



# Family Preservation Project

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility  
2010 – 2013 Evaluation Report

June 2014

Prepared for:

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Over the past 30 years, incarceration rates for women across the United States have steadily increased (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Maruschak, Glaze, & Mumola, 2010). Between 1999 and 2004, Oregon ranked seventh in the nation in female prison population growth (Frost, Greene, & Pranis, 2006). Oregon state officials predicted an even greater increase in women entering the prison system with the passage of the 2008 Ballet Measure 57, a legislatively referred state statute that increased prison terms for individuals who were repeatedly convicted of specific drug and property crimes. In March 2010, the Oregon Department of Corrections funded the Family Preservation Project (FPP) at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville, Oregon, in an effort to address the impact of incarceration on mothers and their families.

It is estimated that 80% of incarcerated women are mothers to children ages 0 – 18 (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003), most of whom resided with their children prior to their incarceration and will likely resume parenting roles once released (Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Separation due to incarceration can have a devastating impact on the family. Specifically, maternal incarceration can adversely affect the mother-child relationship, children’s educational attainment, and children’s mental health (LaVigne, Davies, & Brazzell, 2008; Miller, 2006). The risk for children’s behavioral and emotional difficulties can stem from feelings of guilt, shame, confusion, abandonment, and concern about their mother’s well-being (Miller, 2006). The Family Preservation Project, informed by the best practice literature, utilizes an intensive case management and holistic family-centered approach to service provision. The program incorporates components of the Oregon Accountability Model to promote successful reentry by fostering opportunities for incarcerated mothers, their children, and their children’s caregivers to positively rebuild and/or maintain healthy relationships. In addition, the Family Preservation Project is designed to interrupt the cycle of intergenerational criminal justice involvement, poverty, and addiction and support successful reentry to help decrease the risk of recidivism.

### **Evaluation Objectives**

This program evaluation was funded by Portland Community College to review the predisposing issues that place women at risk for criminal justice involvement, risk outcomes for incarcerated mothers and their families, and best practices within correctional systems that address mother-child relational issues. In addition, the program evaluation examined the extent to which FPP uses the literature to inform service provision for incarcerated mothers, their children, and caregivers. The evaluation is organized in three primary components. The first provides a summary of the Family Preservation Project’s history, mission, and key service goals. Second, the evaluation report presents an

overview of the issues that incarcerated mothers and their families encounter. The second component also presents an overview of current nationwide practices that address issues associated with parental incarceration and the potential impact on the well-being of children and families. The evaluation concludes with a report of program outcomes for FPP women, their children, and caregivers followed by a summary of recommendations for the program's future direction.

## Research Methods

The findings are extracted from an analysis of administrative case-level data, which consisted of the case files of 27 incarcerated mother, 46 children, and 41 caregivers. The Family Preservation Project staff provided case-level data from a three year period, between 2010 and 2013. This report presents findings from descriptive, correlational, and mean difference analyses of FPP participants' demographics, service provision, and outcomes between 2010 and 2013.

## Key Findings

- On average, women and their families remained in the program an average of 3.5 years. Women's average age 29 years at the time they entered FPP, and they had an average of 1.7 children. Nearly half the women identified as a person of color (48.3%). The majority of the women, 63%, had less than one year of legal employment and about 85% obtained either a high school diploma or GED prior to incarceration.
- The majority of the women who participated in the Family Preservation Project successfully met their educational and employment goals. Over 90% were successful in meeting their educational goals across all three cohorts. Slightly over 80% of the women participated in Coffee Creek Correctional Facility work programs, and nearly 90% completed a certificate program. Approximately 93% of the alumni women reported living in stable housing with their children and/or significant other, partner, or spouse upon release.
- All the FPP women had in-person visits and phone calls with their children while incarcerated. Across all three cohorts, the women averaged approximately 25 visits and 115 phone calls with their children.
- Women's engagement with interactive literacy activities with their children and support for their children's learning increased over time. In addition, analysis showed that more mother-child visits increased the likelihood that mothers had an increased ability to demonstrate expressive and receptive language, participate in reading with their child, and support book/print concepts.

- All of the women who had letters sent to teachers by the FPP staff sent personal letters to their children's teachers to introduce themselves and express interest in maintaining contact with the teachers throughout the academic year. The FPP staff and/or mothers made additional contact with the majority of the children's teachers. Similarly, the majority of the mothers participated in either parent-teacher conferences or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.
- There was a statistically significant association between mothers and/or FPP staff making additional contact with teachers and mothers' demonstration of expressive and receptive language, participation in reading with their child, and ability to support book/print concepts.
- Approximately 88% of pre-kindergarten, and nearly 78% of school-age children, met their school attendance goals. Four of the eight children in pre-kindergarten recognized over half of the alphabet letters at Time 1 testing and 100% recognized over half of the alphabet letters at Time 2 testing. Among the 26 children whose teachers reported reading outcomes, approximately 54% were reading at grade level and among those who were not reading at grade level, 100% were reported to be making progress.
- An assessment of children's behavioral and emotional functioning indicated that overall, the FPP children's average score was within normal ranges both at baseline and follow-up measurements. At both measurements, the majority of the children were assessed to be at low-risk for experiencing any diagnostic disorder, emotional disorder (i.e., anxiety, depression), behavioral disorder (i.e., aggression, delinquency), or hyperactivity or concentration disorder.
- Nine pre-kindergarten children participated in high quality early childhood education programs, 23 children participated in after school programs, and 26 participated in summer camps with the assistance of the FPP. Camp instructors reported that overall, the FPP children positively benefited from the camp enrichment activities.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Over the past 30 years, incarceration rates for women in the United States have steadily increased (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Maruschak, Glaze, & Mumola, 2010). Since 1991, the number of children of incarcerated mothers has more than doubled, increasing by 131% (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). It is estimated that 80% of incarcerated women are mothers to school-aged children (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003), most of whom resided with their children prior to their incarceration and will likely resume parenting roles once released (Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

A mother's incarceration is a non-normative event that can have a potentially devastating impact on the mother-child relationship (LaVigne, Davies, & Brazzell, 2008; Miller, 2006). Children exposed to maternal incarceration are at risk for a number of interpersonal and developmental problems. The research suggests that children of incarcerated mothers are vulnerable to attachment insecurity issues; internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression; externalizing problems that include aggression and delinquency; and feelings of confusion, fear of abandonment, and vivid memories associated with their mother's incarceration (Baker, McHale, Strozier, & Cecil, 2010; Kampfner, 1995; Miller & Bank, 2013; Myers, Smarsh, Amlund-Hagen, & Kennon, 1999).

### **The Family Preservation Project**

According to the Oregon Department of Corrections (2002), more than 15,000 Oregon children have a parent in prison. Oregon ranked seventh in the nation between 1999 and 2004 in female prison population growth (Frost, Greene, & Pranis, 2006). With the passage of Measure 57 in 2008, state officials predicted that more women will enter the system and have lengthier sentences for property and drug crimes. In response to the needs of families whose lives are affected by incarceration, in 1995, the Oregon Department of Corrections began providing family-oriented services and reentry planning to incarcerated men and women at the Columbia River Correctional Institution in Portland with funding from Portland Community College. In 2000, the college received a small grant to explore the feasibility of an Even Start family literacy program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Between 2002 and 2009, Portland Community College operated an Even Start program for female inmates at the minimum-security division of Coffee Creek with funding from the Oregon Department of Education. In March 2010, the Oregon Department of Corrections funded the Family Preservation Project (FPP) as its successor (Coffee Creek Correctional Facility Family Preservation Project Annual Evaluation Report, 2012).

The mission of the Family Preservation Project (FPP) at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville is to interrupt the intergenerational cycle of criminal justice involvement, poverty, and addiction. In an effort to meet this objective, the Family Preservation Project is

informed by the best practice literature with a focus on holistic family-centered services designed to positively rebuild and maintain the incarcerated mothers' relationships with their children and their children's caregivers. The FPP utilizes components of the Oregon Accountability Model through intensive case management and education to promote successful reentry and foster opportunities for incarcerated mothers, their children, and their children's caregivers to rebuild and/or maintain healthy relationships.

### **Key Service Provision**

Upon initial acceptance into the program, the Family Preservation Project staff engage women in a bio-psychosocial assessment to identify and assist women with short- and long-term goals. Each woman meets individually to review goals on a weekly basis to identify FPP services and other programs within the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility that would assist women to repair family relationships, address history of trauma, and history of drug and alcohol abuse and/or dependence. The bio-psychosocial also identifies women's strengths as a starting point to build upon during their time in the program.

The Family Preservation Project provides mothers with guidance and assistance to learn and implement healthy interaction with their children and opportunities for consistent and meaningful visitations and phone/mail communication to maintain and/or rebuild mother-child relationships. Mothers are encouraged to become actively involved with school- and community-based services that directly affect their children's lives. In addition to helping facilitate mother-child bonds, the program creates collaborative relationships within and outside the facility to support reentry, such as

Karen, a mother of two, began participating in the Family Preservation Project when her two sons were one and two years old. Jordan was born while Karen was incarcerated and Joshua, her older son, was barely speaking. The boys' father was working nights and Karen expressed concerns about the lack of stimulation and normal routine in their home environment. The boys were sleeping late during the day and staying up at night. The program staff arranged for and covered the cost of educational services through an early learning center three days a week. Attending the center required that the boys follow a regular meal and sleep schedule. The center also arranged for Joshua to receive services from a speech pathologist. The boys' father brought them regularly for the Saturday mother-child program visits where she was able to practice newly learned parenting skills and bond with Jordan and Joshua.



housing, treatment for substance abuse and mental health concerns, employment, and parenting supports to improve outcomes for the families served.

Skill building is an essential component of program services that help systematically identify, address, and resolve issues that led to incarceration. Through educational and enrichment services, the Family Preservation Project strives to increase mothers' chances of educational and vocational success by bolstering their development of both hard and soft skills. The women are encouraged to participate in educational programming as a means of obtaining gainful employment once released and creating sustained economic changes to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Upon release, women are offered opportunities to remain connected to FPP staff and formerly incarcerated women through alumni activities and reunion events.

Another primary aim of the program is to assist incarcerated women with rehabilitative and family-oriented services that will prepare for their reentry into society after upon release. Many of the services are designed to identify and interrupt risk factors that contributed to incarceration and prevent the potential for intergenerational cycles of criminal justice involvement and associated risks (e.g., poverty, addiction) that lead to involvement with corrections.

The program also offers educational and enrichment opportunities for children to remain connected to their community by forming positive relationships with positive adults. In addition to bi-monthly contact visits with their mothers in a child friendly environment, children have opportunities to participate in extra-curricular and comprehensive summer enrichment activities. The children receive academic support services and have access to high-quality pre-school placements. If necessary, children may obtain referrals for mental health services. Caregivers receive ongoing support to decrease stress associated with caring for a child during a mother's incarceration.

## **Population Demographics**

The Family Preservation Project staff provides intensive case management services to approximately 10 to 12 incarcerated mothers each year at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Since 2010, the FPP staff has enrolled three cohorts: Cohort 1 in 2010<sup>1</sup> Cohort 2 in 2011 and 2012; and Cohort 3 in 2012 and 2013. FPP staff records indicate that between March 2010 and August 2013, 27 mothers, 46 children, and 41 caregivers participated in the project. In 2010, FPP enrolled 11 women and 19 children into Cohort 1. From 2010 – 2011, 11 women and 19 children were enrolled in Cohort 2 and 5 women and 8 women were enrolled in Cohort 3 from 2012 – 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> Three women in Cohort 1 participated in the Even Start program beginning in 2008 and transitioned into FPP in 2010.

The majority of the women, 88.9%, remained in the program until they were released from prison or were in the program as August 2013. On average, women and their families remained in the program an average of 3.5 years. Women’s average age at was 29 years when they entered FPP; they had an average of 1.7 children. Many of the women identified as a person of color (48.3%), while 40.7% identified as White (see Table 1 for detailed racial demographics). The majority of the women (63%) had less than one year of legal employment and 85.2% obtained either a high school diploma or GED prior to their incarceration.

**Table 1. Family Preservation Project Mothers 2010–2013 (N = 27)**

Demographics	Percentages and Means
Age <sup>a</sup>	29
Race/Ethnicity	
White (non-Hispanic)	40.7%
Black (non-Hispanic)	25.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	11.1%
Hispanic	11.1%
Multi-racial	11.1%
Average number of children <sup>b</sup>	1.7
Average sentence in years <sup>c</sup>	~3.5
High school diploma or GED	85.2%
Legal employment	
< 1 year	63%
1 – 5 years	25.9%
> 5 years	11.1%
Average years in FPP <sup>d</sup>	1.3
Cohorts	
Cohort 1	40.7%
Cohort 2	40.7%
Cohort 3	18.5%
<b>Note:</b> <sup>a</sup> range = 21 – 38 years; <sup>b</sup> range = 1 – 3 children; <sup>c</sup> range = 1 – 5.7 years; <sup>d</sup> range = .5 – 3.5 years	

Of the 46 children participating in the Family Preservation Project, 52.2% were girls. The average of the child participants was 5.5 years as of August 2013. Nearly half, 47.9%, of the children were pre-school age or younger upon entering the program (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Family Preservation Project Children 2010 – 2013 (N = 46)**

Demographics	Percentages and Means
Age <sup>a</sup>	5.5
Sex	
Male	47.8%
Female	52.2%
Grade level <sup>b</sup>	
Younger than preschool age	19.6%
Preschool	28.3%
Kindergarten	15.2%
1 <sup>st</sup> – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grades	19.6%
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> Grades	13%
6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> Grades	2.2%
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade and above	2.2%
Cohorts	
Cohort 1	41.3%
Cohort 2	41.3%
Cohort 3	17.4%
<b>Note:</b> <sup>a</sup> range = 1 – 14 years; <sup>b</sup> grade level at the time child entered FPP	

In an effort to provide important resources to more women incarcerated at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility but not actively participating in the FPP’s intensive case management program, the FPP created the Family Resource Center (FRC). Each month, the FRC serves an additional 10 – 15 women with assistance to:

- participate in their Department of Human Services (DHS) child welfare cases;
- encourage parent-child visitation/time;
- establish or maintain contact with children via mail, phone calls, and contact visitation;
- secure needed services for children; and
- establish contact with children’s schools and caregivers.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE BEST PRACTICES LITERATURE**

Literature on best practices for supporting incarcerated parents and their children remains limited in scope. Nevertheless, it is growing, partially due to the increased focused attention by research scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners (Miller, 2014) seeking programs that demonstrate promising practices through program participants' reports of positive outcomes or recommendations from the scholarly research on where service provision should be focused (Meyerson & Otteson, 2009; Miller, 2014). This program evaluation report provides an overview of the issues that incarcerated parents and their families encounter and highlights areas of common focus among service programs.

### **Transition Support/Planning for Successful Reentry**

Transitioning from prison back into society can pose a significant challenge for formerly incarcerated individuals and their families (Parke & Clark-Stewart, 2003). Incarcerated individuals may become accustomed to the atypical patterns of behavior and prison norms that make it difficult to adjust to societal norms upon release (Haney, 2003). Moreover, years spent in prison can compromise one's ability to obtain productive employment and sustainable housing. Reentry programs that focus on mental and physical health, education, and job training skills are essential to promoting self-reliance and decreasing former incarcerated people's need to access social services. Addressing these needs also increases the likelihood that formerly incarcerated people can provide for their families' well-being.

### **Parenting Skill Building**

A supplemental and important aspect to parent-child contact is a parent's ability to perform effective parenting skills. In recent years, prison-based parenting programs have been increasingly offered to incarcerated parents (Eddy, Kjellstrand, Martinez, & Newton, 2010). Prison-based parenting programs typically focus on improved communication between parent and child. Parents are taught to problem solve, monitor child activities, use positive reinforcement, redirect, and administer age-appropriate, non-violent discipline.

### **Parent-Child Contact**

Incarcerated mothers identify separation from their children as one of the most difficult aspects of their incarceration (Baunach, 1985; Hairston, 1991; Hairston, 2003). Parents worry about their children's well-being—they have concerns about their children's safety and how the disruption affects their children's emotional well-being (Hairston, 2003). Children who are separated from a parent often experience significant stress, fear, and sadness and scholars have attributed parent-child separation due parental incarceration to that of loss of a parent to death (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). While death is naturally occurring and final life event, separation because of incarceration is ambiguous as children

may experience uncertainty on how to mourn the loss of a parent who is alive, yet physically and emotionally absent (Miller, 2006). Many incarcerated individuals desire to be parents to their children, not only in name but also as instrumental figures in parental functions such as on-going supervision, monitoring educational activities, and fostering positive emotional and behavioral development (Eddy et al., 2008). Parent-child visitations can assist parents in taking on these roles and responsibilities.

On-going visitation may be a critical factor in determining children's susceptibility to elevated internalizing and externalizing behaviors, feelings of guilt and shame, and diminished academic achievement. In-person visitations can help children develop a more realistic understanding of their parent's circumstances and may reduce the fear that she is in danger. Contact via phone calls and letter writing can be equally important to building and maintaining a healthy bond between parent and child. On-going communication allows families to share experiences and maintain family norms such as celebrating events, observing holidays, or participating in religious observances—all of which helps families remain emotionally connected (Hairston, 2003). In addition, scholars suggest that when parents have continuous contact with their children, they are more likely to experience successful reunification with their families and are less likely to recidivate (Bales & Mears, 2008; Holt & Miller, 1972).

## **Enrichment Activities for Children**

Enrichment activities such as high quality early education and after-school programs, summer camps, and sporting activities provides innovative and creative experiences to increase academic achievement, foster motivation, and encourage engagement (Loeba, Bridges, Bassok, Fuller, & Rumberger, 2005). Enrichment activities can also have a positive effect on children's behavioral and emotional well-being by broadening their experiences, improving socialization skills, building self-confidence, and developing basic life skills (Loeba, Fuller, Kagan, & Carrol, 2004). Such activities provide children with additional supports that expose them to positive experiences. For children who experience difficult life circumstances such as exposure to poverty, parental substance abuse and mental health concerns, and community and familial criminal activity, providing enrichment opportunities can open doors and present opportunities to gain skills that could help them become productive members of society and avoid situations that contribute to criminal justice involvement, addiction, and poverty.

## **Support to Caregivers**

While children of incarcerated father typically remain in the care of their mothers, children of incarcerated mothers, on average, do not reside with their fathers during their mother's incarceration. Rather, these children often have varied and sometimes uncertain living

arrangements (LaVigne, Davies, & Brazzell, 2008; Miller, 2006). Many children of incarcerated mothers are either formally or informally in the care of a grandparent, other relatives, or family friend. Assuming the additional responsibility for a child, in particular a child of an incarcerated parent, can place significant stress (e.g., financial hardship, emotional strain) on the caregiver, the relationship between the caregiver and child, and the relationship between caregiver and incarcerated parent (Hairston, 2003). Experts agree that communication with children’s caregivers plays an essential role in renewing and maintaining healthy relationships between the incarcerated parent and children’s caregiver. Providing caregivers with opportunities to express the difficulties experienced throughout incarceration can be key to enabling caregivers to preserve and effectively assume the surrogate parental role. Service provision that also addresses the complications of co-parenting responsibilities can be an important aspect of family emotional healing and well-being.

## **FAMILY PRESERVATION PROJECT OUTCOMES**

### **Mothers’ Educational, Employment, and Long-Term Housing Outcomes**

In an effort to promote long-term success and stability after release, the Family Preservation Project staff work with women to identify educational, employment, and long-term housing goals. The Family Preservation Project collaborates with Oregon Department of Correction partners to provide participants with adult educational opportunities that include GED preparation, adult basic and skill

Jonas was almost three years old when he experienced the sudden and traumatic separation from his mother when she was incarcerated and sentenced to more than three years in prison. Jonas was placed in his grandmother’s care, who became his main source of emotional support. Jonas qualified for Head Start but refused due to separation anxiety. The Family Preservation Project staff and Jonas’s mother were concerned that his refusal to attend preschool would hinder his readiness for Kindergarten. Jonas’s separation anxiety symptoms worsened and he reported unusual perceptual experiences but his grandmother did not seek mental health support. However, there was a willingness to allow Jonas to participate in the Saturday mother-child program. Jonas attended regularly and his mother provided him with social and emotional support. After being in the program for 17 months, Jonas entered Kindergarten and his attendance rate was over 90% for Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

building education, and postsecondary education classes. Through these programs, women are also encouraged to participate in job skills, improved job skills, or employability training. Identifying goals to assume or reassume employment upon release is an important step toward financial and emotional stability for the women and their families. In addition to finding gainful employment, establishing long-term housing is a significant indicator for a successful, restorative reentry experience. The FPP staff work intensively with the women to reduce barriers for securing long-term housing.

**Educational training.** All FPP participants across all three cohorts identified educational goals, and most successfully achieved these goals.

- The majority of the women (85.2%) had obtained a high school diploma or GED at the time of enrollment in the FPP program (81.8% in Cohort 1, 81.8% in Cohort 2, and 100% in Cohort 3).
- All participants without a GED identified obtaining this credential as their primary educational goal. The majority of the FPP participants identified a post-secondary education goal (37%) or other types of skill building and/or training in a specified trade goal (44.4%).
- Across all three Cohorts, 92.6% made progress toward their educational goals.
- Of the participants in Cohort 1, 10 of 11 women (90.9%) who identified educational goals made progress toward their goals. Two women completed GED, one made progress toward a post-secondary course, three completed one or more post-secondary courses, one participated in small business classes, two completed the FASFA to explore post-secondary educational courses, and one participated in behavioral health or other treatment educational training.
- Of the participants in Cohort 2, 100% of the 11 women made progress toward their identified educational goals. One woman earned her GED, one passed one or more GED subtests, one completed one or more post-secondary courses, one participated in small business classes, one completed the FASFA to explore post-secondary educational courses, four women took computer classes, and two participated in either behavioral health or other treatment educational training.
- Among the participants in Cohort 3, all four women who identified educational goals made progress, participating in computer classes. Only one participant did not identify an educational goal.

**Job training or employability skills.** Nearly all FPP participants across the three cohorts identified employment goals related to job training, employability, improve employment, and obtain employment..

- Most of the FPP women participants (85.8%) identified employment job training, employability, improved employment, or gain employment as a goal.
- Twenty-two of the 27 women (81.5%) participated in Coffee Creek Correctional Facility work programs (81.8% in Cohort 1, 81.8% in Cohort 2, and 80% in Cohort 3).
- Of the 18.5% (five out of 27) women who did not participate in a Coffee Creek Correctional Facility work program, four participated in a certificate and/or job referral program.
- The majority of the women, 88.9%, entered and completed a certificate program (e.g., financial credit, budgeting skills, barista, nutrition, and food handling classes). While Cohort 3 had the lowest participation rate in for the job referral program, 80% of the women participated in the certificate program. Cohort 1 participated and completed the certificate program at a rate of 90.9% and Cohort 2 at a rate of 90.9%.
- Several women participated in the Road Success Transition program or other type of job program (70.4%). Cohort 1 had the highest participation at a rate of 81.8%, followed by Cohort 2's participation rate of 63.6%, and Cohort 3 had a participation rate of 60%.

**Long-term housing.** The majority of the women who participated in FPP reported finding long-term housing and residing with their children upon release.

- Twenty women exited the Family Preservation Project and were released from Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Fourteen of the alumni women (70%) reported residing in stable housing (i.e., living in an apartment or home). Two women were reported living in transitional housing and two were in a treatment facility. The FPP staff were unable to establish where two of the FPP alumni resided once released from the program.
- Of the women who reported stable housing, 92.8% lived with their children. Approximately, 65% (64.3%) resided with a significant other, partner, or spouse. One woman reported living with her spouse and having child visitations.
- Of the women who reported residing in transitional housing or in a treatment center, 50% reported either living with their children or having child visitations.



## **Interactions with Children, Parenting Skills, and Parent Involvement with Children's School Outcomes**

An important aspect of the Family Preservation Project services is to support mothers' development of parenting skills. Through twice-monthly Saturday visits, mothers are given the opportunity to practice their skills they learn from the Parenting Inside Out (PIO) curriculum, an evidenced-based therapeutic intervention program for incarcerated parents designed to increase positive parent-child interactions and develop healthy relationships among the parent-child dyad (Eddy et al., 2010). Mothers receive immediate feedback from FPP staff on how well they demonstrated effective parenting. The Family Preservation Project staff encourages and facilitates increased contact between the FPP mother participants and their children. One of the most important ways FPP staff support mothers in parenting from prison involves encouraging and facilitating participants' engagement in their children's education. Mothers are supported to communicate with their children's school, participating in parent-teacher conferences and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings via phone and written communication.

**Interactions between mothers and children.** The Family Preservation Project provides mothers with the opportunity to participate in bi-monthly three-hour Saturday mother-child visits. Women are also encouraged to connect with their children by phone.

- All program participants had a minimum of four visits with an average of 25.6 visits while in the program.
- Cohort 1 averaged 32.8 visits (range = 7 – 76; average years in FPP = 1.7), Cohort 2 averaged 25.2 visits (range = 14 – 44; average years in FPP = 1.4), and Cohort 3 averaged 10.6 visits (range = 4 – 10; average years in FPP = .6).
- All participants had a minimum of 20 phone calls, with an average of 115.4 calls during their term in the program.
- Cohort 1 averaged 147.6 phone calls (range = 32 – 328; average years in FPP = 1.7), Cohort 2 averaged 113.5 phone calls (range = 72 – 168; average years in FPP = 1.4), and Cohort 3 averaged 48.8 phone calls (range = 20 – 104; average years in FPP .6).

**Parenting skills.** All Family Preservation Project mothers but one participated in the Parenting Inside Out (PIO) parenting skills training. During the mother-child visits, FPP staff assessed indicators of appropriate and positive mother-child interactions. The skill assessment includes such indicators that the mother:

- Maintains a consistent bond with their child;
- Provides their child with emotional support, nurturance, and encouragement;
- Allows the child to take the lead and demonstrating flexibility;
- Plays with child and has fun together and setting up activities that the child will express interest;
- Provides equal attention to both children when there is more than one child;
- Listens sensitively to the child;
- Answers the child's questions in an age appropriate manner;
- Helps the child learn to identify and express feelings of grief and loss;
- Communicates clear and age-appropriate expectations;
- Expresses love toward their child and is attuned to their/her needs;
- Asserts herself as a parent who cares deeply for the well-being for her child;
- Uses "I" statements when talking about feelings with the child;
- Remains calm when the child shares upsetting information about how they are being parented by caregivers;
- Avoids engaging in power struggles with the child;
- Learns to patiently set limits when the child does not follow directions;
- Models respectful and responsible behavior for the child; and
- Demonstrates active involvement in the child's education and social services

**Parent support of children's literacy development.** The Family Preservation Project employs the Parent Education Profile (PEP) to assess a parent's behaviors, attitudes, and understanding of their child's literacy development and plan strategies to increase parental skills that produce age-appropriate children's literacy outcomes. The FPP program staff uses the PEP Scale II and Scale III.

The PEP Scale II assesses a parent's role in interactive literacy and has three indicators: 1) expressive and receptive language; 2) reading with children; and 3) supporting book/print concepts. A 5-point Likert scale is used to assess a parent's competency in these indicators. Scores for each indicator are averaged, with a higher score indicating a higher level of competency (range = 1 – 5).

The PEP Scale III uses five indicators to assess a parent's role in supporting a child's learning in formal education settings: 1) parent-school communication; 2) expectations of child and family; 3) monitoring progress/reinforcing learning; 4) partnership with educational settings; and 5) belief in child's success is learning. The five indicators are averaged and higher scores indicate a higher level of competency (range = 1 – 5). Both the Scale II and Scale III are measured through FPP staff observation twice, once at

baseline (pre-test) and once approximately six-months after baseline (post-test).

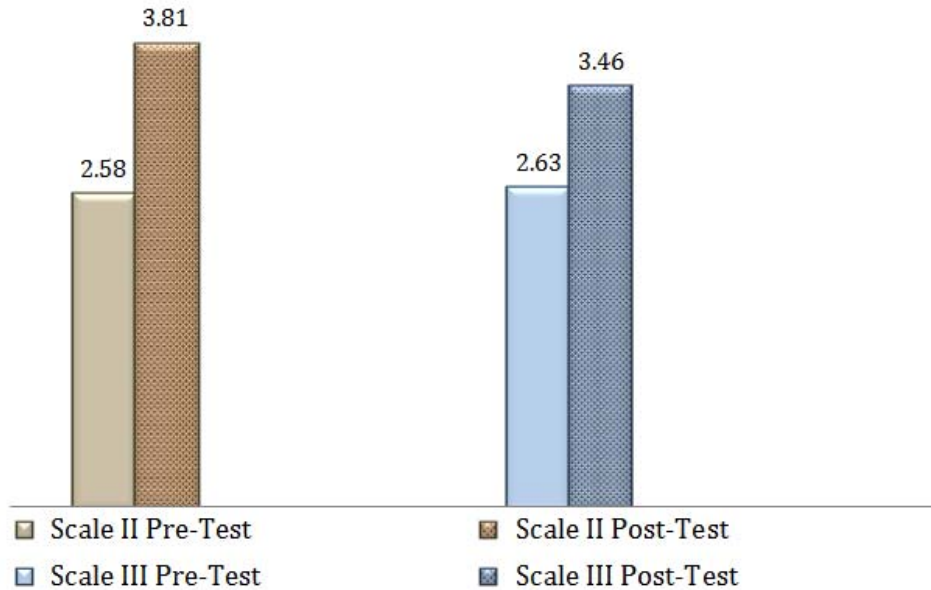
Eighteen mothers had post-test PEP Scale II scores.

- Of the women who were evaluated on their interactive literacy activities (PEP Scale II) with their children, final scores improved from baseline. The pre-test PEP Scale II scores averaged 2.58 (range = 1.33 – 3.66, SD = .77) and the post-test PEP Scale II scores averaged 3.81 (range = 3 – 5, SD = .68) (see Figure 1).
- The mean differences between the pre-test PEP Scale II average score (2.58) and post-test Scale II average score (3.81) was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) such that there was a statistically significant improvement in pre-test Scale II and post-test Scale II scores. The findings indicate that the FPP mothers interactive literacy skills, expressive and receptive language; reading with children; and supporting book/print concepts, meaningfully improved over time.

Twelve mothers had post-test PEP Scale III scores.

- The FPP participants' role in supporting their child's learning in formal education setting PEP Scale III scores also improved from baseline to final measurement. The pre-test PEP Scale III scores averaged 2.63 (range = 1.25 – 4, SD = .78) and the post-test PEP Scale III scores averaged 3.46 (range = 2.75 – 4.5, SD = .5) (see Figure 1).
- There was a statistically significant mean differences between the pre-test PEP Scale III average score (2.63) and post-test Scale III average score (3.46) ( $p < .001$ ) such that there was a statistically significant improvement in the mothers' average pre-test Scale III and post-test Scale III scores. These findings suggest that the FPP mothers demonstrated meaningful improvements in taking an active role in supporting their children's learning in formal education settings through parent-school communication; expectations of child and family; monitoring progress/reinforcing learning; partnership with educational settings; and belief in child's success is learning.

**Figure 1. Parent Education Profile (PEP)  
Scale II and Scale III Pre- and Post-Test Scores**



The potential associations between number of mother-child contacts through either in-person visits or phone communication and PEP scores were analyzed, revealing a statistically significant association with mothers' scores on the post-test PEP Scale II scores.

- Post-test PEP Scale II scores were positively and significantly associated with mother-child visits, such that in-person visits increased the likelihood that mothers would demonstrate improved expressive and receptive language, participate in reading with their child, and support of book/print concepts ( $p < .01$ ).
- Mother-child phone contact was positively associated with post-test PEP Scale II scores, as well. Mothers who had more phone contact were more likely to demonstrate increased expressive and receptive language, participation in reading with their child, and ability to support book/print concepts ( $p < .01$ ).

However, no statistically significant association was found between the number of mother-child contact visits and mothers' post-test PEP Scale III scores. Neither was there a statistically significant association between the number phone calls and post-test PEP Scale III scores. In other words, neither mother-child contact visits nor phone calls were associated with outcomes associated with mothers' support of their children's learning in formal education settings (i.e., parent-school communication, expectations of child and

family, monitoring progress/reinforcing learning, partnership with educational settings, belief in child's success is learning).

**Involvement with their children's teachers.** The FPP staff initiates contact with schools on behalf of the mothers, by sending letters of introduction and requesting on-going communication about children's progress.

- The FPP staff sent letters of introduction to teachers for 85.2% of the mothers. Approximately, 91% (90.9%) of the Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 mothers and 60% of Cohort 3 mothers had letters sent on their behalf.
- All participants who had letters sent to teachers by the FPP staff also sent personal letters to their children's teachers to introduce themselves and express interest in maintaining contact with the teachers throughout the academic year.
- The majority of the FPP staff and/or mothers made additional contact with school teachers. In Cohort 1, 90.9% had at least one additional contact (range = 1 – 23). Of the Cohort 2 mothers, 90.9% had additional contact (range = 1 – 24) and of the Cohort 3 mothers, 20% had at least five additional contacts (range = 5 – 6). The most common reason that either the FPP and/or mothers did not make additional contact with teachers for Cohorts 1 & 2 was due to the child's caregiver not permitting contact.
- Similarly, the majority of the mothers participated in either parent-teacher conferences or IEPs. In Cohort 1, 81.8% had conferences and/or IEPs (range = 1 – 10). Of the Cohort 2 mothers, 90.9% participated in conferences and/or IEPs with school teachers (range = 1 – 7) and of the Cohort 3, only one mother had a conference with a school teacher.

Among the mothers with a PEP Scale II score ( $n = 18$ ), there were statistically significant associations between mothers' contact with school teachers and participation in conferences/IEPs and post-test PEP Scale II scores.

- There was a positive significant association between mothers and/or FPP staff making additional contact (in addition to the first letters sent by FPP staff) with teachers and post-test PEP Scale II scores. If a mother or FPP staff made additional contact with teachers, mothers' scores on post-test PEP Scale II were higher ( $p < .01$ ).
- Mothers' participation in parent-teacher conferences and IEPs was positively associated with post-test PEP Scale II scores, such that the more mothers participated in conferences/IEPs, the more likely they were to demonstrate

increased expressive and receptive language, participation in reading with their child, and ability to support book/print concepts ( $p < .05$ ).

- There were no statistically significant associations between additional contact or conferences/IEP participation and post-test PEP Scale III scores.

## **Children's Early Education, Attendance, and Reading Outcomes**

The Family Preservation Project is committed to supporting children in their educational development and assisting mothers and caregivers in participating in their children's education. The FPP staff work with the incarcerated mothers to identify and track children's participation in high-quality educational programs, attendance, and extra-curricular activities.

**Early education participation.** FPP provides full financial support and resources for high quality early childhood education programs that promote essential intellectual, socialization, and educational outcomes.

- The Family Preservation Project assisted families in accessing high quality early childhood education programs for nine pre-kindergarten age children. Of the children in Cohort 1, 27.2%(3 of 11) participated in early childhood education. In Cohort 2, 66.7% (6 of 9) children participated in early childhood education programs through FPP assistance. The one child who was eligible for program assistance in Cohort 3 received early childhood education services through FPP.

**Children's attendance.** Given that attendance is an important indicator of educational success, FPP staff tracks pre-school attendance for children who participate in the program.

- Attendance goal for pre-kindergarten children ages two to five was set at 70% attendance. The majority of the pre-kindergarten children, 15 of 17 (88.2%), met their attendance goals. In Cohort 1, 90% (9 of 10) and in Cohort 2, 85.7% (6 of 7) of the children two to five years old met their attendance goals. There were no FPP enrolled children in Cohort 3 between the ages of two and five with recorded attendance.
- Attendance goal for school-age children in grades kindergarten and higher was set at 90%. The majority of the children with recorded attendance data (14 of 18) met their attendance goals 77.7%. In Cohort 1, 100% (7 of 7), in Cohort 2, 50% (4 of 8), and in Cohort 3, 100% (3 of 3) met their attendance goals.

**Early childhood education reading preparation.** The Family Preservation Project assists families in identifying and placing children in high-quality early education programs to promote better educational outcomes. The FPP staff uses the Alphabet Knowledge (upper-case letters) section of the scientifically-based Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening Pre-Kindergarten (PALS-Pre-K) assessment tool. The assessment tool is designed for pre-kindergarten children, ages four years old. Children are randomly presented with the 26 upper-case letters of the alphabet. The PALS-Pre-K helps identify skills that are indicate future reading and writing success and may provide parents, caregivers, and teachers with information on where a child may require specialized reading and writing attention (University of Virginia, 2005).<sup>2</sup>

- Pre-kindergarten children were assessed by the PALS Pre-K measurement twice. Of the eight children who were assessed by the PALS Pre-K screening tool at Time 1, 50% correctly identified 14 upper-case letters in the alphabet (range = 0 – 24). At Time 2, 100% correctly recognized at least 18 upper-case letters in the alphabet (range = 18 – 26).

**School-age children’s reading level.** The program staff identifies and tracks whether school age children meet their reading at grade level outcomes.

- Among the 26 children whose teachers reported reading outcomes, 53.8% read at

Natasha’s situation was different from most women in the program. Her 19-year-old daughter, Ava, was the caregiver for her eight-year-old daughter Daniele. Throughout the 18 months the family was enrolled in FPP, Ava struggled to maintain work, secure housing, and take care of her younger sister. Natasha was keenly aware of the stress and instability she had caused in her daughters’ lives. She worked hard to parent from a distance. The Family Preservation Project facilitated communication between Natasha and Daniele’s school. She participated in Daniele’s IEP, where she received special education and social support skills. The program staff facilitated meetings between Natasha and Ava to address feelings of shame, guilt, and resentment. The meetings helped heal their relationship. Natasha also worked diligently to apply for housing and find transitional housing. Upon release, she was accepted into a long-term housing program that she applied for through FPP. Natasha is employed and recently was promoted to manager.

<sup>2</sup> For additional information on the PALS Pre-K measure, please see University of Virginia. (2005). *PALS-PreK: Phonological awareness literacy screening*. School readiness assessment. Charlottesville, VA: Author.

grade level. Approximately, 64.3% ( $n = 9$ ) of Cohort 1 children, 33.3% ( $n = 3$ ) of Cohort 2, and 66.7% ( $n = 2$ ) of Cohort 3 children whose teachers reported reading outcomes, were reading at grade level.

- Among the 46.2% of children who did not read at grade level, teachers reported that all were making progress toward this goal.

## Children's Behavioral and Emotional Outcomes

Family Preservation Project staff work with incarcerated mothers to collaborate with school teachers and caregivers to monitor children's behavioral and emotional functioning. The goal is to determine the extent to which potential behavioral or emotional difficulties worsen, remain the same, or improve at home and/or in the classroom.

**Children's behavioral and emotional functioning.** The Family Preservation Project staff uses the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a brief measurement tool that is used for children ages four to 17 to assess their behavioral and emotional attributes. The SDQ identifies problems that are chronic, cause distress, cause social impairment, and are burdensome to others. The SDQ is a 25-item questionnaire that assesses both strength and difficulties in the following areas: 1) emotional symptoms; 2) conduct problems; 3) hyperactivity or inattention; 4) peer relationships; and 5) prosocial skills. A SDQ uses a three-point Likert scale (0 = Not true, 1 = Somewhat true, and 2 = Certainly true) to measure responses. The total score is a summed score that is composed of the first four scales to determine a child's overall stress level. Total scores range from 0 – 40, excluding the fifth prosocial skills scale. The SDQ questionnaire includes four risks for diagnostic predictions: 1) any diagnosis; 2) emotional disorders (i.e., anxiety, depression); 3) behavioral disorders (i.e., aggression, delinquency); and 4) hyperactivity or concentration disorders. The risk levels are: 1) low risk; 2) medium risk; and 3) high risk. The questionnaire may be completed by a teacher/education personnel or parent/other identified caregiver (Goodman, 1997).<sup>3</sup> The FPP staff recommends that parents and caregivers utilize the SDQ as a guide to identify a child's potential risk level for behavioral and emotional functioning (Hahn, Maxim, & Carlton, 2012).

- Twenty-one children had SDQ initial scores on their behavioral and emotional functioning with an average overall stress total score of 10.<sup>4</sup>
- The SDQ initial scores for 11 children in Cohort 1 averaged 9.3. In Cohort 2, the

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<sup>3</sup> For additional information on the SDQ measure and psychometric properties see Goodman, R. (1997). The strengths and difficulties questionnaire: A research note. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 38(5),581-586.

<sup>4</sup> The overall stress level ranges are: 1) 0 – 12 = close to average, 2) 12 – 16 = slightly raised, 3) 16 – 19 = high, and 4) 19 – 40 is very high



average SDQ initial score for 10 children was 10.7.<sup>5</sup>

- Diagnostic predictions indicated that 9.5% ( $n = 2$ ) of the children's scores indicated "high risk" and 33.3% ( $n = 7$ ) of children's score indicated "medium risk" for any diagnosis.
- Approximately 4.8% ( $n = 1$ ) scored within the "high risk" range and 9.5% ( $n = 2$ ) children scored within the "medium risk" for an emotional disorder.
- Again, 4.8% ( $n = 1$ ) scored within the "high risk" and 19% ( $n = 4$ ) scored within the "medium risk" for experiencing a behavioral disorder.
- Approximately 33.3% ( $n = 7$ ) of the children scored within the "medium risk" for hyperactivity or concentration disorder (see Table 3).

**Children's behavioral and emotional progress.** The SDQ follow-up asks additional questions pertaining to observed differences in children's behavioral and emotional functioning approximately six months after the initial measure (see Table 3).

- Twenty-one children had SDQ follow-up scores with an average overall stress total score of 8.5. Of the 21 children, 14.3% ( $n = 3$ ) had follow-up scores that were more than three points higher than their initial scores.
- The SDQ follow-up scores for 11 children in Cohort 1 averaged 9.3. In Cohort 2, the average SDQ initial score for 10 children was 7.5.
- In terms of diagnostic predictions, 19% ( $n = 4$ ) children's scores indicated "high risk" and 4.8% ( $n = 1$ ) score indicated "medium risk" for any diagnosis.<sup>6</sup>
- One child scored within the "high risk" range and 9.5% ( $n = 2$ ) scored within the "medium risk" for an emotional disorder.
- Two children scored within the "high risk" and 4.8% ( $n = 1$ ) scored within the "medium risk" for experiencing a behavioral disorder.
- Approximately 14.3% ( $n = 3$ ) of the children scored within the "medium risk" for hyperactivity or concentration disorder.
- Twelve (60%) of the children's teachers or caregivers reported at follow-up that since receiving FPP services the child's problems are either "a bit better" ( $n = 6$ ) or "much better" ( $n = 6$ ). Teachers and caregivers indicated that five of the children's

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<sup>5</sup> Children in Cohort 3 did not have recorded SDQ scores at baseline or follow-up.

<sup>6</sup> While the number of children who scored within the "high risk" range for experiencing any disorder increased, the total number of children who either scored within the "high risk" or "medium risk" decreased from 9 at the initial SDQ measure to 5 at the follow-up SDQ measure.

problems were “about the same” and four children had missing responses from their teachers or caregivers.

- Most teachers and caregivers ( $n = 12$ ), indicated that receiving FPP services have been helpful in providing information and/or making children’s problems more manageable. Three teacher or caregiver respondents reported that FPP services helped “a great deal” and nine reported that FPP services helped “quite a bit.” Two respondents reported that services helpful “only a little” and seven left the question unanswered.

**Table 3. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Scores ( $n = 21$ )**

Initial SDQ Measure	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
<b>Diagnostic Predictions:</b>			
Any diagnosis	2	7	13
Emotional disorder	1	2	18
Behavioral disorder	1	4	16
Hyperactivity or concentration disorder	0	7	14
<b>Average Overall Stress Total Score:</b>	10		
Follow-Up SDQ Measure	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
<b>Diagnostic Predictions:</b>			
Any diagnosis	4	1	16*
Emotional disorder	1	2	18
Behavioral disorder	2	1	18*
Hyperactivity or concentration disorder	0	3	18*
<b>Average Overall Stress Total Score:</b>	8.5		
*Note: The overall number of children who were at low risk for experiencing diagnostic disorders increased from the initial SDQ measurement to the follow-up measurement. The average overall stress total score from the initial SDQ measure to the follow-up SDQ measurement decreased 1.5 points for the 21 children.			

### Children’s Social Skills and Self-Confidence

The Family Preservation Project provides support and resources for high quality afterschool and summer camp programs that promote improved social skills and self-confidence. Children participate in activities such as tutoring, swimming lessons, horseback riding, soccer, dance, and sporting activities. Children are also given opportunities to participate in full week overnight comps where they cook outdoors, hike, kayak, observe meteor showers, and do arts and crafts.

**Children’s improved social skills and increased self-confidence.** The Family Preservation Project has made a concerted effort to collaborate with outside organizations to provide enrichment activities for children to improve their social skills and increase self-confidence.

- The FPP staff assisted families in finding after school programs for 23 children. In Cohort 1, 42.1% (8 of 19) of the children participated in after school programs through the assistance of FPP and 87.5% (14 of 16) of the children in Cohort 2. Only 1 child (14.3%) of the seven children in Cohort 3 participated in FPP assisted after school programs.<sup>7</sup>
- Twenty-six children participated in summer camps with FPP assistance. Approximately, 72.2% (13 of 18) of the children in Cohort 1, 57.1% (8 of 14) of the children in Cohort 2, and 62.5% (5 of 8) of the children in Cohort 3 who were old enough to attend summer camp participated.
- Overall, camp instructors reported that the FPP children loved the enrichment activities such as hiking, building forts, exploring caves, cooking over a camp stove, and watching meteor showers. The instructors indicated that the children learned new skills and had made new friends.

## Caregiver Reports

An important aspect of the Family Preservation Project’s services is to support caregivers as they either transition into single-parenthood, become parents for the first time, or enter into a parental role in later adulthood. Assuming the additional responsibility for a child of an incarcerated parent has the potential to create emotional and financial stress. Providing supports to assist caregivers during a loved one’s incarceration can be essential to the well-being for individual within a family and the functioning of family system during the incarceration period and upon reentry.

**Unexpected transition into the caregiving role.** The unexpected responsibility of caring for one’s grandchildren later in life is often a difficult transition for many caregivers. One grandmother shared how FPP helped ameliorate some the challenges.

*I could not imagine having navigated the two years I was part of Coffee Creek without it. One day you are just another grandma, working, playing, and living your life. Then your adult child goes to prison and you get three kids to care for. How? Where? When? What? No one understands and knows how we feel. Our friends don't understand and often judge. This program*

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<sup>7</sup> Most of the Cohort 3 children were newly enrolled in FPP, toward the latter part of the school year. These children were unlikely able to register for early childhood education or after school programs.

*gave me and my family the care and nurturing that we all needed during that two years. It provided a connection with others going through the same thing...others that could offer support, insight, and understanding.*

**A family-centered environment that promotes family bonding.** Providing children with opportunities to visit with their mothers in an environment that is child friendly and family centered can help break down the barriers to developing a meaningful visitation that fosters healthy family bond time. Grandmother caregivers shared how the family-centered and child friendly FPP visitations positively affected their grandchildren and the relationship between their daughters and grandchildren.

*My four-year-old grandson was abruptly separated from his mother at the age of one and a half. This event has deeply affected us all, but most powerfully it has changed the course of my grandsons life. Before entering this program, my grandson's experiences with his mother were limited to the confines of visiting hours in a room filled with strangers. This program has changed everything for my daughter and the bond she shares with her son. The program provides mutual learning opportunities, educational supports, and mentorship that any mother and child would benefit from, but especially the Mothers at Coffee Creek. Every month my grandson leaves his program with smiles and stories to tell, projects to show off, and loving memories shared with his mother. Because of their bond my daughter is resolved to leave this program with focus and skills needed to build a positive life. With the support of this program and it's incredible staff, she will leave more prepared to be a successful mother and a contributing member of society. This process fills me with hope.*

*We will always be grateful for the FPP program. My daughter has been given the chance to have meaningful bonding time with her son outside the general visiting. They share quite reading time, sharing lunch together...a chance to share memories together and with other children going through the same ordeal. My daughter is given the chance to communicate more times during the week with her son. She has received much support from the wonderful staff in the FPP program and because of this program I know my daughter will leave with all the tools she needs to be successful with her son and in her life.*

### **Maintaining a connection to help cope and assist in reunification.**

Maintaining a connection between the incarcerated mother and her family can help families cope with having an incarcerated mother or daughter and assist with the often difficult transition of them re-entering the family upon release. Grandmothers expressed how FPP helped their family cope with the traumatic event of their daughters'

incarceration and provided them with the assistance to foster a health reunification process.

*The support this program has given me and my family has truly strengthened us. It taught us how to support ourselves and thus how to support our family member when they came home. How to cope not only with the turmoil of the separation but also the adjustment needed with coming back together. Family Preservation has helped us each step of the way. They helped my daughter, my grandchildren, and me. The program allowed and helped my daughter to stay connected with her kids...going to Reach In, taking part in conferences at their schools, and having one-on-one snuggle time. Trusting the knowledge learned and using it.*

*When my daughter came home, I knew what to expect. I knew how to help. I had learned when to let go and how to support her. My daughter is doing great. She and I have a special relationship now that we had not had before. She is an amazing mother. I am proud of her strength, confidence and drive. She is the person I knew she could be, and now I can just be "Mom" to my daughter and Grandma" to my grandchildren. The families who come through this program gain all of this: the support needed to not only survive the trauma but to strengthen and grow both individually and as families.*

## SUMMARY

The Family Preservation Project's mission is to interrupt the intergenerational cycle of criminal justice involvement, poverty, and addiction through a holistic, family-centered approach that is informed by best practices. The program incorporates components of the Oregon Accountability Model to foster healthy relationships between incarcerated mothers and their children to promote a healthy reentry process and break intergenerational cycles of criminal justice involvement, poverty, and addiction. These goals are achieved through participation in educational classes (i.e., GED, post-secondary, therapeutic treatment programs) and job/employability training. The FPP staff also works with women to explore long-term housing once released. A noteworthy aspect to service provision is the FPP staff's efforts to teach mothers parenting skills and allow them to demonstrate their skills through three-hour therapeutic visitations, phone calls, and letters. The women engage with their children's teachers so that they may maintain an active role in their children's education. Another noteworthy FPP service is the identifying and monitoring children's behavioral and emotional functioning. Children participate in positive enrichment activities that improve socialization skills, build self-confidence, and develop basic life skills. Caregivers benefit from the services provided to the incarcerated mothers and their children by way of participating in at minimum a part-time co-parenting relationship with the incarcerated mothers. In addition, caregivers may participate in support groups that focus on the emotional strain of having an incarcerated loved one and the difficulties of supporting children who are vulnerable to emotional and behavioral concerns.

Between 2010 and 2013, the FPP staff has enrolled three cohorts and served 27 mothers, 46 children, and 41 caregivers participated in the project. On average, the women and children met most of their goals and demonstrated improved outcomes since beginning the program. Overall, the incarcerated mothers met their educational and employability goals as well as secured stable housing upon release. The women were able to maintain contact with their children during their time in the program—engaging in an impressive number of in-person and phone communications. Equally impressive was the number of women who showed improved parenting skills and engagement with their children's educational needs. Mother-child contact is essential to fostering positive childhood behavioral and emotional well-being. A mother's engagement in their children's education supports future academic achievement. Overall, the children who participated in FPP met and showed progress toward their education goals. In addition, the majority of the children demonstrated low-risk for experiencing emotional and behavioral disorders. Notably, teachers and caregivers reported improvements in children's functioning and that FPP services were instrumental in the children's successful outcomes.

An effective approach to reducing incarcerated mothers' risks for recidivism and allaying the stressors of incarceration on families is a holistic family-centered model that

connects families to multiple supports, builds on family strengths, and fosters opportunities for incarcerated mothers, their children, and their children's caregivers to rebuild and/or maintain healthy relationships. Consistent with the best practice literature, the Family Preservation Project appropriately prioritizes essential services such as education, employability, parenting, early childhood education, enrichment activities, and supports to caregivers that promote a successful reentry process for incarcerated mothers and their families.

## **Recommendations**

KM Research and Consulting proposes three recommendations to improve articulating FPP program goals and tracking outcomes for participants. As stated in FPP's mission, the program focuses on interrupting the intergenerational cycle of criminal justice involvement, poverty, and addiction. The program goals clearly speak to families' risks for criminal justice involvement and poverty through services that connect incarcerated mothers with educational opportunities, employment training, and long-term housing referrals. In addition, services for children that provide access to mother-child visitations, high quality education, enrichment activities can reduce children's risks for incarceration and poverty. The FPP should clearly state how services and referrals address incarcerated mothers' prior substance abuse/dependence and children's risk for intergenerational addiction. Another recommendation is to optimize the use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) by administering the instrument within the first two weeks of program participation to obtain a baseline of children's risks for emotional, behavioral, and hyperactivity or concentration disorders. The SDQ follow-up should be administered to caregivers every six-months to track children's progress and outcomes. Finally, the Family Preservation Project provides beneficial and essential services to caregivers. It is highly recommended that in addition to the personal accounts of caregivers' experiences, that the program utilizes quantitative measures to capture caregivers' outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

As evidenced by this evaluation report's findings, KM Research & Consulting finds that the Family Preservation Project has a positive impact and provides effective services for incarcerated mothers, their children, and children's caregivers. The program's commitment to the individual needs of mothers, children, and caregivers as well as a concerted effort to work comprehensively with the family system is a laudable and effective approach. It is recommended that Family Preservation Project stakeholders continue to support the program and identify mechanisms that will expand intensive case management services to more incarcerated women and their families.

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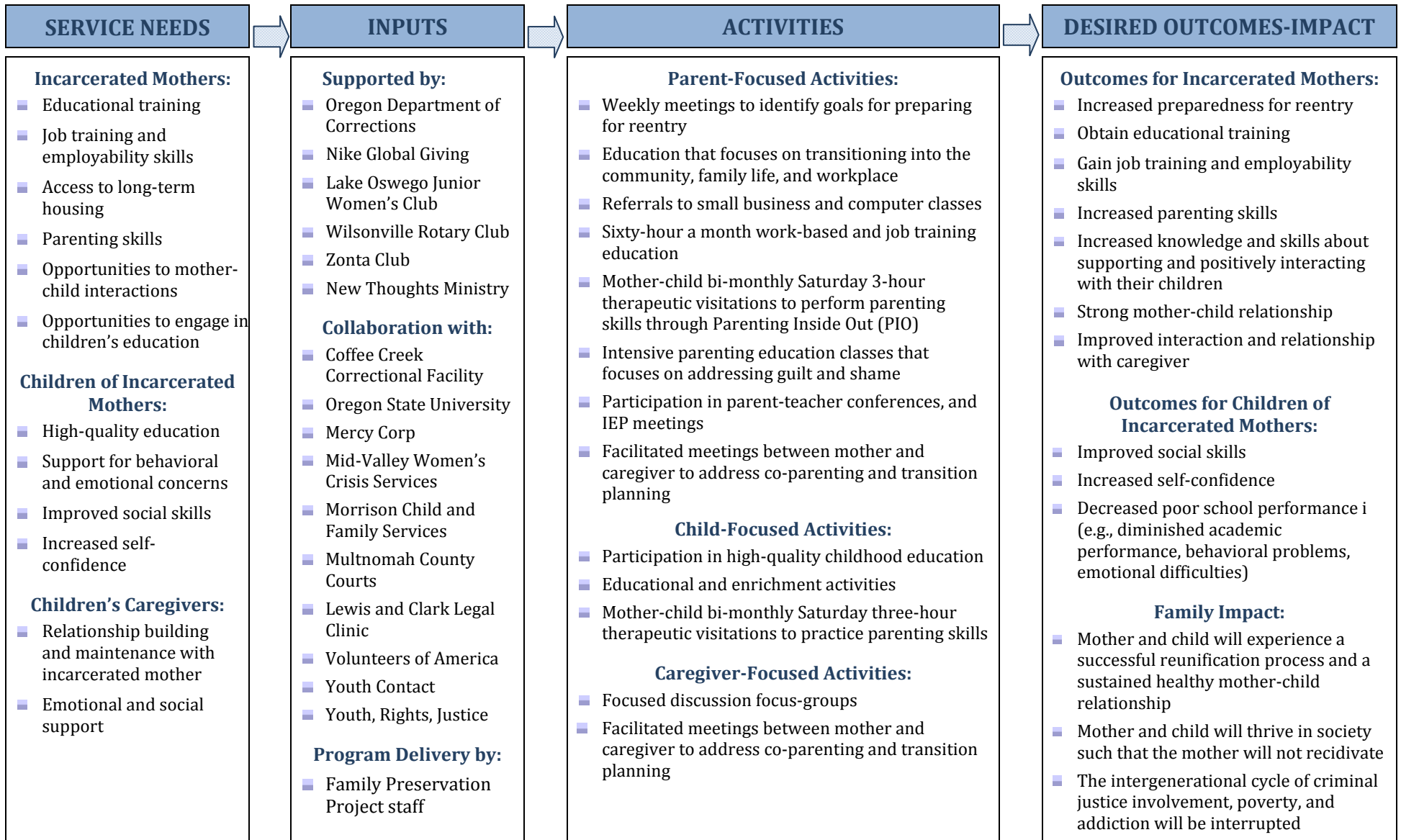
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## Appendix A: Logic Model

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# Family Preservation Project Logic Model

**Purpose:** The Family Preservation Project (FPP) seeks to interrupt the intergenerational cycle of criminal justice involvement, poverty, and addiction. In an effort to meet these objectives, the FPP offers a holistic family-centered approach designed to positively rebuild and maintain the incarcerated mother’s relationship with her children and the children’s caregivers.



*Adapted from:* Hahn, K., Maxim, L., & Carlton, P.R. (2012). Coffee creek correctional facility family preservation project annual evaluation report. Portland, OR: RMC Research Corporation.

