

# Father Factor Capitol Hill Briefing

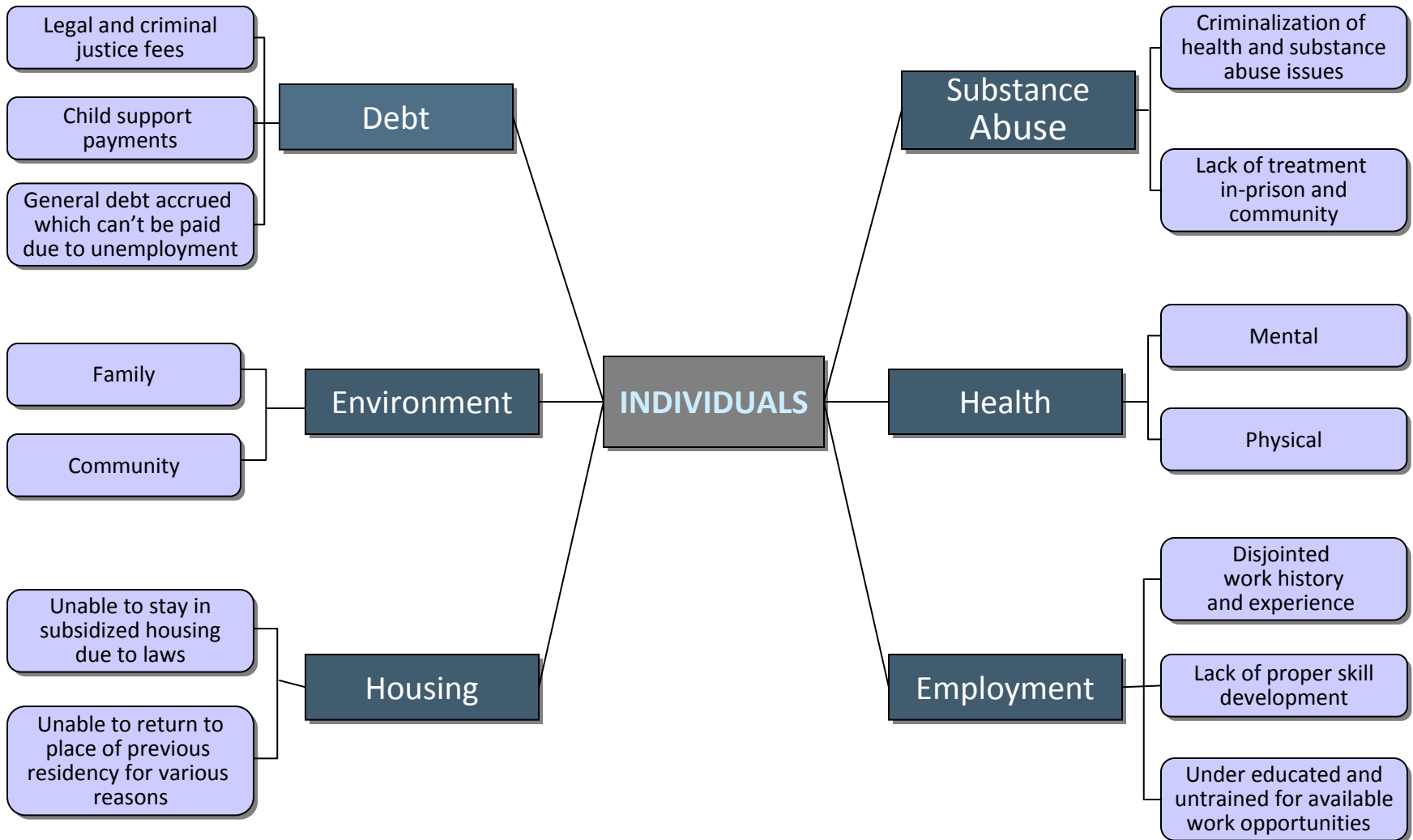
## Safer Foundation

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[www.saferfoundation.org](http://www.saferfoundation.org)



# REENTRY CHALLENGES



# BARRIERS TO FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

## Decline in Relationships Post-Release

- The majority of fathers report residing with at least one child prior to incarceration, that percent drops dramatically post-release.

## Interference from Primary Caregiver/Third Parties

- Many fathers cite their relationship with the mothers of their children as the primary determinant of their relationship with their children.

## Fractured Relationships During Incarceration

- One of the biggest predictors of the father-child relationship upon release from prison is the quality/existence of the relationship while fathers are incarcerated. Positive relationships with children are shown to decrease recidivism.

## Negative Effects of Incarceration

- Studies suggest the psychological changes that take place while fathers are incarcerated can have a negative impact on their relationship with their family/children upon release.



# BARRIERS TO FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS



## Issues Surrounding Child Support Payments

- Child support payments continue to build up during incarceration making it difficult to impossible for men to catch up when released. Additionally, this strains the relationship between the parent-child and co-parents.

## Existing Prison Policy

- There are many barriers to visitation and contact in prison facilities which make it difficult to maintain positive relationships and interactions. Descriptive studies of prison policies found that most incarcerated fathers are unable to have unsupervised conversations or physical contact with their children.

## The Distance Between Prisons and Home

- The distance between the family and where prisoners are incarcerated also makes it hard to maintain close relationships. On average, fathers are imprisoned 100 miles or more away from their children.

## Trouble Earning Livable Wages Post-Release

- Child support debt, combined with limited skills and a criminal record make it exceedingly difficult for fathers to find jobs and make adequate wages through legal means.

# THE SENTENCING PROJECT

## Incarcerated Parents: Trends and Key Points (1991-2007)

- In 2007, 1.7 million minor children had a parent in prison, an 82% increase since 1991.
- One in 43 American children has a parent in prison, with broad racial/ethnic variation. One in 15 black children and 1 in 42 Latino children has a parent in prison, compared to 1 in 111 white children.
- In 2007, there were 809,800 parents incarcerated in U.S. state and federal prisons, an increase of 79% since 1991.
- In 2007, half (52%) of all incarcerated men/women were parents.
- In 2004, 59% of parents in a state correctional facility and 45% of parents in a federal correctional facility reported never having had a personal visit from their child(ren).
- From 1991 to 2007, the number of incarcerated fathers increased by 76%.

# THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

## COLLATERAL COSTS: INCARCERATION'S EFFECT ON ECONOMIC MOBILITY



Former male inmates work nine fewer weeks annually and take home 40 percent less in annual earnings; amounts to an expected earnings loss of nearly \$179,000 through age 48.

One in every 28 children in America has a parent behind bars, up from one in 125 just 25 years ago.

Children with fathers who have been incarcerated are significantly more likely than other children to be expelled or suspended from school (23 % compared with 4 %).

Family income averaged over the years a father is incarcerated is 22 percent lower than family income was the year before a father is incarcerated; even in the year after the father is released, family income remains 15 percent lower than it was the year before incarceration.

**Source:** 2010 report by Professors Bruce Western/Harvard University and Becky Pettit/University of Washington).

# SAFER'S ADULT TRANSITION CENTERS

## Preparing Fathers for Tomorrow

Adult Transition Centers (ATCs) offer Illinois individuals with a criminal record the opportunity to gradually transition back to the community prior to their release from custody.

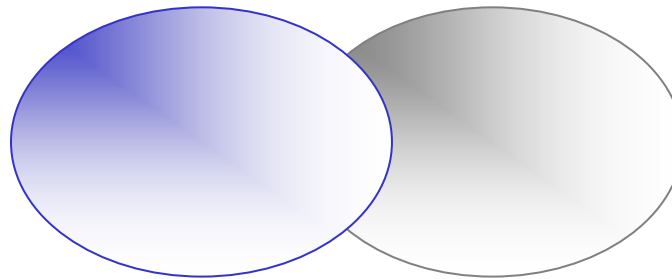
**Crossroads - 350 beds**

**North Lawndale - 200 beds**

**Halfway Back (parole violations) – 50 beds**

### **Job Preparedness**

- Outside Employment
- Education
- Life Skills
- Community Service
- Responsibility for In-House
- Daily Assignments



### **Support Services**

- Case Management
- Cognitive Therapy
- Mental Health Services
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Family Support Services

- Safer's ATCs offer a 16-week parenting program which consistently has the highest rate or enrollment, the highest rate of completion, and receives the most positive feedback.
- The feedback most frequently provided – offer more parenthood training.
- Out of all the men enrolled, not one opposed supporting their children.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Update Child Support Policies

- Encourage work and discourage recidivism when fathers show active attempts to find work
- Stop arrearages during incarceration
- Provide guidelines around reductions in support for the first six months post-release
- Provide tax incentives for fathers who pay child support (similar to the Earned Income Tax Credit)
- Consider a tax credit that incentivizes financial support for non-custodial fathers

## Support Responsible Fathers in their Efforts to Care For/Have Relationships with their Children

- Even when garnishing wages for child support, insure the paying parent is able to survive
- Establish federal Ban the Box legislation
- Establish federal Certificates of Good Conduct guidelines
- Establish visitation centers for imprisoned fathers
- Establish federal guidelines for public and subsidized housing for fathers who have successfully secured employment and are meeting their parole requirements
- Support the Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act in improving economic viability of poor low income fathers

## Increase Transitional Job Programs

- Provide an opportunity for people transitioning home to develop job skills that will help them work towards earning livable wages
- Offer immediate work opportunities to significantly reduce recidivism