Guide to Educational Programming with Justice-Involved Audiences

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As HDRI Educators consider working with learners in the justice system, it is important to ensure that our efforts adhere to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension's educational mission and our Institute's program priorities. Further, it is important to ensure that our efforts, while well-intended, are research-based with a logical theory of change foundation to positively impact the learners and their families. And, with vulnerable audiences, it is critical that our efforts do no harm.

This Guide is designed to help Educators make informed decisions about pursuing work with justice-involved audiences and their families across such varied settings as jail, probation or parole, alternatives and diversion, and courts. Its purpose is not to be a standalone guide, but to encourage deeper thinking and foster conversations with colleagues already involved in outreach work with justice-involved audiences and potential local justice system partners. While some questions can be answered with information found in noted sources, much of the information you will need to seek out locally. For conversations and further guidance, please contact: Mary Campbell Wood, Liz Lexau, Heidi Ungrodt, or Pam Wedig-Kirsch.

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Program Planning Considerations

Question	High Readiness	Low Readiness	Pursue More Information
1. Who has identified educational programming with justice-involved families as a **local priority**? Are they informed and reliable sources of such information? What level of **local stakeholder support** exists from the Extension Committee, County Board, County Administrator, etc. for you to program with justice-involved families?	____ At least one or more local stakeholder group has identified educational programming with justice-involved families as a priority; united support from Extension Committee	____ Limited support from local stakeholders for programming; lack of united support and remaining questions create doubt from key supporters	____ Yes ____ No
2. Have you secured **local data** from jail and other justice partners that defines and justifies the need for programming with justice-involved audiences?	____ Reliable data shows increasing demand and need over time	____ Unconfirmed or conflicting data creates questions around need; data is not available or difficult to access	____ Yes ____ No
3. How does educational programming with justice-involved families **fit into your plan of work**? Does it lend itself to building a comprehensive local HDR program of inputs, outputs, and outcomes?	____ Fits well in plan of work, builds more comprehensive local programming	____ Poor fit; will be an "add-on" and not complement existing program efforts	____ Yes ____ No
4. To what degree do you **collaborate** with the county Criminal Justice Council (or similar group) and partners from the justice system? Are there opportunities to **build relationships** with these key partners? Is there **support from jail and justice system staff** for educational programming with justice-involved families?	____ Solid relationships, clear roles, ongoing communication; support and buy-in from correctional facility and justice staff for program efforts	____ Few opportunities to build relationships and roles; communication is difficult; jail or justice system staff show disinterest for educational efforts or little buy-in	____ Yes ____ No

Question	High Readiness	Low Readiness	Pursue More Information
5. How does the proposed programming build **family support**? To what extent does research show the educational focus is related to reentry and other positive outcomes?	_____ Program content has a direct link to family support; research studies show promising results from similar efforts	_____ There is no apparent link to family support; research does not support program focus	_____ Yes _____ No Yes → [Compendium of Resources](#)
6. What potential exists for the justice-involved families to **use and apply the educational information** you might provide? Can they use the information in meaningful ways (i.e., does the jail allow children to visit)? Will the learners return to the community in the near future allowing them to practice the information they receive?	_____ Learners can practice skills in meaningful ways despite the context (e.g. jail facility) or are due for release within the near future so they can apply their skills in the "outside" world	_____ Learners cannot apply newly learned information and skills; facility has major restrictions on visitation and contact; long-term confinement limits application of new skills	_____ Yes _____ No
7. How will your efforts **complement other programs** for the justice-involved audience and lend towards building a comprehensive corrections program for justice-involved persons that includes academic, vocational, and social support?	_____ Avoids duplication or provides necessary reinforcement of learning to complement existing programming	_____ Viewed as duplicating services already being provided; turf issues apparent	_____ Yes _____ No
8. What are the program outcomes for which you will be held accountable? Are these **outcomes consistent with key stakeholders' expectations**?	_____ Stakeholder expectations are realistic and aligned with program goals	_____ Expectations are beyond the scope of the program and resources available	_____ Yes _____ No

Educator Skill, Comfort Level, and Safety Concerns

Question	High Readiness	Low Readiness	Pursue More Information
9. Before beginning any program, will you participate in **professional training** (e.g. Family Connections and Justice-Involved Families webinars) that provides insight and information about the educational needs and learning styles of justice-involved learners?	____ Plan to participate in opportunities to increase expertise; willing to learn and seek help from Extension Educators working in this context	____ No plans to participate in relevant professional development	____ Yes ____ No Yes → Family Connections Series (link coming)
10. Is there **training that jail or justice system staff** will provide you before you begin teaching in the correctional facility or setting?	____ In-house training will be provided; familiarity with personal safety measures	____ No guidance from facility staff on personal safety	____ Yes ____ No
11. What is your **comfort level** when thinking about working with justice-involved audiences? Are you overly nervous about direct teaching in this setting? Could you put aside any preconceived notions about those involved with the justice system?	____ Few reservations; unbiased and realistic opinion regarding working with justice-involved individuals	____ Doubts and nervousness regarding direct contact; difficulty saying "no" to learners' requests for favors or help; bias may impede effectiveness	____ Yes ____ No
12. What facilities will be used for direct teaching? How does the facility protect your **safety**? What safety measures would be in place to ensure a safe learning environment?	____ Safeguards are in operation in the facility (e.g. guards in classroom, cameras, etc.)	____ Safeguards are not present, not in operation, or minimal	____ Yes ____ No

Educational Program Design and Content

Question	High Readiness	Low Readiness	Pursue More Information
13. How does the proposed programming utilize a **family systems approach**? Are there **additional subgroups** within the justice system, beyond the individual in jail, with whom you could target programming (i.e. children with incarcerated parents, caregivers of these children, additional family)?	____ The effort reaches multiple family members and those with whom they frequently interact; access to specific subgroups exists and would be a viable program audience	____ Programming is directed at only one individual in the family with little or no reach to other family members; access to specific subgroups will be difficult to the degree of impeding program success	____ Yes ____ No Yes → Model Practices Guide AND Why Ask About Family?
14. What are the unique **educational needs and learning styles** of this audience? What means will you use to identify these needs and learning styles?	____ Needs assessment has been done to identify learner needs	____ Little or no information exists to inform about learner needs and learning styles	____ Yes ____ No
15. Do you currently have access to **effective educational resources** (e.g. curricula, written materials) that have been designed or adapted to meet the unique needs and learning styles of justice-involved learners? How is research on educational programs with justice-involved learners incorporated into the educational materials?	____ Ready availability of curriculum and other resources designed for justice-involved audiences; materials reflect pertinent research	____ Little or no access to (or awareness of) resources designed for justice-involved audiences; materials lack research base and references	____ Yes ____ No Yes → Promising Family Strengthening Programs Guide
16. Have you identified any **evaluation evidence** that the program you may use has already been effective and holds promise for success with justice-involved learners? How sound is the evidence?	____ Data shows evidence of effectiveness with audience, especially regarding indicators of parenting and family relationships	____ Evaluation is weak in design and effect; shows little to no benefit in indicators of parenting and family relationships	____ Yes ____ No

Question	High Readiness	Low Readiness	Pursue More Information
17. Is the planned educational program of enough **intensity and duration** to result in beneficial changes among justice-involved individuals?	_____ Program content presented in multi-sessions that build on prior learning	_____ Programs presented in piecemeal, 1-shot approaches; minimal number of sessions to show impact	_____ Yes _____ No
18. Does the program content **complement the program focus** of Human Development and Relationships (HDR)? Is the focus **educational in design** or does it carry more a treatment, service delivery or mandated program emphasis?	_____ Program complements the educational mission of HDR and UW-Madison, Division of Extension	_____ Program is outside the scope of HDR and UW-Madison, Division of Extension; more oriented to treatment, mandated services, etc.	_____ Yes _____ No

Other Considerations

Question	High Readiness	Low Readiness	Pursue More Information
19. Could this audience and/or their families be reached in other ways through **alternative teaching techniques** (e.g. printed materials, online classes, recorded video, tablets, spatial changes, etc.)?	_____ Educational needs of learners could be met via non face-to-face instructional methods	_____ Non face-to-face instructional methods are not available or reasonable to implement	_____ Yes _____ No
20. Will work in this area contribute to the components of **scholarship** (creative, intellectual work; reviewed by peers; communicated and shared; valued by learners)?	_____ Work in this context will contribute to the field and will be useful for other educators	_____ Work holds little potential for generating new knowledge or contributing to colleagues in the field	_____ Yes _____ No

Question	High Readiness	Low Readiness	Pursue More Information
21. What is the process for **fair selection of participants** for the programs you may provide? Who will be involved in selecting participants – correctional system staff? you? participants?	_____ All potential learners have equal access to participate in the program; if space is limited, criteria to choose learners is fair and unbiased	_____ Unfair restrictions are placed on who can and cannot participate in the program	_____ Yes _____ No
22. As you plan program evaluation methods, have you taken the appropriate steps for **Human Subjects Protection** approval or certification that the project is exempt from Human Subjects Protection approval?	_____ HSP approval (or exemption) is being sought and adequate procedures are in place (e.g. media release forms, etc.)	_____ HSP approval (or exemption) is not granted for the work you propose	_____ Yes _____ No Yes → IRB QI/Program Evaluation Self-Certification Tool

Making an Informed Decision

Your decision about whether to move forward in educational programming with justice-involved families may still not be absolutely clear, but you should be more aware of the many considerations involved. Do you need more information before making a decision? Do you think you should pursue the programming effort as planned, revise it, or perhaps not pursue it?

If you decide to move ahead, please consider the additional resources available throughout this document as well as on the Parenting website and The Literacy Link website. These tools will help you navigate educational programming with justice-involved audiences.