4-H LIFE: A program for Children with Incarcerated Parents

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4-H Youth Development
Goals

Increase knowledge of 4-H LIFE program model & strategies used to strengthen the family unit in corrections, juvenile facilities and the community.

Opportunity to think of ways to apply existing programs with families impacted by incarceration.
What is the 4-H LIFE Program?

The 4-H LIFE (Living Interactive Family Education) Program is a holistic 4-H program designed to meet the unique needs of children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers.

It accomplishes its goals through volunteer mentors, extension faculty and community partners.
What is the Cooperative Extension System?
History of 4-H LIFE Program

• Started in Missouri in 2000
• National Recognition
• Exemplary Evaluation
• Replication in 5 states
• National 4-H Mentoring Program
• Started at Potosi Correctional Center March 2000
Benefits of 4-H LIFE

Children
• Build communication and leadership skills
• See incarcerated parent in positive role

Caregivers
• Benefit from positive interaction between child and incarcerated parent
• Learn from caregivers with similar concerns

Incarcerated parent
• Practice parenting skills
• Serve as role model in a safe and supportive environment
Components of 4-H LIFE

• Three integrated components
  – Parenting
    • Offender
  – Planning/leadership
    • Offender
  – 4-H family club meeting
    • Child
    • Caregiver
    • Offender
    • Volunteer mentors
4-H is non formal education

Experiential Learning

- Do
- Reflect
- Apply

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4-H is non formal education

Targeting Life Skills Model

Head
- Managing, Thinking

Heart
- Relating, Caring

Hands
- Giving, Working

Health
- Being, Living
Curricula used in 4-H LIFE

4-H Projects
- Life skills - Nutrition, Gardening, STEM
- Leadership Development - Communication, Decision Making, Teamwork

Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices
- Adult & Youth

Tackling the Tough Skills
- Adult & Teen

Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development

Supplemental
- Parenting From a Distance
- Five Love Languages
- Parenting from Prison
Helps qualified offenders:

- Become more responsible for understanding and meeting their child’s developmental needs
- Communicate and connect with their children as well as the caregivers raising the children
- Become a positive role model and mentor during 4-H family club meetings
Helps qualified offenders:

- Apply parenting concepts when planning the 4-H Family Club Meeting activities
- Learn how to work as a group in setting group goals
- Accept leadership responsibilities
- Reflect individually and collectively on the success and challenges of 4-H family club meeting activities
Structured, family-focused atmosphere and age appropriate 4-H activities lead to:

- Less stress before, during and after 4-H visits
- More positive interaction between all family members
- Closer child-parent bonds
4-H LIFE Program Volunteer Mentor Model

Correctional center mentor team
Community mentor team
• Extension faculty
• Community 4-H club volunteers
• 4-H LIFE community mentor
4-H LIFE in Juvenile Facilities

Buchanan County Academy, St. Joseph, Missouri
Challenges with 4-H LIFE at BCA

- Revolving door
- Background/experiences/baggage
- Lack of understanding of common conventions
- Lack of family support/participation
- Lack of family understanding
4-H LIFE Institutions

Missouri
- Potosi Correctional Center
- Farmington Correctional Center
- Women’s Eastern Reception & Diagnostic Correctional Center
- Missouri Eastern Correctional Center
- Chillicothe Correctional Center
- Buchanan County Academy
- Cass County Drug Court

Nation
- District of Columbia
- Louisiana
- Alabama
- New Hampshire
- Georgia
- West Virginia
Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Prisons

4-H LIFE listed as a parent education program in BOP

Challenges:
• Distance for travel
• Lack of understanding of family issues
• Changing climate in Washington, DC
Partnership Development

With families, offenders and children

Department of Corrections
University of Missouri Extension
Missouri 4-H Youth Development Program
Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Initiative
OJJDP
Bureau of Prisons

Families, offenders and children
Department of Corrections
Land Grant Universities
Cooperative Extension
4-H Youth Development Program

Community organizations
- Faith based
- Social service
- University departments
Evaluation of 4-H LIFE

Parental Incarceration
• discussion of problem, literature review, links to resources

Evaluation Tools & Results
• program logic model, information on methods and results, focus group research, life skills survey

Photos & Video Clips

https://extension.missouri.edu/4hlife/evaluation.aspx
Fostering family bonds during parental incarceration: intervention, research and findings

Tammy Gillespie, Dr. Joyce Arditti, Stephanie Schindler and Yanfang Yue
University of Missouri Extension - 4-H Center for Youth Development and Human Environmental Sciences Extension

Introduction
The University of Missouri (MU) Extension 4-H Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) Program is a family strengthening and support program for children who have an incarcerated parent. Children of offenders are six times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers.

Family study research
The 4-H LIFE Family Study was developed by:
- Dr. Joyce Arditti, 4-H LIFE consultant, VA Tech
- University of Missouri Extension’s 4-H LIFE program coordinator, faculty and staff
- Missouri Department of Corrections
- MU Campus Institutional Review Board

The mixed methods qualitative evaluation includes:
1. Two, in-depth interviews with four waves of female and male offenders (program and control groups).
2. Two, in-depth interviews with each of the offenders' caregivers (i.e., the primary adult raising the child most likely to visit the offender).
3. Parenting Stress Parenting Competence Social Support Quality of Prison visit

Preliminary impact
The 4-H LIFE Family study has just begun; therefore, analysis of findings and conclusions are not final. Important testimonials have come from the main 4-H LIFE collaborators – the corrections staff.

There appears to be a common theme: the 4-H LIFE Program is seen as an educational, family-focused program that equips incarcerated parents and their children with much needed communication skills and bonding opportunities.

I think the 4-H LIFE program is good at providing leadership training and parenting classes. They give offenders information that is visible to them inside and outside the prison. The program focuses on the family – it doesn’t focus on the offender. It helps them focus on relationships – the offender and the child, the offender and the caregiver – the triangle is there. It keeps the relationships in progression.

- Corrections Employee

4-H LIFE Program public value
By supporting MU Extension’s 4-H LIFE Program, children of offenders make healthier choices and get along better with others, thus saving taxpayers $6-$8 per child by breaking the tough cycle of intergenerational incarceration.

Over 97 percent of today’s offenders will be released into communities. Strengthening family ties during their incarceration increases the likelihood the offender will return to an intact family support network. The public also benefits through prevention of repeat incarceration cycles.

Includes $300 in federal delinquency costs and 4-H LIFE 4-H 만 8-10세 아이들 30주, 2007

Conclusion
MU Extension and the Missouri Department of Corrections will benefit from the 4-H LIFE Family Study as they will be seen as leaders in scientifically documenting the impact of family integration as an offender remedy outcome.

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University of Missouri Extension
• Continue evaluation of the impact of the program

• Provide a plan of implementation to be adapted by other correctional centers in

• Provide advice for other states who want to implement the program

• Expand e-mentoring
Wrap up

Questions?
Other resources
Thank you!