

Ministry with Families and Children of the Incarcerated

*Therefore, as we have opportunity,
let us do good to all people,
especially to those who belong to the family of believers.
~ Galatians 6:10*

Create a Healing Community Station of Hope

Healing Communities is an innovative approach to prison ministry and prisoner reentry that begins with the caring resources of the local congregation. For more information visit <http://healingcommunitiesusa.org>

1. Help the family of the prisoner

- a. Embrace each of them
- b. Seek out family members and let them know they are loved and support is available
- c. Be there each step of the legal process
- d. Provide materials to guide families how to cope with a loved one incarcerated
 - Family Guidebook
 - Help! My Child's Been Arrested. Now What?
 - Help! My Loved One is in Jail. Now What?
 - Sentenced. Now What?
- e. Meet their spiritual needs

2. Address the families' material needs

- a. Create a resource directory
- b. Provide for their basic needs (housing, food, clothing, etc.)
- c. Assist with legal fees
- d. Offer employment leads

3. Build a mentoring relationship with a family

- a. Use mentoring teams
- b. Identify needs and services available to the family
 - i. Childcare
 - ii. Support groups
 - iii. Counseling

4. Provide mentoring support to the children

- a. Work with the parent or caregiver
- b. Provide information helpful for caregivers
- c. Allow children to pursue areas they are skilled

5. Help families build or sustain a relationship with the prisoner

- a. Be patient with the family member until they are ready
- b. Assist with transportation needs to visit
- c. Assist with phone bills

6. Build a relationship with the prisoner

- a. Mentor the prisoner
- b. Assist with material and spiritual needs

7. Help the children of the parent who is incarcerated stay in touch with him or her

- a. Write letters, draw pictures
- b. Visit

8. Help prepare the family for the return home of their loved one (Read Coming Home!)

- a. Emotionally ready
- b. Relationally ready
- c. Physically ready
- d. Preparing the children
- e. Develop a covenant

Provide Volunteer and Mentor Training

Volunteers and mentors should receive training to work with families and children. Training can be obtained through Family and Corrections Network and mentor training through Amachi. Volunteers and mentors should be familiar with:

- Information on the impact of incarceration on children and families
- Family coping styles
- Strategies for providing information, support and counseling opportunities to children and their parents
- Fully understand the stages of reaction, and the typical feelings children experience when parents come home
- Caring for children of prisoners from different ages
- Bill of Rights for Children of the Incarcerated
- A list of resources that addresses the needs of the family (housing, food, transportation, employment, childcare, legal services, support groups, counseling, addiction treatment, etc.)
- How to create a plan for responding to the specific needs of the family both for the short-term and long-term.
- How to address their spiritual needs (Training through your church)

Recommended Readings

- Children of Prisoners Library - Families and Corrections Network at www.fcnetwork.org
- Institute for Prison Ministries
 - *Help! My Child has been Arrested. Now What?*
 - *Help! My Loved One is in Jail. Now What?*
 - *Sentenced. Now What?*
 - *Coming Home! A Guide for Those Receiving a Loved One Back from Prison or Jail*

Resources for Children

Psalm Twenty-Three Illustrated by Tim Ladwig, Erdmans Books.

You are Special by Max Lucado. Crossway books.

Where is God When I am Scared? Veggie Tales DVD