



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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

Incarceration, unemployment, and lack of resources were the primary explanations for low levels of child support payments.<sup>4</sup>



## ***Deadbeat or Dead-broke? (cont.)***

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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup>

Only 4% of child support arrears are held by noncustodial parents with more than \$40,000 in annual income.<sup>9</sup>



## ***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.



## *Alternative to Incarceration*

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)



## ***Skills: Job Readiness and Employment***

Job etiquette

Application completion

Resume writing

Interview skills

Conflict resolution

Effective decision-making (thinking through consequences)



## ***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*

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



## *Financial Costs*

<u>Cost Savings</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>
Cost to operate 7 ATI components for 12 months	\$ 575,000	
Cost to operate 9 ATI components for 12 months		\$ 585,000
Cost to incarcerate men for 6 months	\$ 2,760,000	\$ 3,360,000
<b>TOTAL SAVINGS:</b>	<b>\$ 2,185,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,775,000</b>



## *Financial Benefits*

### Benefits

Total amount of child support paid: (arrear plus ongoing)	\$ 646,881	\$ 597,609
Total gross earnings of participants:	\$ 3,142,965	\$ 2,860,698
TOTAL BENEFITS TO FAMILIES AND SOCIETY:	\$ 3,789,846	\$ 3,458,307
TOTAL SAVINGS AND BENEFITS TO FAMILIES AND SOCIETY:	\$ 5,974,846	\$ 6,233,307



*“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