

Project Summary/Abstract

Population Groups Served: The RIDGE Project will build upon its proven successes in working with incarcerated fathers by targeting 800 Ohio ex-prisoner fathers who are low-income, within 6 months of release or recently released in one of 20 Ohio counties. **Needs to be Addressed:** Across Ohio, many families, predominantly low-income, are trapped in generational cycles of high recidivism rates, crime, welfare dependency and poverty. When families, particularly fathers, are repeatedly incarcerated, as much research has shown, children are more likely to repeat the behavior they have seen. There is a lack of transitional and ongoing family support for ex-offenders, as well as community discrimination of ex-prisoners and their families, making a successful permanent transition difficult. Supporting the families of ex-prisoners will help stop the disintegration of their families, thereby ending generational cycles of incarceration. **Proposed Services:** Our approach to resolve this epidemic is a combination of an already proven successful combination of family-centered case-management combined with promoting healthy-marriage, responsible fatherhood and employment/job skills through the Keeping FAITH (Families And Inmates Together in Harmony) program. We will begin serving the majority of our clients while they are in prison, although we will also accept clients as they walk in or are referred by judges and partner agencies. At the initial contact with the client, we will assess and evaluate their needs with them and develop a customized Individual Development Plan for each father and their family. Once the assessment is made, clients will begin the first phase of Keeping FAITH; the TYRO Dads Program. This program will meet once per week for 10 weeks in a group setting, and will target the root causes of incarceration and will establish a foundation for the rest of the courses. Next, the clients will enter a Couple Communication program where the spouse/significant other can attend within the prison walls. As the father is released from prison, we will either continue to serve them or connect them to a regional partner to continue services. We have targeted four very needy regions in Ohio, the Northwest, Northeast, Central and the Southwest which encompasses 20 counties. The Ridge Project has a strong partnership with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and is also endorsed by the Ohio Reentry Coalition of 16 Ohio State Agency Director. We will provide, or refer to, necessary transitional supports: Housing, Child support, mental health, substance abuse, health care. The RIDGE Project, directly or through our regional partners, will provide job training, searching and placement and continued family support. At all stages of this process, intensive follow-ups and case management with both the incarcerated father and their family will be taking place. As the fathers progress through the services, they will become members of a local group mentoring and accountability fraternity called TYRO Chapters for continued encouragement and support. Through the Keeping FAITH program, both fathers who are ex-prisoners and their children, as the next generation, become stable, positive influences in their families, neighborhoods, places of employment, local communities and the state of Ohio. At the conclusion of the services, clients will have lower recidivism rates, increases in commitments to marriage and parenting, stronger communication and parenting skills and higher job retention rates.