

Using Distance-Based Child-Parent Engagement Strategies in Correctional Facilities

Webinar Transcript

April 28, 2021

[Slide 1 — Using Distance-Based Child-Parent Engagement Strategies in Correctional Facilities]

Valerie Carpico: Good afternoon and thank you for joining the 2021 Reentry Week webinar on "Using Distance-Based Child-Parent Engagement Strategies in Correctional Facilities". My name is Valerie Carpico and I am a senior policy analyst at the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

[Slide 2 — Virtual Meeting/Conference Recording Notice]

This event will be recorded and posted online for training purposes.

[Slide 3 — Reentry Week | April 26–30, 2021]

During Reentry Week the NRRC will be your home for resources and virtual events.

[Slide 4 – Speakers]

Joining me today as presenters are Milo Dittrich, Corrections Program Manager at The Pathfinder Network; Lisa Hall, Case Management Administrator at the Oregon Department of Corrections; Sheri Sandoval, Director of Correction Programs at The Pathfinder Network; Brandi Harrison, Project Manager, Forensic Services, Allegheny Department of Human Services, and Amy Kroll, Administrator of Re-entry Services at the Allegheny County Jail.

Additionally, I would like to welcome my colleague Erica Nelson, also with the Council of State Governments Justice Center, and Kathy Mitchell and James Smith with OJJDP, who will be joining us for the question and answer session at the end of today's webinar.

[Slide 5 – The Second Chance Act (SCA)]

The Second Chance Act supports state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations in their work to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for people leaving incarceration. The Second Chance Act has supported over \$500 million in reentry investments across the country since it passed in 2008. The Second Chance Reauthorization Act passed in 2018 and continues to build on the strengths of the initial landmark legislation.

[Slide 6 – The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center]

The Council of State Governments Justice Center's mission is to develop research-driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

[Slide 7 – CSG Justice Center Training & Technical Assistance]

We are one of four technical assistance providers for Second Chance Act programs. Our focus is on behavioral, health, housing, and family supports. This includes technical assistance for the Second Chance Act grant tracks listed on this slide, as well as the next slide, which include the grant track we will speak about today: Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children.

[Advanced to slide 8 and paused for a few seconds.]

[Slide 9 – Agenda]

Today, for our agenda, the presenters will provide an overview of their grant programs, including using distance-based child-parent engagement strategies in correctional facilities. Also, the presenters will provide a brief overview of their programs, including navigating restrictions and policy changes due to the current COVID pandemic. Following our webinar today, there will be a question and answer session.

[Slide 10 – SCA Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children Grant Program]

The Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children grant program provides funding to support states and units of local governments to develop activities that foster positive family engagement between incarcerated parents within detention and correctional facilities and their children who are under the age of 18. The program also supports the children of incarcerated parents, by providing services that reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviors and future involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Some of the key objectives include providing support to facilities for staffing, equipment, tools, and resources to create child-friendly spaces within detention and correctional facilities. Also, another objective is to develop safety protocols and procedures for children who are visiting their incarcerated parents [and to develop] programs and services that support the needs of parents and their children, while the parent is incarcerated and as the parent transitions to the community from correctional custody. Now, without further ado, I would like to turn it over to our first presenter, Lisa Hall.

[Slide 11 – Oregon Department of Corrections]

Lisa Hall: Thank you, Val. Hello everyone, my name is Lisa Hall, and I am the correctional case management administrator for the Oregon Department of Corrections, and I'm happy to share our experience here in Oregon.

[Slide 12 – Parenting Inside Out (PIO) Phase II: Enhanced Visiting Pilot Project]

Our Parenting Inside Out (PIO) Phase II: Enhanced Visiting Pilot Project is an advanced skills development and parenting child visiting program that builds upon the evidence-based Parenting Inside Out curriculum. For those of you who may not be aware, Parenting Inside Out

was developed in 2002 in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Corrections and the Oregon Social Learning Center.

The program is a nationally recognized, cognitive behavioral parenting training program. It is the only evidence-based parenting skills training program developed for parents involved in the criminal justice system. The PIO II program is strength-based and takes a holistic approach. The program supports incarcerated parents in developing parenting skills and working towards parenting goals. The program also provides support, materials, and resources for children and caregivers.

[Slide 13 – Program Goals]

The program goals are to increase communication between the parent and child to enhance that relationship. It is also to increase positive family engagement and create positive memories. And the program is also to mitigate the impact of parental incarceration on children and to enhance safety within the institutions for adults in custody and our correctional staff.

[Slide 14 – Project Scope and Population Served]

The project scope and population served—and this, of course, is prior to the pandemic of March of 2020. Before then, the PIO Phase II was operating in two sites: Oregon’s only women’s facility, Coffee Creek Correctional Institution, located in Wilsonville, Oregon; and one men’s institution located in Salem, Oregon, which is the Santiam Correctional Institution, a minimum [security] facility.

The program served PIO graduates whose children age 18 or younger could attend the monthly enhanced in-person visits. PIO Phase II was focused on monthly enhanced visits for the incarcerated parent and their children; group parenting workshops; and once-a-month one-on-one coaching; and children and caregiver support sessions.

Now, I would like to introduce Sheri Sandoval, the Director of Corrections Program for The Pathfinder Network. And she will be taking us through some more experiences with our Program.

[Slide 15 – The COVID-19 “Pause and Pivot”]

Sheri Sandoval: Hello, I am going to talk a bit about the “pause and pivot” that we experienced when COVID came to visit us in March of 2020. So, there was a two-month pause in our programming where visiting was suspended, and currently visiting continues to be suspended, so this caused us to do a pause and a pivot for our in-person programming.

And we also had experienced some wildfires in Oregon. I’m sure many of you saw that on as it was national news, and it was causing evacuation for the Oregon Department of Corrections that they’ve never had happened before in the history of the system. So, it really threw a

wrench into our in-person programming, so we really did a pause and worked to figure out how do we move forward.

[Slide 16 – The COVID-19 “Pause and Pivot”]

So, the temporary use of department of corrections legal call-line and the adult in-custody phone system was our first line of defense in staying connected and keeping the program running.

Our in-person material classroom materials we converted to packets and delivered them through the DOC’s mail system and actually through the actual regular mail system. We’ve mailed in some envelopes following the Oregon Department of Corrections mail system and how much mail could be received through that method. And then we increased contact with the caregivers and children through our own zooms or video visits or that way, so that we could keep that connection.

And now I’m going to turn it over to Milo Dittrich, who is our program manager for PIO Phase II, and he’s going to take us through what the model looks like right now as we’re in this pause and pivot. Thank you.

[Slide 17 – Current Model]

Milo Dittrich: Thank you, Sheri, so much.

So yeah, as Sheri has said, I feel like we’ve done a fair amount of pausing and pivoting, and our current model is really focusing primarily on individualized one-on-one interventions and curriculum. And the format for this is through weekly video coaching, in-person coaching when we’re allowed access, and the introduction of a bound participant workbook the individuals or groups are able to use.

When we were meeting in groups before the pandemic, so much of what we were doing was just happening in the classroom in that group setting, and we hadn’t created some of those accompanying materials that would allow folks to kind of go inward and work through the program tools and learning opportunities when they didn’t have access to classmates, or they didn’t have access to a coach.

To accompany with that, to kind of stand in for, certainly not replace, but stand in for the enhanced in-person visits that the program was built around, we’ve been able to institute weekly video visits between incarcerated parents and their kiddos. And we’ve also been able to expand our pool from the initial two sites that Lisa had outlined, Coffee Creek and Santiam, to be able to serve more parents who perhaps aren’t able to have an in-person visit, since that wasn’t a requirement in this current incarnation.

[Slide 18 – Moving Forward in Person or from a Distance: Continuing 1:1 Coaching and Facilitation]

So, as we're looking at moving forward, you know here in Oregon, we know that in some cases, that will be in-person, and in some cases that will still be from a distance. And we found that some of the best practices that we've been identifying really are going to be applicable in both settings. And there have definitely been some silver linings for us in operating remotely and trying to find options for parents and children to connect from a distance, that we find are going to carry over into our in-person programming as well.

So, when it comes to the one-on-one coaching that we've been doing, you see here a picture of one of our coaches who's actually having a coaching session with an incarcerated parent using the workbook that I mentioned. And I think one thing that is just shining really bright for us is the importance of acknowledging the pandemic.

We know that we're not in a business-as-usual reality and our participants aren't either, and so just simply acknowledging, 'hey, this is where we are, this is what's happening,' and really partnering with that parent as you go to stay being curious about new ideas for how the program could be successful. And walking together to prepare for changes that we might not know what the changes will be, but we know that they're going to come.

And, along with that — keeping it simple. If you know that you're going to have a few different pathways depending on what's happening, have it be just really simple and clear, so that when you're not on site that parent knows what to expect and what to do. And all of this kind of goes in that bucket of using a trauma-informed lens as you're thinking about programming.

[Slide 19 – Moving Forward in Person or from a Distance: Supporting Parent-Child Engagement]
When it comes to moving forward as we're talking about supporting the engagement between the parent and the child, again, that trauma-informed lens is just proving to be so important for us. Just recognizing what it means to not be able to have an in-person visit for over a year, what it means when you get on a call and you're talking about a family member who might have COVID or you're talking about not being able to go to school in-person anymore.

There's just a lot, that's in that mix that when we applied for our grant really wasn't in our mind's eye or our landscape of what kind of things are we going to be supporting children and parents and families, through this wasn't on our radar. And so more than anything, I think recognizing the importance of individualizing what we offer, and really offering choice points within our programming, knowing that different families are in different situations and are going to have different needs right now.

Another important piece of that, you know, is really working on that self-care and selfregulation piece for parents, because when we were having our enhanced visits we really were able to wrap around that parent before and after the visit to ensure that they were processing it, that

they were taking healthy steps for themselves after. And so, knowing that so often we're not going to be in the room anymore, just kind of what guardrails can we put up and how can we help that parent and child prepare for those transitions.

And I think also you know, a note here is celebrating those milestones, and so recognizing that sometimes the wins that we're going to have are going to be small, or they may feel small or look small to us, but really that these are some you know magical foundational moments that are happening in the lives of these parents and these children, and really just calling them forward and staying in the moment of those, of those milestones can be really impactful.

[Slide 20 – Moving Forward in Person or from a Distance: Connecting with Caregivers and Children]

I think, finally, when talking about as we move forward, you know kind of our best practices when we're talking about connecting with caregivers and children themselves as a program and initially going in, we were supporting families and coming for these in-person visits and preparing them beforehand and supporting them after, and when that's not a part of the mix, again, so much of what we're doing is that individualization. Staying curious about what's working for the family, what supports they might need, what creative solutions they have, and I think a big piece, for us too is just that showing of gratitude and grace, knowing that these caregivers and children are carrying so much and going through things that are hard for us to even wrap our minds around, and so really working with those caregivers as beloved program partners more than they are recipients of services. These are folks that are doing the most important work with these kiddos and so really celebrating them for that.

This picture, I just want to highlight for a moment, kind of in that spirit of creating opportunities for reflection and feedback. This is a photo of a father having a video visit with his son on his birthday, and grandma there has set up that visit; they have a beautiful cake. And this is a dad that was really struggling to find ways to have meaningful engagement over video visit. And over the course of the program has just become so confident and excited about how he can play tic-tac-toe with his son, how they can play tag over video visit in ways that are creative, and so just having moments where we're just acknowledging these good things that are happening is important.

[Slide 21 – Distance Based Programming]

Now, I'd like to pass the mic back over to Sheri Sandoval, who's going to speak a little bit to considerations for distance-based programming in general.

Sheri Sandoval: Thank you Milo. So, through this process from our original grant to our kind of "pause and pivot," we've had a lot of eye-opening experiences and would like to offer up some of the considerations that we all have processed through.

We've been very lucky to have a wonderful working partnership between the Oregon Department of Corrections and The Pathfinder Network, so many of these considerations were very much a collaborative effort between the two agencies. And so, some of those things are just ensuring system design and capacity; resource allocation and security features; contractual obligations and restrictions; any necessary grant modifications and alternative funding sources; participant identity, culture, language, and learning styles; institutional culture; and partners and stakeholders. And a lot of this just really heightens what Milo just spoke to about our current situation and kind of the being open to new ideas and different ways of doing things, but it definitely brought in a whole new element of things we needed to consider.

As our original grant was written with what we could do, and what was feasible, and what we'd already been doing through other programs at that time, but with the COVID coming in and being a major partner in the last year, it has meant that we've had to lean on each other more to make these pivots, and so these are just some of the highlighted areas that we've realized really should be considered before you even attempt to make any kind of pivot. As we kind of got them periodically through the pivot we came up against technical issues with phone systems and how to make that work and just basically people's families' way of living and some of them don't have computers and have access to video visits. And so, there's just a lot of things you don't really take into consideration when you're really trying to pivot quickly and continue that parent-child relationship building. So definitely want to give you some of our bumps in the road to consider before to maybe help with that.

So, with that I'll turn it back over to Val.

[Slide 22 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program]

Valerie Carpico: Thank you very much for the wonderful presentation and the great work you guys are doing and able to highlight for others nationwide—so appreciated.

Without further ado, I will turn it over to Allegheny County, who, as well, has a fantastic program and Brandi will go ahead and kick it off for us.

Brandi Harrison: Hi. Thanks, Val. We truly appreciate this opportunity to share what we've been doing in our county and also learn from the experiences of others. My name is Brandy Harrison, and I'm a project manager with Allegheny County Department of Human Services in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I coordinate and facilitate communication amongst the partners for our Children of Incarcerated Parents grant.

[Slide 23 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program]

The Family Support Program at the Allegheny County Jail is a partnership between the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative, which DHS is a part of, the Allegheny County Jail Re-entry Program, and Pittsburgh Mercy, who's our contracted service provider.

Joining me on the call today is Amy Kroll. She's the administrator of our jail re-entry programs. You'll be hearing from her in a few minutes, but first I'll give a brief overview of our project. So, as you see on this slide the purpose of this project, our project is anticipated to serve 210 individuals, both men and women who were serving a sentence in our county jail and assessed at medium or high-risk of reoffending.

The purpose of this project is to reduce recidivism for participants and also to improve critical outcomes for their children, including reduced child welfare involvement and juvenile justice involvement.

[Slide 24 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Goals]

We have three overarching goals for this project. The first, as you see, on this slide is to increase family well-being and decrease child protective service involvement. We want participants to improve their understanding of child development, non-violent discipline techniques, and parenting skills. Along with increasing their problem-solving skills, we also want to ensure that families are connected to any needed resources or supports during their parent's incarceration.

[Slide 25 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Goals cont'd]

Our second goal is to increase the child's well-being and decrease juvenile justice involvement by helping families maintain connections to the incarcerated parent and ensuring that the children have the support needed to address the trauma of parental incarceration.

[Slide 26 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Goals cont'd]

And last but not least, our third goal is to reduce recidivism and incidents of violent crime by the incarcerated parents after release. Participants complete a reentry service plan to address criminogenic needs and receive supports to assist with reintegration back into the family upon release.

[Slide 27 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Grant activities]

Under the grant, staff provide evidence-based parenting curriculum inside the jail to incarcerated parents. Participants in the classes typically participate in coached phone calls and contact visits. The grant also expanded family communication by allowing video visitation between the families participating. With them being located at Pittsburgh Mercy's Community location and the incarcerated parent in the jail, so that video visitation is between those two places.

This is not at all intended to replace the in-person visits, but to offer additional opportunities for contact throughout the month, and also to allow families who may have barriers that prevent them from participating in contact visits, such as work schedules. A different mechanism to visit as well. The opportunities for contact and communication have been adapted due to COVID protocols, as in-person visitation is still restricted.

And Amy will talk more in a minute about how we're leveraging technology to expand and enhance family communication, while those health and safety protocols are still in place.

[Slide 28 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Grant activities cont'd]
Staff in the program strongly encourage contact between the incarcerated parents and children. They work with the families to help them understand what contacts available and how they can access those opportunities. When contact visits are available, they assist the family and children in understanding the process and coach them through the transitions at the beginning and end of the visit and provide support during the visit as well.

They also work with families to overcome any barriers to transportation, such as transportation limitations, and when it is time for the incarcerated parent to transition back home staff provide support through that process as well.

[Slide 29 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Grant activities cont'd]
Another key component of this grant project is supporting children in the community. Family support specialists complete an assessment with enrolled families using the Family Advocacy and Support tool, also known as the FAS, to identify areas where support could benefit the family and also areas of strength that could be built upon when working with the family. They then connect the families with appropriate supports and resources in the community.

We really want to ensure that families are as stable as possible when the incarcerated parent is released and ready to reintegrate with their family to support that transition. Community activities are also provided to allow opportunity for engagement with peers, who may be experiencing some of the same challenges. This setting also allows additional opportunities for staff to engage with the family and provide supports. So that's a quick overview of our project. I'll hand it over to Amy Kroll now to talk more about our program eligibility and how technology is being used to support this project.

[Slide 30 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Eligibility]

Amy Kroll: Good afternoon. I'm in Allegheny County Jail right now, so just in case you may hear mics overhead going off, I wanted to let you all know.

So, the individuals—to give you a little bit of background, our jail is considered a large jail on the eastern seaboard. We currently have about 1700 in our jail, but it's a revolving door. People can be here up to 48 hours, or they can be here two years, less two days. Otherwise, they go to our state department of corrections.

So those individuals that are deemed eligible for our program are considered high and medium risk of reoffending; they're usually sentenced; and they have to be here in the jail longer than 90 days, so that we can engage with them, and also, they will be released on probation or

parole. And then about two years ago we opened it up for individuals who are here on minor charges and that have multiple detainers to other judges.

Also, to be eligible for the program you have to be a parent of a child under the age of 18 and/or a caregiver. Because the nucleus of everybody's family is very different, the program was open to parents that may not be the biological parent of that child, but for most of them, since their birth or since they were younger, they have been raising these children. Also, you have to be returning to Allegheny County or a resident of Allegheny County, and there were no minimum education requirements for this program. So once individuals enrolled in the program and began to take our parenting classes so that we could get to know them better, and we learned more about their children, one of the main things that we began to use was coached phone calls.

[Slide 31 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Use of technology: remote visitation]

This phone call is very different from a normal phone call in that the phone calls were not recorded and all the other phone calls in our jails are recorded. This phone call had two handsets to it, so that our family support specialist and the parent that was incarcerated would then be talking literally and listening at the same time to the caregivers at home and the children.

And we found that a lot of our clients here had not talked, really talked to their children. And so, when they were in here and had time available and weren't in the streets, talking to their children they found that they were having difficulties. So, through these coached phone calls, we were able to make real connection with the caregivers and the children at home.

The other way we did it was expanding our visits. In the very beginning, we had window visits or glass visits, and through slow baby steps we were finally able to give contact visits to our parents that had graduated out of their parenting classes and had made coached phone calls home, and those phone calls had gone very well. So, in that case, sometimes, the parents didn't really want to talk, so we were able, through our staff in the communities, to transport the families to Mercy to a very conducive room [where] we could offer them the video visits with their incarcerated parent who was in the re-entry center of the jail.

And so that was able to...we were providing options to the parents. Not everybody was available, sometimes children would come home from school later hours and the parents in here really wanted to see their children, so that was always an option, the virtual coached visits.

[Slide 32 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Use of technology: remote visitation cont'd]

The next use I'd like to go into more is about a lot of the technology. In October of 2020, every inmate in Allegheny County Jail now received a tablet that they use to make phone calls and video visits. The good and bad about this is a fee is charged, and as we all know those fees can be very exorbitant, very, very high. So our oversight board—and again this was in the COVID, in our epidemic—they decided to give, to be able to draw the families closer together and to maintain their connections, especially since, during COVID we had no longer window visits, no longer contact visits, and it was such an incredible burden to the family and the children, they then would add to everybody's tablets \$50 a month, free, for that individual to remain in contact with their children and their family. And it's been incredible. I mean, that has been happening since January, we have had four solid months of individuals getting \$50 free on their account to be able to remain in contact with their family.

So, the program has really worked towards the process of coached phone calls and visits using the tablets, and at no cost to the individuals or the families, which was huge. Again, once COVID is hopefully out of the picture soon, we will resume contact visits, but we are going to continue to use our tablet visits, so that it is extra, increased opportunities to have families connect with their children.

[Slide 33 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Use of technology: distance-based strategies]

Some of the other as the Oregon group said, we had to pivot and pretty much on a dime to get things running in our facility. So, one of the things we did was, just as our children all over the United States were going to school, we did that here. And what we did was, very quickly, we got large screen TVs, we had laptops, we used the Teams platform, and our instructors that were at home began to teach the inmates in the jail. We used our large gyms, we were able to socially distance everybody, and through Teams and the large screen TVs, they could easily just have a regular classroom—they could hear each other, they could ask questions and facilitate a whole conversation in real-time.

[Slide 34 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Use of technology: cost] And then, one of the most exciting things was, using the COVID-19 relief funds, we were able to purchase all this equipment. We are on a high-rise, so we were able to get TVs, laptops, carts, speakers, and enabled to get it on every floor of our high-rise, and we have 16 floors here in this high-rise.

[Slide 35 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Lessons learned] **Brandi Harrison:** I can say that when we talk about the successes that we've had over this past year, while working through these new technology pieces, none of them would have happened without flexibility, persistence, and advocacy. I am personally very appreciative that we had Amy on the ground in the facility advocating for our program participants every chance that she had. When there was a 'no' she took it as a 'not yet', and she went back, time and time again, and so we were able to move forward.

She really worked to identify what those barriers were, and she continues to do so as we are continuing to work to offer more opportunities for communication and support. We have more than we had at this time last year, but we want more, we want to keep moving in that direction and offer every opportunity that we can.

[Slide 36 – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Family Support Program: Lessons learned] **Amy Kroll:** One of the other lessons that I've learned in my super many years in corrections is, just always, try to keep moving in a positive direction. In the very beginning, my administration looked at me like I had six heads when I said I'd like to do a contact visit in Allegheny County Jail, and their first response was we've never done contact visits in our jail. Through the first year of doing the classes and then doing the coached phone calls home, I finally convinced administration to allow me to do two contact visits with two different families on the floor of our contact visiting room with rugs and toys, and they must have had 15 correction officers watching the visit thinking somehow something would go on, but the visit went on, and then soon it bloomed into Saturdays with 30 contact visits.

So, either through using technology or through using persistence, but also kill them with kindness. The correctional lens is tough, we all know it's tough, but through example and trying to anticipate barriers and work through them, showing that it's always something positive that will then be flowing over in our community. But I think this has been a super, super positive program for our residents of Allegheny County.

Brandi Harrison: I agree, and I think what Amy said about using that corrections lens is so important, like when you're planning human services in a correctional facility, making sure you have somebody at the table that is able to look through that lens, and really help you work through those barriers in the planning stage. It'll just save you a whole lot of heartache when you get further down the road and realize you're going to have to face those battles anyway. So, we are so grateful to have Amy at our table and doing that and kind of leading the charge inside the facility.

I think that's it, and we'll punt it back to Val now. Thank you so much for the opportunity to share our experiences.

[Slide 37 – www.NationalReentryResourceCenter.org]

Valerie Carpico: Thank you so much Allegheny County—again, phenomenal work going on. Thank you very much to actually all of our presenters today—you're really leading the way to show how a pandemic is not going to hold you back, people telling you 'no' are not going to hold you back, and there are things that we can do that's what's right for families, so thank you for all that you do.

To see the full Reentry Week schedule of events, links, and resources, please visit the National Reentry Resource Center at www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org.

[Slide 38 – Track News and Updates on Social]

Also, join in the conversation on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn: #ReentryMatters, #ReentryWeek, #ReentryWeek21.

[Slide 39 – Thank you!]

I would like to thank everyone for joining us today, and don't forget to sign up for the National Reentry Resource Center newsletter.

And if you have any questions, please reach out to the NRRC via email. Now, I will turn it over to my colleague Erica Nelson, who will facilitate our question and answer session. Please feel free to put any questions in the chat box, thank you.

[End of slide presentation]

Nicholas Read: Thank you for that, and as we said, Erica, we'll invite you and fellow panelists to hop on here and we'll jump straight into the questions that have come in from everyone.

Erica Nelson: Awesome. Thank you so much, Nicholas. Can you hear me?

Nicholas Read: We can hear you. Yep.

Erica Nelson: Awesome. We got our first question from Anna. She asked if one of the panelists can talk a little bit more about coached visits. What typically do those look like? Who is responsible for coaching that visit, and when do they occur? Does the coached visit happen during, after, pre-visit? I think this may be a great question for the Oregon folks.

Milo Dittrich: This is Milo with the Oregon team. I can jump in on this one; Sheri, Lisa, please fill in anything that I'm missing. I'll speak to kind of pre-COVID what our enhanced visit model looked like. The coach is our parent and family support specialist that's working directly with our incarcerated parents, as well as the kiddos and the caregivers on the outside. It's the same person that they're doing their classroom work and their one-on-ones with that then is also present for those enhanced visits. And the format that we took for that was we'd have a cohort of about six parents that would have their enhanced visit together. So, it would be those six parents, their children, and, in some cases, the caregivers of the children as well. And really, those visits that which were two or three hours at a time, while we had structure and options in place for activities, things that children and parents could be doing together, we also really just let parents follow their children's lead. That's a lot of the parenting education and skills development work that we do with parents is really learning about their child's age and stage of development, their interests, and learning how to follow their lead in those visits.

So, as coaches, you know, and often we would have multiple staff present for those visits, and really it was just more of a community environment where children were free to go where they wanted to go. Not unlike Allegheny, you have parents and kiddos on the floor playing games. And so, the coaches are present in the room and they have eyes on what's happening, but they're there as a supportive partner in that space in the moment. So really our coaches aren't directly intervening with any action between the parent and the child during those visits. If we see something that seems harmful or maybe there's a child that's unsupervised playing, we'll step in there, but otherwise it's really just an opportunity for the parent and the child to be together to relax and to have less eyes on them during a visit than they would normally have.

Typically, we do not have security staff in the room for those visits. We've had one dad say, "Wow this is what it might feel like when I get home to spend time with my children, this is what it could be like." And so, that's the kind of vibe that we're wanting to create, but then after the visit is really when that coaching can happen, that reflective time with the parents as a group. And then also in the one-on-one: what went well, what would you do differently, did you encounter anything challenging that you just weren't certain how to proceed? Let's do a role play, let's look through the workbook and see "Okay, this is a lesson that applies to that; let's practice." So, trying to find that balance between just allowing organic engagement and then on the backend being able to kind of walk through and process those pieces. I think somebody had mentioned, "What is it like for the children to have somebody watching and observing this interaction?" and that's absolutely not the way that we want to operate. We want to provide a safe bubble that children and parents can be together and not feel like they're in a fishbowl.

Erica Nelson: Awesome. Milo, that was extremely helpful to hear, and the coaching piece we know is a very important aspect of the program as we help parents to engage with their children. I have another question, especially given that I saw in the chat that we actually have a caregiver who's on the line, who is caring for their grandchild while their child is incarcerated. And Milo, this can be for you or your colleagues, but how do you typically engage the caregiver into aspects of your program?

Milo Dittrich: So, the entry point for our program is really with parents who are incarcerated and who have completed the Parenting Inside Out curriculum. That's a prerequisite for our PIO Phase II program. Some programs start with connecting with a child and then trying to develop that connection with a parent that's on the inside and our program pathway really starts from the other direction. So, we're meeting first with that incarcerated parent, hearing about their goals, their hopes, their worries, and then we really support them in having a conversation with the caregiver about engaging in the program.

We've learned the hard way that cold-calls to caregivers are just not a good idea, and when you can avoid that that's best, and if our goal really is to be fostering meaningful and healthy

communication between the children and their parents and also between the incarcerated parent and their caregiver, we start right at jump where it's like, "Okay, how can we support you in having this conversation about the program? How do you talk about why you want to do it and what you're asking of this caregiver?" So, usually by the time we talk to the caregiver during our intake process, some communication has already happened between the parent and the caregiver to kind of set the groundwork.

From there, we really spend time with that caregiver to understand where they're coming from and what their hopes and goals would be for the parent being involved and children engaging in the program. So, really being able to center whatever's alive for that caregiver and what they think is most needed for the child at the time, we're really able to meet them where they're at. We aren't necessarily the incarcerated parent's advocate or the child's advocate; we're really there to be that bridge in between. We follow the caregivers lead: if texting is best for them, if video visits are best for them, if meeting at a park is best for them, we really try to do what's going to meet their need. We have some where coaches are, after every video visit between a parent and child they're talking to that caregiver and talking through ideas and then there's others where we're just another person or another organization that's looking in on their lives. So, in that case we offer resources, books, and just encouragements: "Hey, way to go. Thanks for making that video visit happen."

So, I think it looks different with each caregiver and each family. During COVID it's hard because we before were able to be meeting folks face-to-face and meeting their children and seeing how they were together as a family, and we just don't have that now. And so, I think part of it is just, again, recognizing we aren't in the reality we were, and recognizing that what caregivers can offer and how they can show up is going to be different too. So, just having that grace and that understanding, I think has been huge.

Erica Nelson: Yeah, that's a great point. Meeting the caregivers where they are and being flexible and having that grace is so key. I wanted to offer the opportunity for Brandy or Amy in Allegheny County to talk a little bit: same question, about the involvement or the engagement of caregivers in the program.

Amy Kroll: Our engagement with the families is similar to what Milo said. In the very beginning when people are enrolling in our parenting program and they're working with the instructors in the classroom, they give us the name of their caregiver or their wife or significant other that is caring for the children. We in turn used to, before COVID, meet them on the coached phone calls, which were free phone calls home, so it didn't cost the family anything. Our staff member or family specialist was on the phone with them, they would introduce themselves, they would talk about the classes, and they just had a really good phone call of what the individual in the jail was trying to accomplish and what did they want to see him or her accomplish, and then how we could support them. And usually, by engaging them through those coached phone calls, after the first or second phone call, very quickly they would come in for a contact visit. We

in turn then, during our coached contact visits, all of our staff were there, and the correctional officers are usually on the very perimeter of this huge room where we have 15 family rugs and each family is kind of in their own area with toys and juice boxes and Goldfish, and, you know, stuff like that. We're kind of filtering through, but usually we'll stop by somebody's rug and talk to them [about] things from the phone call. After that first visit it usually opens the door for us to come to that caregiver's home then to help them in whatever they needed. So, very similar to Oregon. I was kind of smiling to myself. We're on two opposite ends of the United States, but our programs in their own way are similar about engaging the caregiver.

Erica Nelson: Thank you so much, Amy. It's so good to hear about the level of engagement that's happening and how caregivers are being incorporated into the aspects of this really important work. There's another question that came in about coaching, it seems like people are very interested in understanding more about the coaching aspects of the program. We're about two minutes in closing out, but really interested in understanding is there a guide, how do you understand how to best coach a parent during a visit? Is there a tool; what tools or resources do you use in terms of understanding how to do this?

Amy Kroll: In our program, in the very, very beginning, we had a child therapist that we had hired part-time for a year, and she was at those contact visits and she was there on those coached phone calls. So, in the very beginning, she really guided our staff on how to engage the families. And then just to watch her style—I used to tease her that she could really work a room, but she was able to go through the whole room and be able to at the end, because every Monday our staff had contact-visit wrap-up. And that is where we would look back on the visit; who seemed to be stressed during their visit; who interacted with their children well during their visit; who was more, as we used to say, in the face of their caregiver and really weren't involved in their kids because sometimes during our coached visits we actually had to go up to one of our clients that was in the jail to say, "no, this is about you engaging with your kids, not you staring at the caregiver's face." Sometimes it was the guys doing it, other times it was our females, but a lot of time during those visits, we were able to read issues with the family, and then when we went to the homes, we casually brought that up, and we heard from the caregivers about issues that they have, and those things then we began to work on with the client that was here in the jail. It was a child therapist that really helped us in the beginning.

Erica Nelson: Thank you so much, Amy. I believe that was truly helpful in hearing that you guys had someone who's trained in doing this work really assist in understanding more of what is the best method and way in coaching these visits. I know we're at time, and we have a few questions that still remain, so one thing I do want to share is we are recording your questions and we can provide follow-up directly to those who have indicated the questions in the chat box. I want to be mindful that we are at a one-hour window, so this has been extremely helpful to hear about the great work that is happening in Oregon and Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. I hope that the work has been helpful in understanding more about how you can do this work in your communities. So, now I'll turn it over to Nicholas to close us out.

Nicholas Read: Great, thank you so much, Erica, and thank you to all of our panelists. Really amazing work to share, and I think, as you said Erica, got great traction with the participants today. If you are on and you have other questions, we will work to get those to Erica and her team, and she can reach out and provide those answers. Again, this webinar is archived or will be archived on the Reentry Week website. We do encourage you to go over and check out the recording, pass it along to those who maybe weren't able to make it, and in addition to all of the resources that are available on Youth and Families Day today, that will be available all week and invite you to check back the remainder of the week as we look into How to Make Reentry Work on Thursday, and on Friday, The Importance of Program Evaluation. Also, on our website there is a brief feedback form, and we would really appreciate your feedback on this and other events and your experience in Reentry Week as a whole. And with that, I will again thank our panelists and our participants today for their time and look forward to a great rest of Reentry Week. Thank you all so much.