

Strengthening and Maintaining Family Connections: Best Practices for Child-Friendly Video Visiting

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

April 4, 2023

This project was supported by 2020-CZ-BX-K001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to youth delinquency and victimization. The Office helps states, localities, and tribes develop effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that create safer communities and empower youth to lead productive lives.

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center



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We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.

The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (NRCCFI)

NRCCFI is the oldest and largest organization in the U.S. focused on children and families of the incarcerated and programs that serve them.

- Disseminating accurate and relevant information
- Guiding the development of family-strengthening policy and practice
- Training, preparing, and inspiring those working in the field
- Including the families in defining the issues and designing solutions

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- 12 Best Practices of Video Visiting
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections
- Questions
- Closing

Welcome and Introductions

Presenters

Ann Adalist-Estrin, *Director, National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Rutgers University Camden New Jersey*

Deb Sahd, *Special Assistant to the Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections*

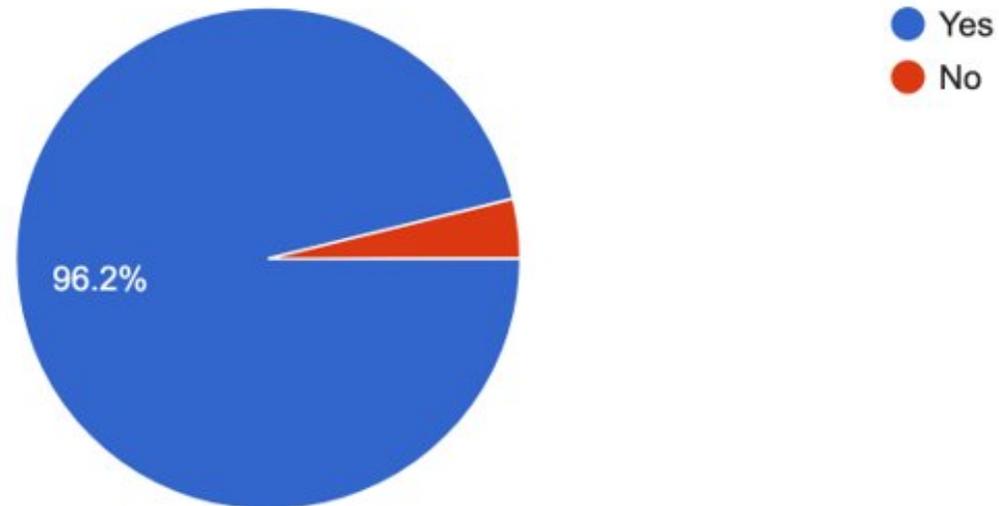
Megan Pfeiffer, *Senior Policy Analyst, Corrections and Reentry, CSG Justice Center*

Valerie Carpico, *Project Manager, Corrections and Reentry, CSG Justice Center*

What Is the Current Climate of Video Visiting?

Does your facility currently offer video visiting?

26 responses



The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of Second Chance Act Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children grantees, August 2022.

Importance of Visiting

- In-person relationships matter
- Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic
- "I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent." - Children of Incarcerated Parents' Bill of Rights
- Embracing the "and" in visiting policy
- The advocacy dilemma

Children of Incarcerated Parents' Bill of Rights

"The Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights," New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, accessed February 27, 2023, <https://www.susu-osborne.org/bill-of-rights>.

- 1.** I have the right **to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.**
- 2.** I have the right **to be heard when decisions are made about me.**
- 3.** I have the right **to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.**
- 4.** I have the right **to be well cared for in my parent's absence.**
- 5.** I have the right **to speak with, see, and touch my parent.**
- 6.** I have the right **to support as I face my parent's incarceration.**
- 7.** I have the right **not to be judged, blamed, or labeled because my parent is incarcerated.**
- 8.** I have the right **to a lifelong relationship with my parent.**

* Developed by the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership in 2005: www.sfcipp.org

Value of Video Visiting

- Mitigates difficulties associated with in-person visiting
- Limits long distance travel
- Facilitates consistent communication
- Allows for convenience and flexibility
- Offers incarcerated parents the ability to be a part of their child's home life

12 Best Practices for Video Visiting

Poll Question

Agree or disagree: the benefits of video visiting outweigh the benefits of in-person visiting for children and families.



1. Offer video visits as a supplement to in-person visits—not as a replacement.

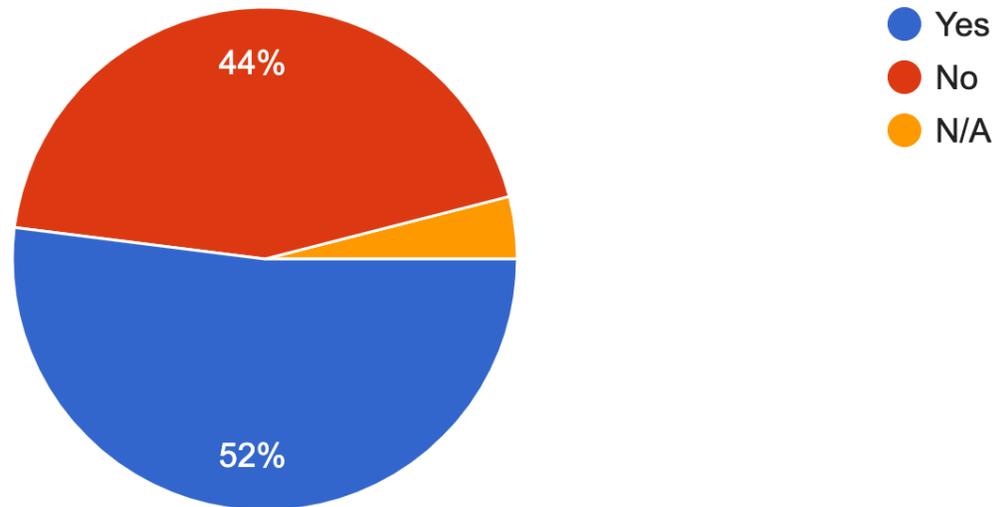


Photo courtesy of incarcerated parent detained at the Rose M. Singer Center in New York City.

2. Provide video visiting options that are free to families.

If you offer video visiting, is there a fee for visitors?

25 responses



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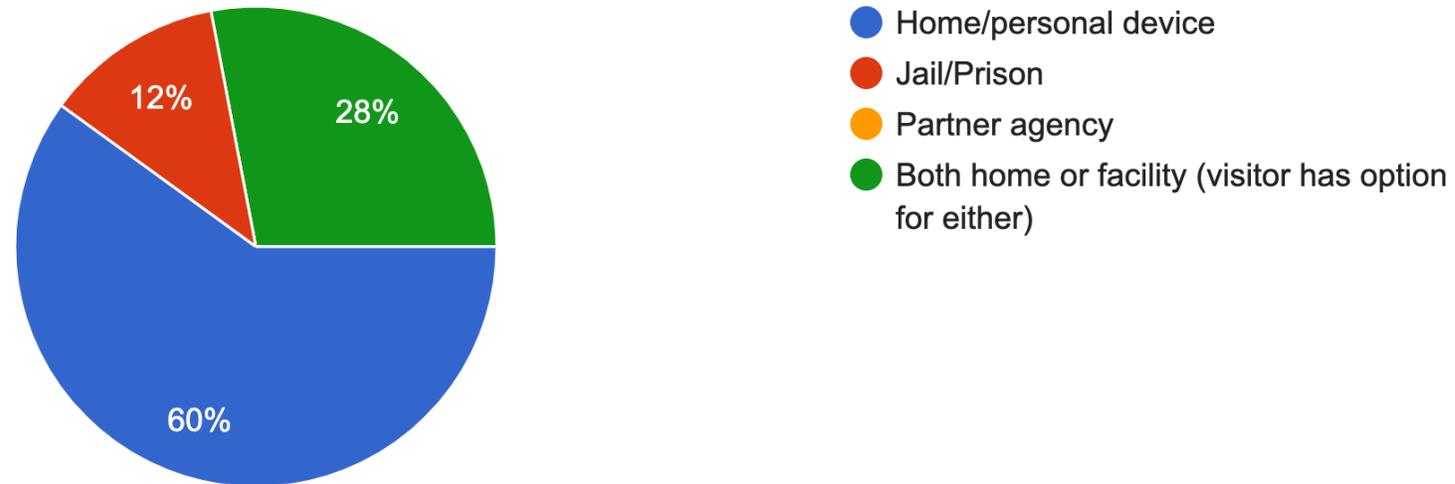
2. Provide video visiting options that are free to families.



3. Offer families flexibility in the location of video visits.

If you offer video visiting, where do visitors video visit from?

25 responses



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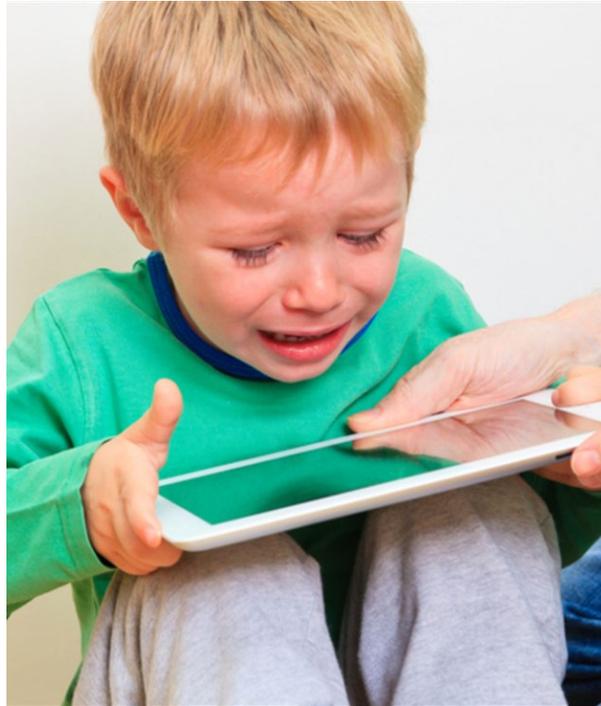
3. Offer families flexibility in the location of video visits.



4. Be responsive to children's and families' schedules.

- Assessing family needs
- Importance of choice:
 - ❑ Weekends
 - ❑ After-school hours
 - ❑ Working with child welfare agencies

5. Embrace, expand, and support technological capacity for both incarcerated parents and their families.



6. Engage families in activities and play.



Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility, Berlin, NH

6. Engage families in activities and play.



The Osborne Association Office, New York City, NY

7. Create spaces in the correctional facility that are conducive to parents' virtual engagement with children.

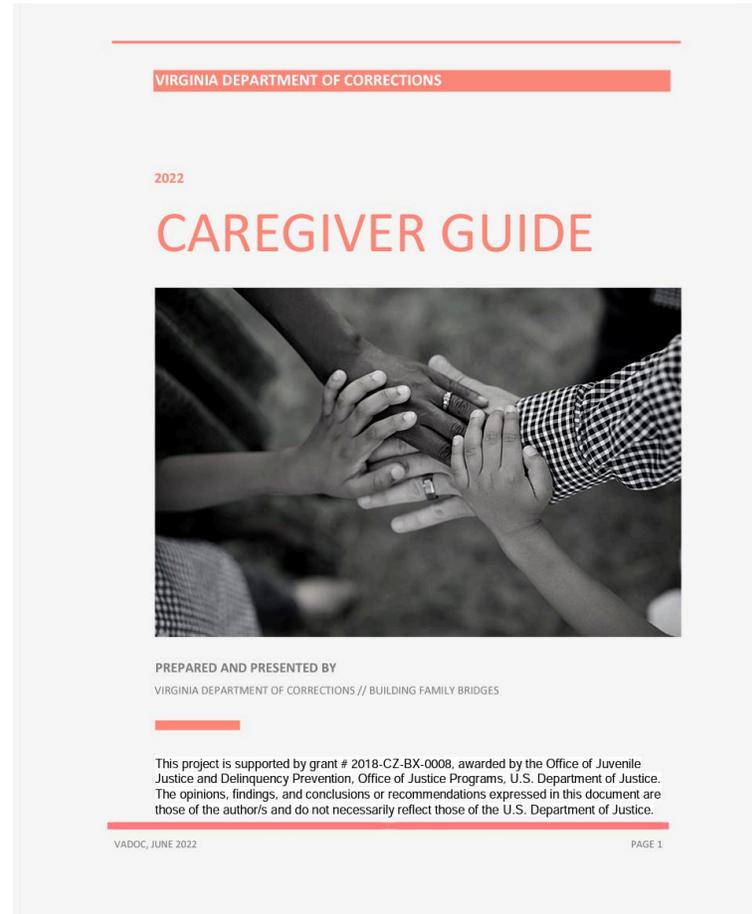


Virginia Department of Corrections

8. Develop humanizing policies for how families are permitted to engage during video visits.



9. Give families easy access to policies about video visiting.



Virginia Department of Corrections, Caregiver Guide

10. Provide support before, during, and after visits.



“Nothing About Us Without Us”

Include children of incarcerated people, their caregivers, incarcerated parents, and formerly incarcerated parents in defining the problems and designing the solutions. They should have a place at every meeting or table where their needs and concerns are discussed and planned for. They are the experts!



Poll Question

Do you include children and families impacted by incarceration as advisors to your program?



11. Establish strong feedback mechanisms with incarcerated parents and their families.

- Defining needs
- Identifying challenges
- Designing solutions

12. Train correctional staff on all the above best practices.



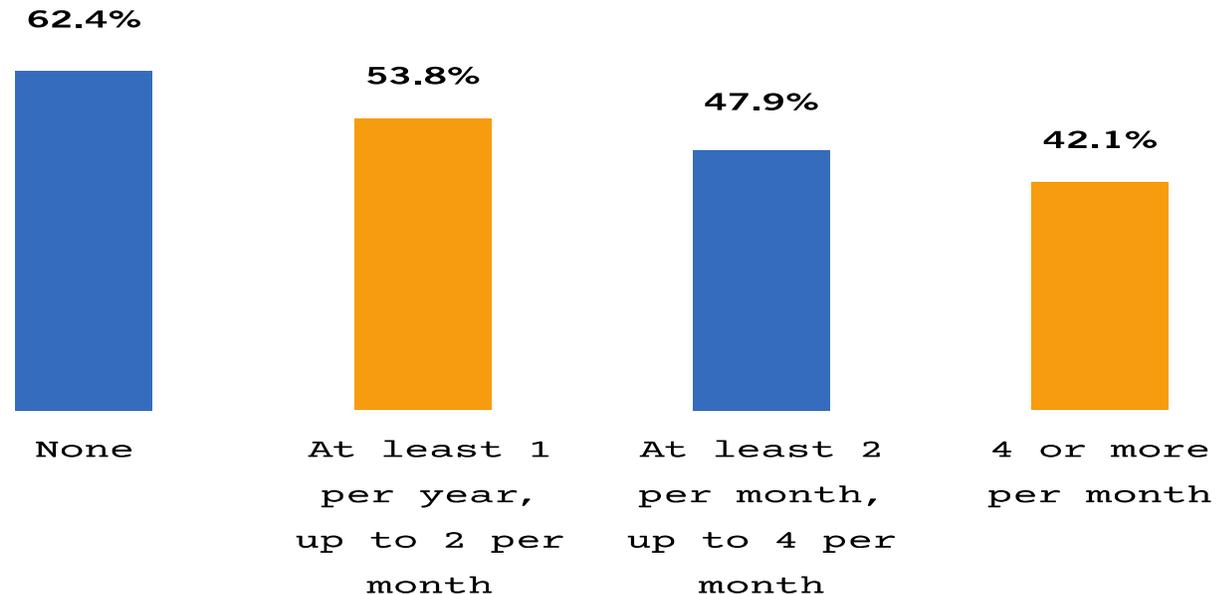
Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

Deb Sahd, Special Assistant to the Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

Video Visits

- The Zoom Path to Video Visits
 - End of Life
 - Funeral Visits
- Value of Visits
 - Recidivism
 - Connection

REENTRANTS WITH MORE FREQUENT VISITS FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY ARE LESS LIKELY TO RECIDIVATE



Average: Visit Events During Incarceration

Video Visits

- COVID-19, video visits, and international influence
- March 2020: Italy
- Scheduling based upon automated court scheduling system
- Server expansion and efforts to support
 - ❑ Kiosks on each block
- A success story
 - ❑ Over 1 million Zoom visits
 - ❑ Feeling “at home”

“It’s Not Easy Being Green” – *Kermit the Frog* and a VR Audience Immersion

Leveraging Virtual Reality Technology to Improve Family Interactions for Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children



***OJJDP Second Chance Grant Awardee
PA Department of Corrections***

OJJDP Grant Award 2020: \$680,486

- A three-year grant awarded in October 2020 driven by the innovative technology submission
- Connect children to their incarcerated parents through Zoom with VR adventure/games
 - Remote visit or in-person at institution with VR adventures
- Provide evidence-based female parenting program and updated male parenting program
 - Utilize a child avatar so the incarcerated parent can role play in lessons to support remote/in-person conversations
- Community providers support the caregiver and minor child(ren): Connect for remote Zoom VR adventure visits at Amachi Pittsburgh and Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) Philadelphia
- Penn State University measures both VR components through surveys

“It’s Not Easy Being Green” *Kermit the Frog*

- Yellow + Blue = Green
 - To understand green, you must know yellow and blue
 - Conceptually, we see the parents as yellow and blue and their children as green
 - Invest in the parents to impact the children
 - We are imprinted and influenced by parenting and the environment
 - How do we impact the lives of the children in an innovative way with buy-in?
 - Better mitigate generational incarceration
 - Opportunity to develop a successful and fulfilling life



The Purpose * The Details * The Minions

- Enhance the lives of the incarcerated parents and children through innovative connections
- Provide professional-level community support to the parent and child
- What Fires Together Wires Together – Hebb's Rule



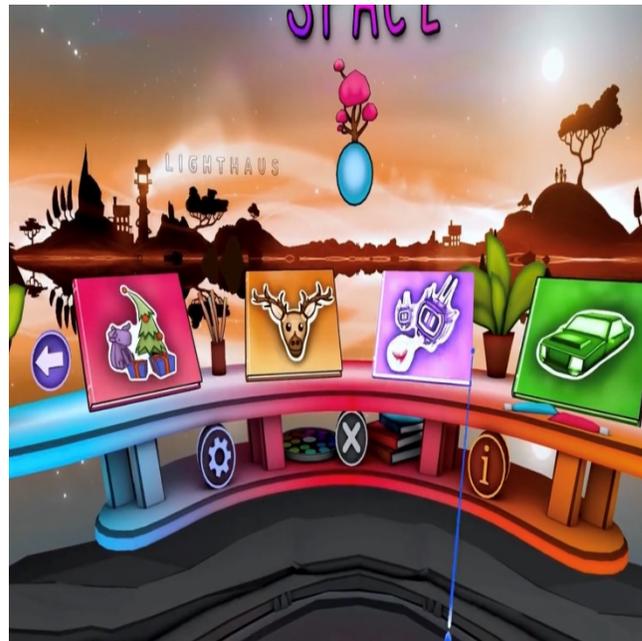
The How: Virtual Reality

Virtual Reality

- Remote VR adventure experiences by Zoom or in-person visits
- Minor child is at the community provider (Amachi Pittsburgh or PHMC in Philadelphia) with the caregiver
 - Provides a professional level of support to both
- Incarcerated parent and child each view a VR adventure at the same time to have some fun, talk about it, and open other conversations

The How: Virtual Reality

Examples: Space station, coloring book immersion, Bongo the pet dinosaur

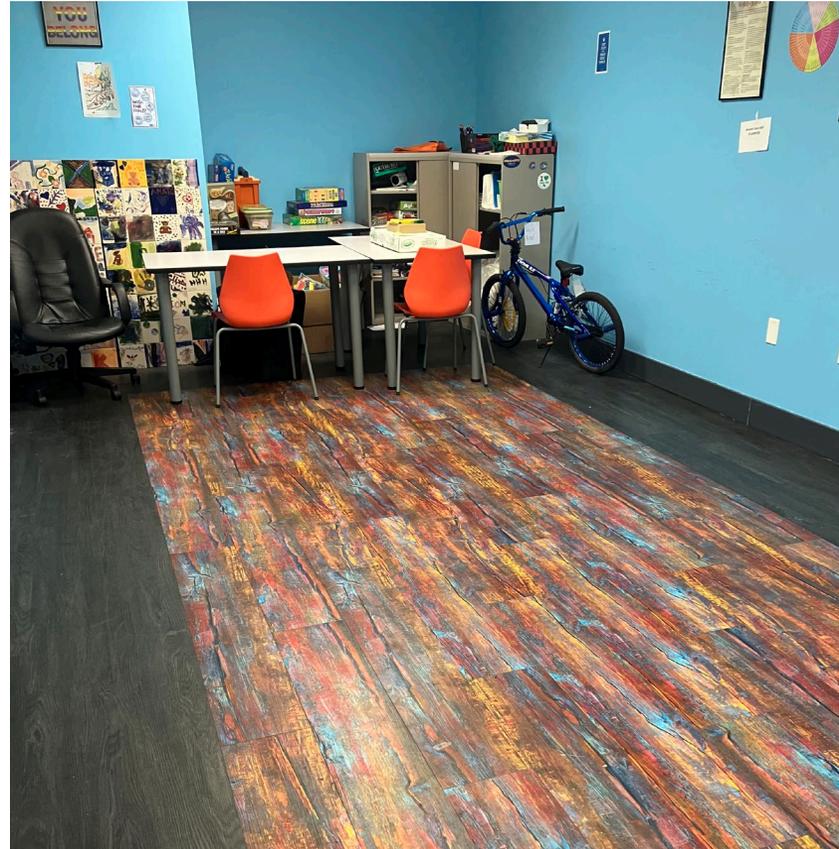


Staff Testimonial: A VR Adventure Visit



A first virtual reality visit occurred between an incarcerated parent and son through PHMC in Philadelphia... The **dialogue was genuine and free flowing**. [T]hey **explored the International Space Station VR**. After 20 minutes they removed their headsets and had an **in-depth conversation** covering many topics such as **school, community, the weather, sports...how he's treating his sister** and if he's performing his **daily chores**. [It] was beautiful to witness the interaction between the father and his son especially since... **the two had not seen each other face to face since before the pandemic**.

Community Provider Perspective



The How: Virtual Reality

- Virtual Reality Parenting Program: Child avatar role playing
 - Five total modules developed for the father (3) and mother (2) parenting programs
 - Emphasize communication skills, discipline, interactions

The How: Virtual Reality

- Ethnicity and accent focus
- Incarcerated parent uses VR as they interact with the child avatar in a lesson with conversation managed by staff



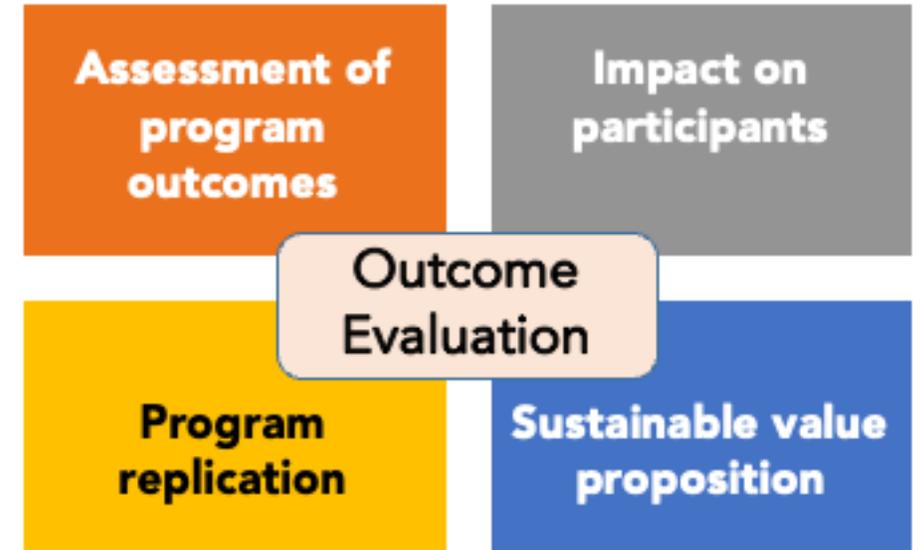
The How: Virtual Reality

- Utilize the ultraviolet virus cleaning box (99.9 percent of virus mitigated) after each oculus and handset use by parent and child



Outcome Measures

- Penn State University Qualitative Study
 - VR parenting program
 - VR child avatar role playing
- Data on VR Adventure Visits
- Anecdotally
 - Adventures are innovative
 - Adventure visits are enjoyed by the parent and child
 - The first parent felt special as they were the first to ever experience it – a pioneer



VR Support Experiences * Future Application

- Reentry acclimation for youth sentenced to life
- People who have serious mental illnesses at forensic facility for weekly VR adventures
 - Outcomes measured by BetaGov
 - Improved behavior and more medically compliant by being incentivized to receive the VR adventures
 - Improved staff environment as it calmed the unit
- Interior designer Officer Dining Room (ODR) immersion
 - Mitigated travel from another state by filming the ODR in 3D and sending the oculus to the interior designer to assist in the design
- Reentry acclimation (current)
- Post Use of Force and Critical Incident Stress Management De-escalation for Staff: A Beta Gov Project Approved

Questions



Thank you!

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