

4 ways

Family Living opens doors for inmates moving from corrections to community

Family support is a vital piece to helping inmates move back to the community, prevent future incarceration and build a better life.

Responding to requests from local officials, Cooperative Extension Family Living county educators and partners develop programs that help jail inmates make the transition back to their families and communities.

When individuals successfully reenter their communities, Wisconsin residents and taxpayers share in the benefits.

1 Partners in the correctional system value the programs.

Local criminal justice partners look for credible, research-based programs.

- Judges, parole officers, social workers and others order inmates to participate in Family Living programs.
- Administrators see better jail safety and security when inmates take Family Living classes.
- Educational programs benefit from the expertise of Family Living educators.

Why it matters: Counties and local governments are seeking ways to reduce the high costs of recidivism and incarceration. Family Living classes are one economical step that helps boost inmates' chances of becoming contributing members of their families and communities.

"People are comfortable that Family Living uses research-based, tried and true information. They have consistently well-run programs that provide a foundation for resilient families."

—Criminal justice system administrator

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2 Inmates trust Family Living educators to be fair and non-judgmental.

Inmates are often wary of the criminal justice system but feel that Family Living educators do not have preconceived opinions about them.

- Inmates in Family Living programs are more receptive to learning and practicing non-criminal ways of thinking and acting.

Why it matters: For inmates to make real and positive change, they need to replace anti-social decisions and behaviors with new ways of thinking and feeling. Inmates are open to learning because they feel Family Living educators are impartial and neutral.

“They [inmates] feel like the educator is an advocate for their success.”

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“...inmates open themselves to a different way of thinking.”

—Criminal justice system administrator



3 Inmates learn the skills to be good parents and contributing community members.

“The parenting class was a turning point...it improved my relationship with my partner and her children.”

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“I now recognize when something is becoming a problem. I think, what can I do differently to deal with it?”

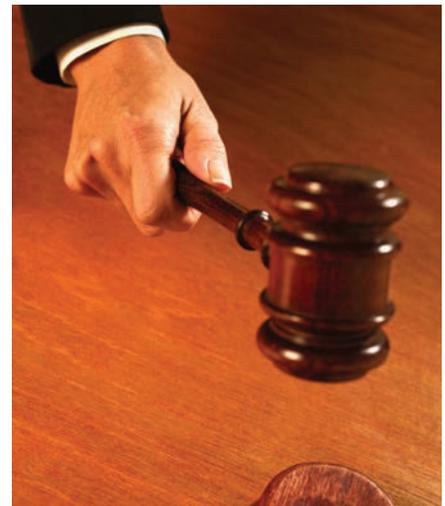
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“The classes help you work through things. I learned how to slow down, take a breath and look at things. Before I just ran headlong and that never worked.”

—Former inmates who took Family Living classes in jail

When inmates take what they learn to heart, their families and communities can be safer and more resilient.

- Family Living classes build family support, which research shows is a critical part of inmates’ successful reentry to community life.
- Former inmates cite improved relationships at home and on the job as a result of what they learn in class—how to better listen and communicate, manage stress and conflict, and make better decisions.
- Participants who take the classes together can develop supportive new connections with each other. For example, one former inmate now co-teaches a parenting program in the jail to help other inmates.



Why it matters: Building family support and helping inmates learn the skills to succeed as parents and in their communities can be the catalyst to help overcome generations-long cycles of abuse and neglect.

4 Family Living programs and resources help set the stage for inmates' success on the outside.

Family Living programs provide knowledge, skills and information about community resources that support inmates and their families both during and after incarceration. These are resources that are crucial to reentry and that inmates might not have known were available.

- Prepared with knowledge about resources to support families, former inmates state that they know how to make better choices when faced with challenges.

- Educational outreach to inmates and their families allows families to learn more about the experiences of loved ones while they are apart. It also helps them discover resources that can help all family members.

Why it matters: Ensuring inmates have adequate support upon release and in the first few months afterwards, can make a vital difference to the success of those looking for a fresh start.



“As long as I keep applying what I learned here, there’s a 99% chance I won’t come back. It’s the emotions that make me head to the bar. This helps me take care of that. It’s worth the money for the taxpayers.”

—Former inmate who took Family Living classes in jail

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“We all want safer communities. We need to be communicating and educating as much as we can. UW-Extension was there from the get-go...”

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“The Family Living class... is a piece of the puzzle for inmates. It gives them pause and the opportunity to choose another path for their lives.”

—Criminal justice system administrator

Cooperative Extension Family Living Programs— Working for Wisconsin families

Family Living Programs university-based and county colleagues serve as catalysts for positive change by working with Wisconsin families and communities to address important issues, concerns and opportunities. Family Living provides statewide leadership to promote education, resources and partnerships that create an environment where families and their communities can thrive.

To learn more about Cooperative Extension, visit www.uwex.edu/ces.

For more information on Family Living Programs, see <http://flp.ces.uwex.edu> and visit us on Facebook.



Information is based on post-class surveys and interviews with former jail inmates, criminal justice system partners and Family Living educators.