YES | □ NO | □ PENDING |

**CHARGES PENDING?**

| □ YES | □ NO |

**PAROLE/PROBATION?**

| □ PAROLE | □ PROBATION | □ NEITHER | □ BOTH |

**MULTIPLE CONVICTIONS?**

| □ YES | □ NO |

**MOST RECENT CONVICTION DATE**

**ARREST DATE**

**COUNTY**

**OFFENSE**

**SENTENCE**

**TIME IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION?**

| □ YES | □ NO (If yes, please explain below) |

**WHERE**

| START DATE | END DATE |

## Type of Release

| □ PAROLE | RELEASED ON PAROLE STATUS |
| □ PROBATION | RELEASED ON SHOCK PROBATION |
| □ DISCHARGED | DISCHARGED - SERVED SENTENCE |

**IF DOG EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER/INTERN/CONTRACT EMPLOYEE = YES**

**WHAT IS THE VISIT ELIGIBILITY DATE?**

**PROCESSED BY [OPERATOR]**

| DATE |
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### REASON FOR VISIT

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**MO 931-0276 (12-01)**

**DISTRIBUTION:** WHITE - INSTITUTION  CANARY - OFFENDER FILE
Why Maintain Relationships?

By Ann Adalist-Estrin

Adapted from How Can I Help?, published by the Osborne Association, Long Island, New York, used with permission.

Is prison visiting good for the child of a prisoner? Is it good for the parent in prison? Is it good for the family?

There is no one right answer for every situation or family. But there are many families and children that can benefit from maintaining family ties through the crises of incarceration.

Can contact with a parent in prison benefit children?

Each family situation is different. The potential benefit to children depends greatly on how much support they receive. There are many adults who are important in the lives of children of prisoners. Children can benefit when adults help with letter writing and phone calls. They can also benefit when these adults participate in preparing for and conducting visits.

Potential Benefits to Children

- **Correcting frightening images**
  What the child imagines about the incarcerated parent's condition and circumstances is likely to be much worse and more frightening than the reality. As depressing as a prison visiting room may be, it is far better that what many children imagine.

- **Talking face to face**
  Parents in prison can talk with their children about their crime and life behind bars in ways that can decrease the child’s guilt and feelings of responsibility. Parents in prison can help their children feel worthy and lovable.

- **Learning you are not alone**
  Seeing other children and families at prison visits helps families know their situation is not unique. There are people who understand.

- **Preparing for release**
  Maintaining contact through visits, phone and mail is also important to prepare the incarcerated parent to be re-united with the family upon release. Without contact, the child may experience the parent's return as an intrusion. The child may be confused when the newly released parent brings a change in parenting style and rules to an established routine in the family. This can be true whether or not the parent will live with the child.

- **Preventing termination of parental rights**
  For children placed in foster care because of parental incarceration, visits are important to avoid permanent placement. These visits assure children that their parents have not voluntarily abandoned them to strangers. In the lives of foster children, ongoing visiting creates continuity. Also, courts may be less inclined to terminate the rights of a parent who, while incarcerated, worked to provide parental support.
• Healing grief and loss

The pain of separation can overwhelm children in foster care and other children of prisoners. Maintaining the relationship between the child and the parent in prison is important to the child's adjustment and healing.

Can contact with family members behind bars benefit families?

Families can benefit from bridging the gap between jail and community. Families are complex systems. The absence of a part of the system has a powerful impact on its functioning. Family members in prison can be a vibrant part of the family if communication exists.

While prison limits the activities that a family member can perform, a prisoner can still fill an important role in family life as mother, father, spouse, partner, or sibling.

But families can only benefit from their relationship with an incarcerated member when and if they stay in communication.

Can contact with families benefit prisoners?

The family is probably this country's most valuable weapon in fighting crime. Prisoners who receive visitors, maintain family ties, and are released to a stable home environment are more likely to succeed in leading productive, crime-free lives.

What the child imagines about the incarcerated parent's condition and circumstances is likely to be much worse and more frightening than the reality. As depressing as a prison visiting room may be, it is far better than what many children imagine.

Prison inmates clearly benefit from family efforts to stay in touch. Families can provide an incentive for prisoners to grow, learn and change. Families can help prisoners stay in touch with what's going on in the world, easing their transition back to society. Some parole authorities see strong family ties as an indicator that a prisoner is better prepared for release.

Many parents in prison can contribute positively to a child's upbringing. Prisoners who have failed as citizens can succeed as parents. Prison can be an opportunity to become a better parent—more caring, concerned and informed.

Prison may not be the best place to improve one's parenting, but it has been done. Around the country, there is growing interest in starting and expanding programs to help prisoners learn the skills of parenting. The Directory of Programs at www.fcnetwork.org lists many examples.

There are several ways children can benefit from visits to their parents in prison.

There are many reasons for families separated by arrest and imprisonment to keep in touch. There are also many reasons that doing so is difficult.

Children of Prisoners Library pamphlets are designed to make the process a little easier. For more ideas on maintaining relationships, see CPL pamphlets 103, 105 and 107 and 201 – 204.
Sample Invitation Letter to Caregivers to Join 4-H LIFE

To: Caregiver Name

From: Name, Title

Date: Date

Subject: 4-H LIFE – an enhanced visitation opportunity

Do you and your young family members visit the Name Correctional Center? If you do, then here’s an opportunity to make visiting each month fun!

4-H LIFE is called an enhanced visit because it gives families in the visiting room a chance to have fun with their incarcerated family member through songs, laughter and activities for everyone! The best part is that the children take part in a 4-H Family/Club for boys and girls. The children visit with each other and with their incarcerated family member using fun activities. Children learn to speak in front of a group, to make positive decisions and to run a business meeting. As 4-H members, the children will also be able to participate in county and state 4-H clubs and events like summer camps.

The 4-H LIFE program provides the incarcerated family member with separate parenting classes and planning meetings to help prepare for the activities that take place during the visiting time.

This free program will only be successful if caregivers like you bring the children and/or grandchildren of your loved one to the visitation. Doesn’t this sound like a better way to spend visiting time?

The 4-H LIFE program needs your support. In return, the program can give you some extra help in your important role as caregiver!

If you want to be part of the 4-H LIFE program, please contact name at phone at number or by email at email address.
We need YOUR ideas to help us plan for the 4-H LIFE Family/Club at the Correctional Center. Being part of a 4-H club is a great way to learn about things that interest you and a great way to work with others and make friends.

Please check three (3) topics listed below that you would like to learn about.

- **Arts and Crafts** - Develop your creativity through many projects.
- **Child Development** - Learn about children and get your Red Cross Babysitting certification.
- **Gardening** - Grow your green thumb and knowledge of plants and flowers.
- **Healthy Living** - Learn how to get fit and make healthy food choices.
- **Horses** - Learn about horses, even if you do not have a horse of your own!
- **Leadership** - Learn how to make tough decisions, plan your future, and lead!
- **Public Speaking** - Squash your public speaking fears with fun activities.
- **Puppetry** - Create puppets, perform skits, and do cool sound effects.
- **Other:**

Name ____________________________________________________

Age_____ Town/City You Live In _______________________________

Telephone _________________________________________________

Parent or Guardian’s Name_____________________________________

Please return to the correctional center activities coordinator or mail to:

**Extension Agent, Address, City, State, Zip**
4-H LIFE Program Participant Recruitment and Eligibility Process

1.) 4-H LIFE staff or IAC gives program enrollment to potential participants if they meet criteria, including no sex-offenders, no child abuse or neglect charges, active visits with at least 1 approved child or family members ages 5-18, violation free for facility’s established period of time.

Yes

2.) 4-H LIFE Staff, IAC and caseworkers review program enrollment applications.

3.) 4-H LIFE Staff notify offender of all 4-H parenting skills classes, planning meetings and monthly 4-H Family/Club Meetings.

4.) 4-H LIFE Staff encourage offender to share local Extension resources with family.

5. 4-H LIFE Staff connect families with local Extension programs and other resources.

No

Stop. Refer offender to Institutional Activities Coordinator or caseworker.

4-H LIFE participants exit the program upon offender’s release or when the offender or family members no longer meet program criteria (See 1).
Sample of Monthly Memos to the Correctional Center  
(for visit & supply approval)

To: Name, Title, Correctional Center, Fax Number  
From: Name, Title, MU Extension  
Date: Date  
Subject: Interoffice Communication (IOC) Request for date

I am writing to let you know that ________________________________, volunteer in corrections, will be facilitating the 4-H LIFE family meeting on date. They will arrive at between time and time and leave between time and time.

They would like to request written approval to bring in the following items:
- Blank, plastic and cardstock nametag holders
- Handouts (e.g., sign in sheet)
- Pencils
- Scrapbooking supplies (foam letter, glue sticks, cardstock paper)
- Food items
  - Chicken strips
  - Various sauces for dipping chicken in
  - Fresh fruits and vegetables
  - Bread for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches
  - Peanut butter
  - Jelly
  - Individual bottled water and fruit juice

Please confirm approval of these requests.

Address  
City, State, Zip  
Fax:  
Phone:  
Email:

Thank you very much for your assistance!

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Preparation

- A 4-H Club agenda is handed out to all families.
- A sign in sheet is passed around for all to sign their first and last name.
- Youth are recruited to serve as 4-H Club officers for the duration of the meeting.
- Younger youth are recruited to hold the 4-H flag, American flag, and 4-H banners.
- All families gather in a designated place in the visiting room if necessary.

Meeting Called to Order

- The 4-H Club president calls the meeting to order (with a plastic gavel).
- All 4-H LIFE Family/Club participants, staff, volunteers and correctional center staff stand to do the Pledge of Allegiance.
- All families and 4-H LIFE staff say the 4-H Pledge, and a song or two (camp song, silly song or seasonal song).

Introductions and Roll Call

- The 4-H Club president asks everyone to introduce himself
- The 4-H Club secretary takes roll or checks off each name on a sign in sheet.
- The 4-H members introduce themselves and respond to a question provided by the president. Example: name something good that happened since the last 4-H LIFE Family/Club meeting

Announcements

- After everyone is introduced, 4-H LIFE staff, volunteers, youth, incarcerated parents, and caregivers make announcements or give updates.
- This is a great time to highlight birthdays for the month, upcoming 4-H camp and conference opportunities, thank you statements, etc.
Adjourn business meeting
The 4-H Club president adjourns the business meeting and the families begin working on 4-H projects or crafts led by the incarcerated parents.

Discussion/Educational Activities

- The incarcerated parents or volunteers lead this portion of the 4-H LIFE Family/Club meeting.

- Discussion and/or activities may be divided according to the ages of the children and/or available leadership for different age-appropriate activities. The activities usually focus on family relationships, communication skills or other topics (e.g. seasonal).

4-H Projects
Members work as a family unit on several different 4-H projects (e.g., scrapbooking, gardening) or family-oriented projects (e.g., making a family crest).

Snacks
4-H LIFE staff or volunteers provide healthy snacks, including beverages and, on occasion, a birthday cake or cupcakes.

Games
Families participate in games that encourage teamwork and communication.

Demonstrations

- The 4-H Club president calls for everyone’s attention.

- The 4-H LIFE staff member facilitates this portion of the meeting, asking several different youth and/or parent-child pairs to stand at the front of the room to share what they learned or enjoyed in one of the preceding activities.

Conclusion/Cleanup
The meeting concludes with closing announcements by the 4-H Club president and 4-H LIFE staff including reminders of future events and a request for the entire group to help with cleanup.

4-H LIFE Family/Club Meeting Adjourned
The 4-H Club president adjourns the meeting.
4-H LIFE Family/Club Meeting Reflection Survey

Month _____________ at ___________________ Correctional Center

Directions: Do NOT write your name on this. Think about the most recent 4-H LIFE Family/Club Meeting and write or draw images that reflect your personal thoughts about the meeting.

1. Overall, how did it go?

2. What worked well?

3. What did not work so well?

4. What should we change?
5. What did you learn about your children?

6. Did you practice leadership? If yes, what did you learn about yourself?

7. How can you/we apply what you have learned?
5. What did you learn about your children?

6. Did you practice leadership? If yes, what did you learn about yourself?

7. How can you/we apply what you have learned on the inside (while here)?

8. How can you apply what you have learned once you are released (at home)?
4-H LIFE RESOURCES
Available from the Missouri 4-H Center for Youth Development
Contact gillespiet@missouri.edu or 573-882-3316

4-H LIFE Program News Story - November 2004
Kit News Story - April 2005 (CD ROM)
Produced by Kent Faddis, Cooperative Media Group, University of Missouri Extension

The 4-H LIFE News Story features the 4-H LIFE Program at the Potosi Correctional Center and the Mail Kit story features a simple community service project to create kits containing writing materials for children of incarcerated parents.

The 4-H LIFE Program (DVD)
Filmed and produced by D.R. Lynes, Inc., funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation; 2006; 11 minutes, 7 seconds

The 4-H LIFE Program DVD was produced by the Annie E. Casey Foundation who sponsors the National 4-H Council Family Strengthening Award for innovative, exemplary and effective 4-H youth development programs that improve outcomes for rural, disadvantaged families sponsored. 4-H LIFE received this award in 2006.

Our Children: Kids of Convicts, Seeds to Success, Hero Packs, Island Academy (DVD available on Internet; downloadable in text format)
Produced by CSREES, Partners Video Magazine 18; 2006; 50 minutes, 21 seconds

4-H LIFE is featured by CSREES in this electronic magazine.

Prison Dads (VHS or DVD)
Produced by Lincoln University Cooperative Research and Extension; 2000; 27 minutes, 30 seconds

Prison Dads illustrates how incarcerated fathers handle parental relationships while serving their sentences. Seven dads tell their stories of how they, their spouses, and their children are coping with the problems associated with prison life.

Addressing the Needs of Children of Offenders: The 4-H LIFE Model (Article)
by Lawson, Lynna J.; Wilkerson, Robert C.; Gillespie, Tammy; Dunn, Elizabeth G.; Arbuckle, J. Gordon; Turner, L. Jo; Journal of Youth Development Volume 2, Number 2, Fall 2007 Article 0702PA002

http://www.nae4ha.org/directory/jyd/index.html
4-H LIFE RELATED WEBSITES

4-H LIFE Program
http://extension.missouri.edu/4hlife/

The 4-H LIFE Program website including a 4-H LIFE guide, mail kit community service project, program, evaluation documents and more.

Missouri 4-H
http://4h.missouri.edu/

The Missouri 4-H Center for Youth Development expansive website including volunteer resources, projects, events, research/evaluation and more.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

A Sentence of Their Own
http://www.asentenceoftheirown.com

* A Sentence of Their Own * is a documentary that chronicles a family’s annual visit to a New Hampshire State Prison.

Children of Incarcerated Parents
http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/00/notes/v7n2.pdf (PDF)

Summary report prepared by Charlene Wear Simmons, Ph.D. on children of incarcerated parents in California in 2000.

Children Left Behind
http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/pdfs/children_left_behind_guide.pdf (PDF)

Suggested Reading for
Children of Offenders and Their Families

Books


Dad’s in Prison by Sandra Cain, Margaret Speed, ISBN# 0-713-65094-x (A&C Black, Aug. 1999)

Everything You Need to Know When a Parent Is In Jail by Stephanie St. Pierre, ISBN# 0-823-91526-3 (Rosen Publishing Group)


The Same Stuff as Stars by Katherine Paterson, ISBN# 0-618-24744-0 (Clarion Books, Sept. 2002)


Suggested Reading for Parents or Caregivers

Books


Articles

*Family Ties During Imprisonment: Important to Whom and For What?* By Creasie Finney Hairston: (18 Journal of Sociology and Social Work. 87-104, 1991)  
[http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/familyconnections.pdf](http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/familyconnections.pdf)

[http://www.cwla.org/articles/cv0409mentoringcop.htm](http://www.cwla.org/articles/cv0409mentoringcop.htm)

[http://aff.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/6/2/9](http://aff.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/6/2/9)

*Mother in Prison: Research, Policies and Programs* by Barbara Bloom (Family & Corrections Network REPORT. Palmyra, Virginia, Issue 14, 1997).

*When the jailhouse is far from home: Kids with parents behind bars share the pain of incarceration* by Bernstein, Nell, (FAMMGRAM, Spring 2000.)  