

2008 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-M-30SD

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: South Dakota

Assign Program Category (applicant): Health and Human Services: Children and Families _____ (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name: Long Distance Parenting
2. Administering Agency: Mike Durfee State Prison/ Yankton Minimum Unit
3. Contact Person (Name and Title): Warden Bob Dooley, MDSP
4. Address: 1412 Wood Street, Springfield, SD 57062
5. Telephone Number: 605-369-4400
6. FAX Number: 605-369-2813
7. E-mail Address: Bob.Dooley@state.sd.us
8. Web site Address:
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Long Distance Dads parenting program offers male inmates opportunities to reconnect and continue to strengthen relationships with their children.

The program further strides to correct misconceptions, improve self-esteem, and enhance communications for healthier family relationships.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

Planning began March of 2004, and the curriculum committee approved the Long Distance Parenting program in May of 2004.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

It is our desire to put an end to the fatherless children epidemic in our nation. This program strives to instill involvement, consistency, nurturance, and awareness in fathers. It is imperative that children grow up feeling loved and secure in their parent-child relationships

The program is set up to address problems such as: increased drop out rates, use of chemical substance, and increased crime involvement in relation to absent fathers. Lack of father's involvement in the child's schoolwork, peer relations, and overall communications are additional concerns to be addressed.

The majority of the students in class come from fatherless homes themselves. They bring with them harbored resentments, disappointment and anger; which continues to contribute to this epidemic.

Mike Durfee State Prison and Yankton Minimum Unit provide incarcerated fathers with opportunities to develop skills that are needed to maintain a healthy relationship.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

June 2004 to present: Mike Durfee State Prison and Yankton Minimum Unit began Long Distance Parenting classes, targeting involvement, consistency, nurturance and awareness. Class entails the creation of projects, videos, and photos that are sent home to the children.

June 2004 to present: Fatherhood Activity Days provide the opportunity for fathers to spend more time with their children. The activity day includes make-it-take-it projects, a shared meal, and enhancing the involvement stressed in class.

June 2004 to present: Fathers were given the opportunity to videotape themselves reading a book, reciting a poem, or sharing a custom and sending it home to their child.

April 2007 to present: South Dakota was one of 14 states to be selected to receive a five year grant to support Fatherhood and Families: Inside and Out. A program promoting healthy marriages.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

The program is offering the first opportunity for incarcerated fathers to improve relationships through effective communication, increased quality time with children, and an opportunity to correct distorted expectations of family roles, strengthening the bonds between children and their fathers.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The Department of Education sent academic staff to Oklahoma City, OK to obtain certification in the Long Distance Dads parenting program.

A computer program, digital camera, and video recorder were purchased to allow videotape production.

Addition costs include craft supplies, children's books and adult parenting literature.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

An estimated \$500 a year has been calculated for activities and resources.

16. How is the program funded?

The program is funded through the Department of Corrections Education Budget.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

NA

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

Approximately 30 refurbished bicycles from Mike Durfee State Prison are given to children each year at Christmas.

Collaborated efforts through Lutheran Social Services provided the program with DVD video cameras, DVD players, DVD supplies, as well as additional adult parenting literature.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Yes, in South Dakota Lori Drotzmann, Academic Instructor at Yankton Minimum Unit, conceived the program.

Lori Drotzmann
178 Mickelson Drive
Yankton, SD 57078
605-668-3359
Lori.Drotzmann@state.sd.us

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

Since implementation of the Long Distance Dads program, other states have introduced additional related programming.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The program has been fully implemented. As well, the first year of Fatherhood and Families: Inside and Out has been successfully implemented.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

Assessment results have shown consistent improvement in each of the four core areas (Involvement, Awareness, Consistency, and Nurture).

The Fatherhood Initiative has shown a decrease in the recidivism rate through parent-child involvement.

Children's minds are more at ease knowing and seeing their father's are doing just fine while incarcerated. Often children have misconceptions regarding prison life; wondering if dad is okay. As a result, children are more able to concentrate on school.

Activities and videos that are sent home help bridge the gap as a result of distance.

We have received numerous amount of positive feedback from children and caregivers, including articles in the local paper and magazines. Direct quotes include:

"This is a blessing for families"

"This is an excellent program"

"I got to feel like a dad again"

"My kids watch the video every night before bed"

"Great bonding opportunity"

One disadvantage some fathers have faced is an unhealthy relationship with the mother of the child, limiting contact and involvement.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program continually strives to expand with new ideas and activities to keep fathers involved. Our participation has tripled since its implementation.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

Within Department of Corrections there are numerous limitations in regards to security measures.