



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

HAROLD W. CLARKE  
DIRECTOR

*Department of Corrections*

P. O. BOX 26963  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23261  
(804) 674-3000

September 5, 2019

Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Co-Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
P.O. Box 2  
Mount Solon, VA 22843

Delegate S. Chris Jones, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
P.O. Box 5059  
Suffolk, VA 23435

Brian Moran  
Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security  
P.O. Box 1475  
Richmond, VA 23218

Senator Thomas K. Norment, Jr., Co-Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
P.O. Box 6205  
Williamsburg, VA 23188

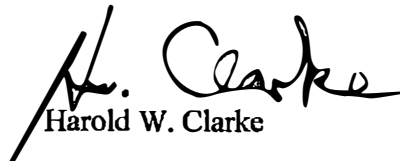
Dan Timberlake, Director  
Virginia Department of Planning and Budget  
1111 E. Broad St., Room 5040  
Richmond, VA 23219

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to the language in the 2019 Virginia Acts of Assembly, Item 391.K, attached is the Virginia Department of Corrections' report on services to promote family reintegration in Intensive Re-entry Programs.

Please contact me if you have questions or further requests.

Sincerely,

  
Harold W. Clarke

Enclosure

## Promoting Family Reintegration in Intensive Re-entry Programs

### Virginia Department of Corrections

September 4, 2019

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) fosters a healing environment that promotes family reintegration in intensive reentry programs and throughout the Department. The VADOC has numerous programs and services that have been developed purposefully to assist in the successful reintegration of offenders with their families and children. The VADOC is dedicated to this critical issue due to its direct impact on long term public safety. As an agency dedicated to helping people be better, the VADOC follows the notion that family reintegration contributes to the enhancement of the quality of life for returning citizens prior to release and once the returning citizen has transition to the community. There is a direct correlation between family reintegration and a decrease in recidivism, as well as crime victimization. Beyond the impact on public safety, the Department recognizes the positive impact on the lives of the spouses and most particularly, the offender's children. By reestablishing healthy family relationships, this can help prevent the next generation from following in their parent's footsteps into a life of criminal activity. The following describes the programs and curriculum VADOC has applied to the task of fostering successful family reintegration. Each of these programs offers elements that support a healthy family reunification.

**Parenting Curriculum:** Following an initiative in 2010 designed to expand family reintegration services for VADOC offenders and their families prior to reentry into the community, elements of that initiative have continued in the pilot facilities. Parenting programs and family reintegration activities at five VADOC facilities has continued: Chesterfield Women's Community Corrections Alternative Program CCAP (formally Detention and Diversion), Virginia Correctional Center for Women (VCCW), State Farm Correctional Complex (formally known as Deep Meadow Correctional Center), St. Brides Correctional Center, and Green Rock Correctional Center. These five sites offer diversity in terms of gender and security levels. The staff at male institutions was trained in the *Inside Out Dads* curriculum which is an evidence based curriculum. The female facilities have utilized the Mom's Inc. curriculum. All of the sites continue to offer classes to offenders on a voluntary basis. Both parenting curriculum allow for gender-specific parenting training that incorporates practice opportunities.

These programs are designed to enhance parent-child relationships and strengthen families. The goal is accomplished by educating and empowering the offender with new techniques for interacting with their children. While participating in the program, the offender learns basic parenting techniques, effective communication skills, realistic expectations of children, and alternative methods of discipline. The offenders are able to practice appropriate anger and stress management and how to reinforce positive behaviors and attributes to build their child's self-esteem.

Through the Building Family Bridges Second Chance Grant provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, curriculum research has been completed by VADOC Staff and the Department is currently establishing future training opportunities to expand the use of *Inside Out Dads* throughout state correctional facilities. In addition, *Partners in Parenting* has been selected as an evidence based curriculum for the female population and facilitation training is currently being developed.

**MILK (Mothers Inside Loving Kids):** Another parenting program currently being delivered at Fluvanna Correctional Center and the Virginia Correctional Center for Women is the MILK curriculum. In the MILK program, incarcerated female offenders meet regularly with guided staff/volunteer facilitation to discuss issues regarding their children, learn effective parenting and communication skills, and plan for special visits that are designed to be child-centric and family oriented. After completing the educational component, the participants are observed interacting with their children and provided feedback and coaching from staff and other participants. This program has operated in VADOC for many years and has strong support among the women who participate.

**Family Reunification Curriculum:** Since 2011, Family Reunification Seminars have continued to expand in urban and rural localities across the Commonwealth of Virginia. State probation districts have collaborated with various local stakeholders to educate, engage and empower families of offenders so they will be better prepared to support their loved ones as they return to the community. Unique approaches to addressing this need have included multi-agency events where partner agencies share resource information on topics like pre-employment services and healthcare options. This, along with the families learning about supervision expectations from the probation district, helps them become more informed in how to help and support the reentering offenders. It is also noted that recent family reunification seminars in the community have been held at churches, libraries and the offices of community partners. This change of venue has enhanced the level of engagement for the family members and corrections staff.

On the facility level, pre-release seminars continue to focus on the reentry process and programs that were provided to offenders in preparation for release. Also included in the seminars is information and resource material on the phases of transitioning and adjusting to release from incarceration, along with upcoming supervision requirements. A specific curriculum was developed for Intensive Reentry Facilities to utilize that enables them to meet the goal to engage family members in the reentry process. The program was developed by the late Dr. Joyce Byron, a renowned Family Therapist, and is delivered by DOC staff. Overall, the agency is working as resources allow incorporating families as a vital part of our reentry successes. Their efforts contribute to VADOC's efforts to promote lasting public safety and building stronger communities, as well as reduce generational patterns for crime.

**On-site Visitation and Video Visitation:** Each Intensive Reentry site allows for visitation of family members at predetermined days and times. Low cost transportation is provided by several non-profit organizations and enables families who cannot afford transportation to rural prisons with access to visiting their loved ones. Regular contact between offenders and their families is helpful in maintaining strong family connections. VADOC has also installed video visitation technology that allows an offender to both talk and see their family members for a small fee without requiring travel to the prison site. VADOC partners with a non-profit organization, AFOI (Assisting Families of Offenders), to facilitate family member access to video visitation in the community.

**Family Information Seminars:** These Seminars are held for family members at the Intensive Reentry Program sites or at Probation & Parole Districts to help family members understand more about reentry programming and issues that their incarcerated family member will encounter upon their return to the community. Often, offenders may not accurately share the details of their special

reentry programs with family members. Many family members have requested more information regarding the kinds of services their incarcerated family member has received while in the Intensive Reentry program and need a forum to ask and have their questions answered. The Family Information Seminars are unique in that they provide that opportunity for family members to meet directly with institutional and community staff working in reentry services.

**The Messages Project:** The Messages Project is an award-winning program designed to allow both male and female offenders to prepare a video-tape message for their children while they are in custody. The tape is sent home for the child to view, and may include the offender reading a special children's book or delivering a heartfelt message of encouragement to their child. In 2008, VADOC staff Carolyn LeCroy was honored as one of 10 International Heroes by CNN for her creation of the Messages Project and her contribution to offender family reintegration. The Messages Project now serves almost all of VADOC facilities.

**Circle of Parents Peer Groups:** Offenders who have completed parenting curriculum are excited to put new values and learning into practice. VADOC quickly realized the need for providing on-going parental education and support. The Circle of Parents Program is the gateway chosen to assist with that task. Circle of Parents is a nationwide program geared to provide peer-to-peer parenting groups that are based solely on the principles of family support, mutual self-help, shared ideas, and most importantly shared support. This program offers 92 lesson plans to parents, as well as a separate curriculum for their children. It generates a platform that will allow our population to discuss various challenges as a result of childrearing, while also gaining communication skills, leadership skills, parenting tips, coaching and motivation to maintain or reestablish relationships with their children. Groups are designed to ensure our families within Corrections are given a friendly, supportive environment led by parents, yet supported by the agency as a whole.

**VADOC Nursery Project:** VADOC is actively exploring the development of an Incarcerated Women and Child Nursery unit to be located at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women (VCCW) facility. Pregnant female offenders could deliver their baby and continue to provide parental care for up to 3 years post-delivery while living in the Nursery Project unit. VADOC is actively visiting other state DOCs who have adopted similar programs.

**Special Parenting Events:** All correctional facilities are encouraged to be innovative and resourceful, creating special parenting events throughout the year. For example, the Virginia Correctional Center for Women holds a Women Empowerment Seminar. This year the participants engaged in creating individual vision boards, practice Yoga and Zumba skills, and heard from motivational speakers. St. Brides Correctional Center held a Relationships Workshop where returning citizens and their significant heard words of wisdom from a local life coach. The couples also participated in activities that afforded them an opportunity to enhance their communication skills.

**Building Family Bridges Advisory Committee:** As a result of the Building Family Bridges Grant, VADOC developed an Advisory Committee established to enhance community collaboration regarding parenting services with the agency. The Advisory Committee meets bimonthly to review and suggest revisions on the protocols, procedures, and practices of VADOC pertaining to family reunification. The committee examines current practices within VADOC that impact family

engagement, facility security, child safety, parenting programs, and reentry planning as it applies to family connectivity. Committee members each bring their unique experiences and expertise to the committee. The committee consists of key staff from the three pilot DOC facilities, various DOC departmental units such as visitation, reentry services, programming, and victim services. An evaluator from the College of William & Mary helps to capture and assess the data. Additionally, community organizations such as Greater Richmond Trauma Informed Community Network, National Alliance of Mental Illness, Assisting Families of Inmates, and two former offenders who were incarcerated at VADOC all serve on the committee.

**Trauma Informed Care Practices and Training:** To ensure the VADOC is utilizing best practices, the agency has examined its current services and programs in relation to Trauma Informed Care. One example of this work is the incorporation of Helping Women Recover and Beyond Trauma curriculums added to the Cognitive Therapeutic Community Program at the Virginia Correctional Center for Women. These materials were developed by Dr. Stephanie Covington, a nation expert in the area of trauma informed care. The Department has also ensured that staff are trained in trauma informed care practices. A four hour SAMHSA Gains Center Training entitled, Being Trauma Informed, has been incorporated in all Basic Skills for Counselors, Probation and Parole Staff and in 2020 will be added to the Basic Skills for Correctional Officers. The Gender Responsive Women's Risk Needs Assessment tool and training (WRNA) also includes specific trauma informed training.

**Anger Management:** The Department continues to offer anger management and has transitioned to an evidence based curriculum. Aggression Alternative Skills is a cognitive based program offering an additional thirteen skills provided at the end of the Thinking for a Change curriculum that focus on appropriate ways to deal with aggression. We also offer Anger Management by SAMHSA for offenders who score high on the Negative Social Cognition scales as well as Mental Health and/or substance abuse on Compas. These programs assist offenders with skill development to strengthen family relationships and parenting.

**Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Substance Abuse (CBI-SA):** CBI-SA is a research-based program that provides a structured approach for treating substance abusing clients involved in the criminal justice system. This curriculum developed by the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, relies on a cognitive behavioral approach to teach participants strategies for avoiding substance abuse. Emphasis placed on skill building activities to assist with cognitive, social, emotional, and coping skill development. Understanding that the CBT approach is most effective with substance use clients involved in Corrections. The curriculum includes pretreatment (optional), motivational enhancement, cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, social skills, problem solving and relapse prevention. Specific modules offer skills that will enhance the family reintegration process. Such topics include finding support, communicating your needs, having a conversation and understanding the feelings of others.

**Making It On Supervision:** Seminars are offered throughout the state by Senior Reentry Probation Officers to ensure that returning citizens are prepared with the knowledge needed to be successful on probation and parole. These seminars review the conditions of probation and parole. In addition, the returning citizen is able to gather detailed information on their personal case regarding sentencing orders, fines, special conditions, etc. This collaboration prior to release is contributing to a decrease in anxiety for both the returning citizen and their family regarding the transition process.

**PREPS (Preventing Recidivism by Educating for Parole Success):** PREPS was developed by a former offender who experienced first-hand the challenges of reentry. The program is designed to help prepare the offender in multiple life areas for the reentry experience and stresses that will occur. One goal of the program is to expose offenders to the realities of readjustment and to prepare the offender for the risks involved in returning to society. Other program goals include: 1) increasing the offender's awareness of areas needing improvement, 2) Improving the offender's coping strategies and skills, and 3) assisting the offender in developing appropriate adaptive handling of daily stressors and situations that are likely to be encountered in the community. Much emphasis is placed on reentry into the household and how the relationships may be affected.

**Reentry Resource and Employment Fairs:** The purpose of a Reentry Resource and Employment Fair is to introduce returning offenders to community organizations and agencies that provide post-release assistance and potential job opportunities. Linkages with critical service providers and employment have been shown to be key components associated with successful reentry. Reentry Fairs also provide an opportunity for service providers and employers to understand reentry programming in corrections and become more amenable to providing returning citizens with post-release assistance and employment opportunities. Reentry Resource and Employment opportunities are held twice per year at each Intensive Reentry Program.

**Resources for Successful Living:** This program assists offenders with identifying and utilizing resources for successful reentry. The curriculum includes chapters on coping skills, family reunification, successful compliance with probation supervision, maintaining health, developing pro-social relationships, meeting special needs through community resources and developing reentry plans. The program offers opportunities for practicing through role playing typical situations that the offender will encounter that otherwise may be uncomfortable without prior practice.

**Road to Success:** The goal of the Road to Success is to provide re-entry and transitional services and programming to returning citizens who are currently at VADOC minimum security facilities including work centers and correctional units. The program requires that offenders near release complete 12 sessions of reentry programming during a four-month cycle. While work centers and filed units typically house offenders with a lower security risk, most still have significant gaps in knowledge and experience that create problems for them post-release.

The Road to Success curriculum seeks to target the specific needs of this population. VADOC uses materials developed by the Change Company that promote cognitive restructuring, problem solving skills, and job skills preparation. A Senior Reentry Probation Officer and an Offender Workforce Development Specialist each provide informational sessions such as "how to succeed on probation" and "how to create an effective resume and how to apply for work".

**Thinking for a Change:** The Thinking for a Change program is designed to teach offenders social skills, help them develop their problem solving strategies, and teach them appropriate cognitive restructuring techniques (which subsequently may impact risk factors). The goal is to decrease criminal thinking through cognitive behavioral changes and skill development in the group participation. The Thinking for a Change (T4C) curriculum is widely used in correctional settings across the country and is supported by the National Institute for Corrections (NIC) as an evidence-

based program. VADOC is also employing a new cognitive intervention, "Decision Points", which addresses cognitive restructuring and can be delivered in fewer sessions and in open entry groups.

**Veterans Programming:** This programming enables participants to become aware of Veteran benefits, instructing them on how to access programs, build self-esteem, improve relationships with family and others, and identify available resources upon release. It provides a support system for offenders with unique experiences, perspectives and needs as a result of their service in the U. S. military. Using a peer support group process with staff assistance, this program provides information and access to veteran services and benefits (i.e. medical and mental health, disability, housing, etc.). VADOC has forged closer ties with the Virginia Department of Veteran Services (DVS) as well as other Veteran support groups (DAV, American Legion, VFW, etc.) and agencies. These groups meet quarterly in a Veterans Stakeholders Meeting with DOC staff to address common issues and concerns. As a result, DVS staff and representative from other veteran agencies provide onsite services to all VADOC institutions meeting with incarcerated veterans and assisting them in benefit applications. This year VADOC has hired a Veteran Programs Manager to oversee VADOC veteran concerns. In addition, a Veteran Advocate Position will be filled to enhance services for Veterans specifically surrounding Veteran Benefits.

**Healthy Relationships:** The goals of this curriculum are to teach offenders to stop their violence and prevent the reoccurrence of future violence. As such, offenders are taught to identify abusive behaviors, identify alternatives to violence, and explore the impact of violent and abusive behavior on intimate partners, children and others. The cognitive aspects of this program help to assist offenders in examining the beliefs they hold about violence so that this new awareness can begin to motivate change in behavior. This program was developed from the Virginia Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs (Responding to Male Violence against Women).

**Ready to Work:** To prepare returning citizens for the transition back to their communities and to assist them in securing employment, this group is offered to all offenders prior to release. The group offers skills building sessions focusing on interviewing, professional dress, work ethics, employment legalities, and additional workforce development areas. In this group, all participants are afforded an opportunity to develop a working resume and cover letter, along with mock interview sessions. In addition, the Federal Bonding Program is explained to the participants and they release from incarceration with a personal Federal Bonding Eligibility Letter. This group emphasizes the importance of workforce development and the financial responsibilities involved with caring for a family. Participants are eager to attend this group since it assists them with long lasting skills to financially support a family and contribute to their children's needs.

**Drive to Work:** The VADOC has piloted the Drive to Work Program which assists individuals in restoring their driving privileges. This program offers participants a second chance to restore a much needed privilege since driving is critical to independence and is needed when caring for a family. This drivers improvement course affords returning citizens a new opportunity which assists them with employment, family reintegration and community involvement.