The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families

Jobs Not Jail: Alternatives to Incarceration for Low – Income, Noncustodial Parents
Benefits of Fathers

Researchers have found that displays of warmth and support from nonresident fathers were associated with lower levels of:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Delinquency
- Drug use among adolescents
Deadbeat or Dead-broke?

For most men, fulfilling their obligations to financially provide for their children is a powerful expectation. Given the relatively high rates of unemployment for African American (9.8%) and Latino (7.6%) men, their involvement with their families and successfully providing for them is often difficult.

A study by Duke University and University of Wisconsin (2006) found that fathers contributed to the support of their children if they had the means to do so. Incarceration, unemployment, and lack of resources were the primary explanations for low levels of child support payments.
In 1990, there were 9.5 million noncustodial fathers in the United States and 18 million children potentially eligible for child support. Only 46% reported that they paid child support. 23% of the fathers who did not pay child support had gross incomes below 130% of the poverty level for two consecutive months. 70% of the national child support debt is owed by noncustodial parents who have no quarterly earnings or who have annual earnings of less than $10,000. Only 4% of child support arrears are held by noncustodial parents with more than $40,000 in annual income.
Present Options to Incarceration

Work release
An option only if the inmate has both a job and an employer who is willing to complete extensive work-release paperwork.
It does not address the overcrowding issue.

Home detention
A less viable option for low-income fathers as these programs charge high monitoring fees to utilize their services but offer no employment or other services to the father. Most low-income fathers cannot meet these expenses for any period of time and are re-incarcerated within a few months.
Low-income fathers need support and jobs; not jail.
The Alternative to Incarceration Component of a Fatherhood Program is utilized by the Family Court and Child Support Enforcement to provide an alternative sentencing strategy for low-income fathers who are behind in the payment of child support. Fathers who are court ordered to attend a fatherhood program must work, must pay both their ongoing and debt related child support, and must attend a weekly support group on the core fatherhood curriculum for 24 weeks. Unlike jail, however, low-income fathers who have little education or job skills are also given the necessary support services to provide financially for their children well into the future.
Demographics of ATI Participants

78% African Americans
20% Caucasian
Median age 33 years*
40% had less than a high school education
Only 8% had formal schooling beyond high school
46% were unemployed upon entering the program
50% had never been married
21% were divorced
78% lived with their mothers
11% lived with at least one of their children
The median age of the participants’ children was 8 years
Core Services offered through the Fatherhood Programs

Responsible Fatherhood
Spiritual Development
Effective Communication
Job Readiness and Employment
Understanding Child Support and the Legal System
Financial Management
Parenting and Co-Parenting
Healthy Relationships
Men’s Health and Education
Referrals for Additional services on a Case-by-Case Basis
**Skills: Effective Communication**

Proper verbal and nonverbal communication

Active listening

Seeking feedback

Practicing effective communication with children, co-parent and employer (role-plays, scenarios, modeling, 1:1 counseling)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills: Job Readiness and Employment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job etiquette</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application completion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resume writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective decision-making (thinking through consequences)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Skills: Financial Management

Budgeting

Setting up a checking/savings account

How to balance a check book

How to keep a positive credit record
Skills: Parenting and Co-Parenting

Recognizing and responding to needs of child (based on developmental stage)
Building children’s self-esteem
Disciplining techniques
How to effectively handle common issues that arise as a co-parent
Creating a support network
Skills: Healthy Relationships

Different communication styles between men and women

Anger/Conflict management

Dealing with stress

Effective communication

Decision making
# Two Year Results of ATI Component

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># ATI PARTICIPANTS ENTERED:</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># ATI PARTICIPANTS CURRENTLY ACTIVE:</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># ATI PARTICIPANTS TERMINATED:</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># ATI PARTICIPANTS WHO IS/HAS COMPLIED:</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMOUNT OF CHILD SUPPORT ARREARS PAID BY ATI:</td>
<td>$177,905</td>
<td>$117,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># ATI PARTICIPANTS GRADUATED:</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMOUNT OF ONGOING CHILD SUPPORT PAID BY ATI:</td>
<td>$468,976</td>
<td>$479,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMOUNT OF GROSS WAGES EARNED BY ATI:</td>
<td>$3,142,965</td>
<td>$2,860,698</td>
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</table>
# Financial Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Savings</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost to operate 7 ATI components for 12 months</td>
<td>$ 575,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to operate 9 ATI components for 12 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>$ 585,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to incarcerate men for 6 months</td>
<td>$ 2,760,000</td>
<td>$ 3,360,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SAVINGS:</strong></td>
<td>$ 2,185,000</td>
<td>$ 2,775,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Financial Benefits

**Benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount 1</th>
<th>Amount 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total amount of child support paid: (arrears plus ongoing)</td>
<td>$ 646,881</td>
<td>$ 597,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total gross earnings of participants:</td>
<td>$ 3,142,965</td>
<td>$ 2,860,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL BENEFITS TO FAMILIES AND SOCIETY:</strong></td>
<td>$ 3,789,846</td>
<td>$ 3,458,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SAVINGS AND BENEFITS TO FAMILIES AND SOCIETY:</strong></td>
<td>$ 5,974,846</td>
<td>$ 6,233,307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“As administrative judge and speaking for the Family Court judges in Charleston County, we believe that the Father to Father Program in North Charleston has been an excellent program that has helped fathers consistently pay their child support in lieu of being incarcerated.”

Judge Judy Bridges McMahon
Family Court Judge
“In the past we tried just finding employment but quickly learned that almost all of these men have multiple issues. These programs are a great tool to help the Detention Center lower its population and reduce the recidivism rate. The goal of these programs is to empower these men by addressing their issues of unemployment or underemployment, substance abuse, court issues and parenting skills. By addressing all potential obstacles each inmate and their children face, each are given a more positive out-look for the future.”

Lt. B. Keyes
Head Officer Charleston County
Detention Center Work Camp
“I am convinced that this strategy of enforcing child support against very low-income people is the most effective strategy thus far. In fact, I have become a disciple of the program, and believe that it has provided much needed support for these low-income fathers that are ordered to pay support through child support enforcement.”

Larry McKeown
State Director
Department of Social Services
Child Support Enforcement