

**Mass Incarceration of Fathers: A Handbook to Address Issues That Arise  
Before and After Release**

**By  
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An Applied Research Project  
Applied Research (PA 5398)  
Submitted to the Department of Political Science  
Texas State University  
In Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Public Administration  
Spring 2018

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## **Abstract**

A father's role in the lives of their children is vital. The nuclear family is often cited as a cornerstone of our society and fathers, in a traditional sense, are important sources of strength, stability, and support that are critical to the foundations of family unit. The phenomenon of mass incarceration, however, has been detrimental to the institution of fatherhood. The vast majority of prisoners in our state and federal detention facilities are males and, unfortunately, most male prisoners are fathers. The impact of father absence due to incarceration has serious implications in multiple areas of a child's life. For instance, father incarceration has been linked to emotional and behavior issues in children. Further, the presence of fathers in their children's lives remains a key factor in child poverty rates. However, most incarcerated dads will eventually be released from confinement only to face a different, but equally daunting set of obstacles. This paper examines the literature surrounding the issue of father absence due to incarceration. It used the literature to develop a resource guide to assist Texas fathers with some of the challenges they will face as they work to reintegrate into their communities and fulfill their paternal roles after they are released.

### **About the Author**

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## *Dedication*

*This research project is dedicated to my beautiful wife and daughter,*

*Teresa Carla and Victoria Rose Kay Brinson.*

*I am truly thankful for you both and will be eternally grateful for your*

*trust in me as a husband and a father.*

## Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER I</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>6</b>
RESEARCH PURPOSE .....	7
IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH OUTCOMES.....	7
ORGANIZATION OF PAPER.....	8
<b>CHAPTER II</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b> .....	<b>9</b>
SCOPE OF THE ISSUE .....	9
THE DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION OF FATHERS IN PRISON OR JAIL .....	10
IMPORTANCE OF A FATHER’S PRESENCE AND INVOLVEMENT .....	10
PROBLEMS CAUSED BY MASS INCARCERATION.....	11
POVERTY .....	11
CULTURE / POLICY IMPACT.....	12
INTERGENERATIONAL INCARCERATION .....	13
IMPACT OF A FATHER’S ABSENCE DUE TO INCARCERATION.....	14
EFFECTS ON A FAMILY.....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
FINANCIAL IMPACT.....	16
IMPACT OF INCARCERATION ON FATHERS .....	18
ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE DURING INCARCERATION.....	21
IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH CHILDREN .....	21
KEEPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE .....	24
LEGAL CONCERNS OF CUSTODY OR VISITATION .....	25
ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE AFTER RELEASE FROM PRISON .....	26
RE-INTEGRATION IN TO COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ROLE.....	26
AVOIDING RE-ARREST.....	27
EMPLOYMENT.....	29
<b>CHAPTER III</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT OF THE HANDBOOK</b> .....	<b>30</b>
CHAPTER PURPOSE .....	30
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DATA .....	30
ORGANIZATION OF HANDBOOK CONTENT.....	35
RESEARCHING THE DESIGN OF THE HANDBOOK .....	36
ISSUES BEFORE INCARCERATED FATHERS ARE RELEASED.....	38
ISSUES AFTER FATHERS ARE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION .....	39
RESOURCES SECTION.....	40
<b>CHAPTER IV</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>SECOND CHANCE 4 CHANGE: A HANDBOOK FOR DETERMINED FATHERS</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>CHAPTER V</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b> .....	<b>52</b>

## **Chapter I.**

### **Introduction**

In 1965 Daniel Patrick Moynihan published a controversial report focused on the roots of wide spread poverty in the black community. The report, entitled *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, concluded that the prevalence of single mother households significantly hindered overall progress. Though this report is focused on origins of black poverty, the underlying message is true in all demographics; fathers are irreplaceable. While the Moynihan report was written over half a century ago, the institution of fatherhood has continued to diminish in recent decades. There are many factors that negatively impact the traditional family unit, but one of the most prominent is the increasingly common circumstance of absent fathers<sup>1</sup>. A major factor contributing to the pervasive issue of father absence is the mass incarceration of men in the United States; most of whom are fathers (Cooper et al., 2012). The absence of fathers due to incarceration is an issue that has negative outcomes not only for their children, but also for the dads themselves. The impact of paternal absence on children manifests in many areas of the children's lives (Foster & Hagan, 2009). The absence of their dads can effect a child's emotional development, academic performance, and even social interaction; all of which have profound

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<sup>1</sup> Father absence contributes to negative outcomes in educational attainment, attitudes and engagement, and substances abuse in children. See McLanahan et al., 2013.

effects on the overall ability to succeed later in life (Geller et al., 2012). To address this issue the focus must be on helping those fathers who find themselves in the unfortunate circumstance of being incarcerated.

While this is a national issue, it is also felt locally. Specifically, the State of Texas housed over 150,000 inmates in its prisons. 92 percent (over 138,000) of these inmates are men. In the year this information was collected (FY2014) 70,000 men were released from jail<sup>2</sup>. Over half (50 percent) of men in state prisons are fathers of minor children (Wiltz, 2016). These troubling statistics further frame the issue of father absence due to incarceration and highlight the need for the creation of a resource guide developed with Texas fathers in mind.

## **Research Purpose**

While there are many resources available to dads that are faced with this condition, they are often singular in their focus and provide no insight into other potential areas of concern. An encyclopedic, comprehensive collection of resources for fathers who are faced with these unique circumstances would address this vacancy. To accomplish this, literature surrounding the broad issue of father absence due to incarceration was examined to identify the underlying circumstances that contribute to it. From this literature a reference handbook was developed to help Texas fathers sustain their paternal identity while they are separated from their children due to confinement, and also to provide resources that can assist them with their transition back into society after they are released.

## **Implications of the Research Outcomes**

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<sup>2</sup> These figures were taken from the *Texas Department of Criminal Justice Statistical Report* for FY2014.

The implications of research done for this paper could be valuable in lessening the societal impact that the absence of fathers due to imprisonment, and most importantly the impact on children. The handbook can be given to fathers while in jail to help as they prepare for release as well as after their term of incarceration is over to aid in their transition. Also, the handbook could be made available to community level agencies so that soon to be-and recently released fathers will have an opportunity to see it when they visit in search of other services.

### **Organization of Paper**

The following chapter (chapter II) reviews existing literature about the larger issue of the absence of fathers due to incarceration. It also identifies specific issues that contribute to a successful parental transition from prisoner to newly released dad. Chapter III is an explanation of the organization and content of the handbook that is developed from the literature review chapter. Chapter III also contains visual representatives, in the form of tables, of the content of the handbook (Table 3.1) and justification for the inclusion of specific resources in the handbook (Table 3.2). Chapter IV concludes the paper with synopsis and recommendations for the direction of future research.



## **Chapter II.**

### **Review of Literature**

Social scientists have conducted much research and composed many reports about the mass incarceration of fathers. This literature explores the effects of the father's absence on his children, and himself. Information gleaned from these studies is combined with information about resources for fathers who were just released or about to be released from prison. The intent of the comprehensive handbook is to help these men reintegrate into society and, most importantly, re-assume their roles as involved fathers.

#### **Scope of the Issue**

There are more incarcerated persons in the United States than in any other country. Mass incarceration began to steadily increase in the early 1980s and continues to the present (Boo & Thompson, 2010). This phenomenon has had a profound effect on our society, and there is no shortage of research to confirm it. However, there is one issue that has garnered far less attention than its societal significance should dictate: the impact of incarceration on fathers and their children.

The majority of inmates in federal and state prisons in the United States are parents. Fathers comprise more than ninety percent of these confined parents (Katzenstein, M. & Shanley, M., 2008). Despite their absence, these men play a vital role in the lives of their children and are important to their development. The

prevalence of this problem, the circumstances surrounding the incarceration, and the effects of a father's absence due to the incarceration demand this issue be examined.

### **The Disproportionate Representation of Fathers in Prison or Jail**

The vast majority of incarcerated parents are fathers. According to Katzenstein and Shanley (2008), 1.5 million children in the United States have at least one parent in prison, and of those, about 94 percent are their fathers. While mothers are incarcerated at rates far too high, fathers are disproportionately represented in our nations' prisons. The loss of a parent can be devastating to a child and even more difficult for a younger child, who lacks the emotional capacity to process the loss of a parent.

### **Importance of a Father's Presence and Involvement**

A father's presence and active participation in his children's lives can have far-reaching effects. The scholarly literature draws an important distinction between two terms that are often used interchangeably; "fatherhood" and "father involvement." Visher, Bakken, and Gunter (2013) explain that "fatherhood" refers to a man's motivation relative to the fathering role, the nature of the man's behavior, and the role identity associated with being a father. "Father involvement" refers to a man's behavior as he enacts the paternal role and can have positive consequences for children and fathers. Men in contact with their children from jail are less likely to be re-arrested in the time immediately after their release than men who don't see their kids. This is significant given that most fathers are re-arrested within the first three years of release (Dyer, 2005). In addition, an absent father can have serious implications for the

children. For instance, studies of have shown that incarcerated fathers suffered from the lack of good role models and poor parenting skills from their own parents (Palm, 2001). The father's absence, due to incarceration, creates circumstances that increase the likelihood that their children will face the same challenges when they become adults. Put plainly, children miss out on the benefit of having their fathers around to act as role models, which often has negative results. For example, the absence of a parent due to incarceration denies the child a key relationship that can effect development in areas like school performance as well as attendance (Obertson, 2012).

## **Problems Caused by Mass Incarceration**

### **Poverty**

Poverty of the inmate's family is perhaps the most significant problem caused by mass incarceration. Incarcerated fathers simply cannot provide financially for their children. This can affect resident fathers and nonresident fathers. In the case of resident fathers, being arrested means losing their jobs and their means of financially supporting their children and partners. Nonresident fathers are unable to make child support payments during incarceration (Garfinkel et al., 2011). Incarceration can affect a father's ability to support his after release, as well, due to the negative impact of a criminal record job opportunities (Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, Garfinkel, 2011). Loss of income is the most significant threat for children raised in homes with absent fathers. Also, children living in female-headed households experience poverty for longer periods and are more likely to live in poverty as adults (Shields, 2006).

## Culture / Policy Impact

The condition of poverty, as discussed in the section above, can contribute to the condition of incarceration among fathers. Poverty can be partially to blame because it creates an environment in which behavior occurs that can increase the possibility to being locked up. One such activity is the use and abuse of illegal narcotics. The majority (fifty-two percent) of all federal prison inmates are incarcerated for drug offenses<sup>3</sup>.

According to Taxy (2015) thirty-five percent of drug offenders in federal prison had minimal or no criminal history. This means that the use of drugs alone is the reason this particular group of people ends up behind bars when they have no violent crime history. As discussed earlier in this paper, the vast majority of inmates are men and the majority of them are fathers. If not for their use of illegal drugs these men have the potential to be productive members of society and supportive fathers, rather than behind bars.

Cultural context is an important factor in the transitions of fatherhood over time. Macro systems, such as social policies and microsystems, such as fatherhood initiatives, highlight important policy concerns about the state of fatherhood in the United States. These indicators can influence societal views; the way a society views good or bad fathers (Palm & Palkovitz 2007). This can affect the way fathers see themselves, referred to as internal components, and the behavior effected by this self-image; referred to as external components (Palm & Palkovitz 2007). Increased emphasis on social programs aimed at addressing continued contact between incarcerated fathers and

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<sup>3</sup> Data obtained from U.S. Justice Dept. report *Drug Offenders in Federal Prison: Estimates of Characteristics Based on Linked Data*. See Adams, W., Samuels, J., & Taxy, S. (2015).

their children are an indication of the growing concern regarding the incarceration of fathers. It is important to acknowledge that fathers experience distinct transitions when they are initially incarcerated and when they are released. These circumstances, while obviously linked, present challenges for these fathers and their families (Palm & Palkovitz 2007). Poverty is also a driving factor in the criminal behavior that contributes to high levels of imprisonment. Policymakers have attempted to respond to this by promoting harsher laws. The “War on Drugs” is an example of such policy that has had the negative effect of criminalizing behavior that many people see as having no victims. Further, these initiatives have disproportionately affected low-income and minority communities and resulted in making incarceration a cultural issue.

### **Intergenerational Incarceration**

There has been research to suggest a relationship between parental incarceration and the increased likelihood that the children will be incarcerated themselves. Several fatherhood advocacy groups claim this to be true. However, there is little empirical data to support this. According to James Conway and Jones (2015), while not as significant as widely reported, evidence indicates “an elevated level of justice-involvement” among children with incarcerated parents when compared to those without (Conway & Jones, 2015, p. 10). It is important to note that Conway and Jones (2015) defined “justice involvement” as meaning arrested, convicted, or incarcerated for a crime (Conway & Jones 2015). Palm and Palkovitz (2007) recommend the use of fatherhood programs in correctional institutions as a method of reducing recidivism.

## Impact/Family Effects

Incarceration can affect fathers, their children, their partners, and their families. The degree of the impact can be complex, as it is affected by many circumstances: the father-child separation, the severity of the crime and the circumstances of arrest that led to the subsequent incarceration, poverty, and lack of sufficient care at home (Festen et al., 2012).

A child's experience can be categorized into both short- or long-term issues. The immediate effect of a father's incarceration can be felt in the trauma of abrupt separation from a parent. The incarceration of a parent can also have long-term effects, such as a forced change in the lifestyle. Regardless of the circumstances, all involved experience some type of trauma due to the sudden absence of a parent, but a father's incarceration is especially troubling for children. Well-meaning family members or caregivers can compound the confusion and about seventy-five percent of families do not adequately explain the incarceration of a parent to children (Wright & Seymour, 2000). Basic information may be kept from in an effort to protect them, but literature surrounding this issue suggests that children feel uncertainty due to the lack of information, diminishing their ability to cope and causing greater fear and anxiousness<sup>4</sup>.

Having their father taken to prison isn't the end of the trauma. Children can be further traumatized during the separation. While the immediate effects of incarceration

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<sup>4</sup> Inaccurate or lack of information can have negative effects on a child's ability to cope with the incarceration of their father. See Parke, R. D., & Clarke-Stewart, K. A. (2002), Jason, S., & Andrea, J. (2007), Wright & Seymour, 2000.

– abrupt separation, confusion, and initial absence – may be unavoidable, the long-term effects may be minimized. The ability and willingness of caregiver, often the child’s mother, to maintaining contact between the father and child is crucial to a father sustaining a meaningful relationship with his children. By facilitating regular contact or by prohibiting communication during incarceration, mothers can act as gatekeepers during the father’s incarceration. By denying communication between incarcerated fathers and their children, mothers can exacerbate the feelings of isolation caused by incarceration. However, if mothers allow their children to maintain contact with their dads during incarceration, it can reinforce the fatherhood role and promote a positive self-image (Roy & Dyson, 2005). In this way, “gatekeeping” is integral to how fathers adapt and give meaning to their role as fathers while incarcerated (Arditti et al., 2005). Recent gatekeeping studies (Allen & Hawkins, 1999) have observed how a mother’s refusal to allow contact between an incarcerated father and his children can shape paternal involvement. Low-income, single mothers tend to actively pursue nonresidential fathers to provide material and emotional support, sometimes to the detriment of the needs of their children and the dynamic of the relationship between the mother (gatekeeper) and the incarcerated father (Walker & McGraw, 2000).

The consequences of separating of children from their fathers can be seen in many areas. For example, children raised in homes without fathers have shown to have issues with academic performance. These children are more likely to repeat grades, score lower on standardized tests, have lower grade point averages, and are less likely to graduate from high school. While these negative effects on a child’s academic

performance are more visible when they are young, they also affect their ability to secure employment as adults (Shields, 2006).

Confinement can affect a dad's ability to maintain important relationships during incarceration. For example, the mindset necessary to cope with incarceration can be a detriment to being a nurturing father (Haney, 2002). The necessity of maintaining a closed, hardened, negative mindset needed to survive prison, the "institutionalization" effect as it's commonly called, can also make it difficult to re-assimilate to normal life once released. This can make an inmate less likely to be successful later in other roles such as an employee or partner. However, these effects are unique to the individual, and it is possible to reverse them. Truly, incarceration affects people in different ways, and not everyone is irreparably affected by it. Few, however, are totally unaffected by the experience (Haney, 2002).

### **Financial Impact**

When fathers are locked up, the financial support they previously provided is greatly reduced or eliminated. The levels of financial strain caused by the incarceration of the father are many. While there is the obvious loss of income caused by the father's absence, there are also other issues to consider. For example, lost child support payments can also have a substantial impact on the material well-being of the father's children and their partners. Many mothers of children with nonresident father often supplement their income with the funds provided by child support payments and the loss of these additional funds can force reliance to welfare programs for survival, which places an added burden on taxpayers (Acock et al., 2005).



In using the data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study, Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, and Mincy (2009) find that children of incarcerated fathers have significantly more economic instability. Fathers who have been incarcerated are less likely to be employed; and if employed, they are likely to attain employment at lower wages, which lessens the amount of financial support they can provide for their partners and children. The authors also discover that children of incarcerated fathers have a greater chance of experiencing material hardship.

Incarceration can have a negative effect on employment, even after a father is released. Upon release, former inmates and their families face structural and societal obstacles that hinder them from finding stable, well-paying jobs. The stigma of a criminal conviction is present in research as far back as the 1960s (Kling et al., 2001).

These financial burdens also can affect other circumstances created by the incarceration. Hairston (2008) cites the cost of maintaining communication between the father and their children during incarceration as a major obstacle to sustaining ties with family. Phone calls are an important method of communication between the fathers and their children. In some cases, the distance between the father's prison and the place where the children live make telephone calls the only contact a father has with his family. However, the cost of collect calls from inside prison can be a deterrent to fathers attempting to maintain contact with children. In some cases, a review of the charges on the phone bill of recipients of a collect call from an incarcerated father revealed that the charges were as high as three times that of a collect call from a person not incarcerated (Hairston 2008). Given that father incarceration affects low-income

families disproportionately, this added expense only serves to further strain the finances of a family that already struggles.

### **Impact of Incarceration on Fathers**

Like their children, partners, and families, fathers experience the effects of incarceration. While the trauma caused by incarceration is well-documented in children, fathers also can be deeply affected by the circumstances surrounding incarceration. Along with the initial shock of immediate removal from normal surroundings, these new inmates experience the mental and emotional toll of jail. The anxiety and fear associated with prison life can have long-lasting, negative consequences that the father can be saddled with even after he is released.

A father's mental health can be affected by the need to assimilate to incarceration. The assimilation later can have a detrimental effect on a father's successful re-entry into society and his role as a father after release. Roy and Dyson (2005) explain how fathers emotionally withdraw from their children as a method of processing the separation during confinement. This can cause feelings of abandonment, isolation, and rejection, which impact the mental health of the incarcerated father. There is also the potential for fathers to be overwhelmed by the lifestyle inside correctional institutions, causing them to significantly reduce or eliminate ties with the outside world as a method of coping with the dehumanizing environment of confinement (Roy & Dyson 2005).

The psychological effects of incarceration on fathers can have consequences that last long after release. The adjustment to prison, while perceived as necessary during

that time, can create behavior and habits that are not conducive to successful re-assimilation into society. The process by which individuals adjust to and are shaped by institutional environments is often referred to as institutionalization or prisonization (Haney 2002). Numerous social scientists and mental health professionals have explored this set of physiological adaptations to the atypical demands of prison life. While these adaptations may seem odd when viewed through the lens of accepted norms in human behavior, it is worth noting that these adjustments are a natural and rational reaction to the abnormal circumstances of incarceration. With this in mind, while these adaptations may be destructive when subjected to practical observation, they can be necessary for survival in the unique environment of correctional institutions. This can make it difficult for inmates to assume their roles as fathers and partners after they are released.

Upon release, fathers must deal with the effects of incarceration in their post-prison lives. Studies<sup>5</sup> have shown that the absence of positive role models in the lives of the fathers before they were locked up can perpetuate deficiencies in parenting. Also, the stigma associated with an incarceration record cannot be ignored. The consequences caused by being a “convict” are pervasive in our society and has a profound effect on the self-image of fathers that can extend to their lives after they released from prison. This can have an emotional toll, which can be a catalyst for negative behavior that increases the chance for re-arrest (Palm & Palkovitz, 2007).

Imprisonment may affect how fathers view themselves. While jail affects everyone differently, few, if any, can go through the experience and remain unchanged.

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<sup>5</sup> Children in two-parent homes enjoy stronger attachments and have the more supervision, which is shown to lead to increased risk of incarceration. See Harper & McLanahan (2004).

Chui (2016) explains the effects of incarceration on the identity of the inmates. While incarceration has the obvious effect of separating fathers from their families, Chui reveals that parenthood remains a key part of a father's identity, even while incarcerated and apart from their children. Chui employs Burke's "identity theory" to frame the effects of incarceration on how fathers view their parental roles while they are imprisoned. Identity theory, also known as identity control theory, asserts the notion that people verify their identity through behavior. Three processes accomplish this. First, people should have set congenital standards that are congruent with the identity they seek to verify. Second, people behave in ways that enforce the identity to which they aspire. Lastly, people seek to have "reflected appraisals" that reaffirm that their behavior is congruent with the identity they intend to adopt (Burke, 1991). If the internalized standards held by the individual are at issue with the "reflected appraisals," identity theory predicts that this will result in negative emotions. This can cause the individual to alter his or her standards to reduce these emotions (Chui, 2016). By changing their internal standards, it makes them more likely to be fulfilled and more aligned with the unique situational circumstances. Applying this theory in the context of incarcerated fathers reveals that their parental role is disrupted in no small measure as their circumstances make it difficult to take part in the normative behaviors commonly associated with fatherhood (Burke, 1991).

The level of contact between children and their incarcerated fathers during the period of confinement is a key determinate in the father's successful re-entry upon release. Researchers have recently discovered a link between family contact during incarceration and lower rates of recidivism (Visher 2013). A study conducted in Florida

(Bales & Mears, 2008) found that inmates visited more often and more recently also had lower recidivism rates. Another positive effect found in the Florida study was in the strengthened connection between the incarcerated parents and their children.

## **Issues That May Arise During Incarceration**

### **Establishing and Maintaining Contact with Children**

Fathers nearing their release from jail should prepare for yet another drastic lifestyle. So that the transition from incarceration to the free world is successful, the focus of fathers, prior to release, should be on what factors have the greatest impact on their reintegration. The level, manner, and frequency of contact that a father has with his children while he is incarcerated can have profound implications on his ability to adjust to life after he is released.

The stated purpose of this literature review is to review and compile information to aid fathers in this transition from prison. With that in mind, the handbook should contain a section that emphasizes the importance of establishing and maintaining contact with their children. It is important to note that there is a causal association found between the caregiver type and visitation of fathers while incarcerated. Data suggests that a child in the care of the mother is more likely to visit his or her father during his confinement (Tasca, 2016). These results are based on the reports from incarcerated fathers after controlling for elements such as institutional barriers and child situational factors (Tasca, 2014). However, the relationship between the father and children before the separation must be taken into account. Pre-incarceration

involvement with children was a notable indicator of visitation while incarcerated as paternally reported and no other situational factors had any meaningful effect on whether children visited their fathers while imprisoned (Tasca, 2014).

Given the importance of child visitation to incarcerated fathers, the peripheral importance of the relationship between the incarcerated father and mother of the children is apparent. The situational factors associated with incarceration can threaten the emotional health of fathers, who may begin to see themselves less as fathers and more as “inmates”. The experience of incarceration can be a dehumanizing experience of which contact with their children during this time can counteract these effects (Roy & Dyson, 2005). Outside support, materialized in the contact with children and families that visitation allows, can reinforce the identity of the father and assuage the effects of incarceration.

Family contact with incarcerated fathers can also decrease the likelihood that he will be rearrested, which occurs frequently. About half of people released from confinement are re-arrested within three years (Visher, 2013). Visher (2013) cites research showing a substantial correlation between family contact while the father is confined and lower recidivism rates. In a study of prison visitation in Florida, Bales & Mears (2008), found prisoners visited more often and recently, experienced the lower rates of recidivism.

Identity also plays an important role in the process of transitioning from prison to society. Given that men represent 92 percent of incarcerated parents, the focus on these men is a reasonable approach (Bakken et al., 2013). Maintaining contact with their children during incarceration allows for the reinforcement of the paternal identity

and can have an impact on the success during the father's post-release period. Environmental factors can affect the frequency and nature of contact between jailed father and his children. For example, the condition of visitation area, treatment of visitors, and the distance between the visitor's homes and the facility are factors could effect the usefulness of a visit. Fathers seem to be aware of the possible negative effects of visitation as well (Visher, 2013). While data<sup>6</sup> suggests that a healthy relationship between fathers and their children has a positive effect on recidivism, simply being a parent, with no involvement with the children, has not been found to have any correlation to a father's chance of returning to prison.

While there are conventional programs that focus on parenting they may neglect some areas. Research from focus groups of incarcerated fathers has identified different needs than those addressed by typical parenting programs. Fathers in these groups have expressed a need for assistance in parenting areas such as guiding, limit setting, and disciplining their children. These are areas that are affected by the environmental limitations presented during confinement (Pierce, 2015). While the programs and resources are important, the conditions of visitation should also be considered. While in-person visitation is ideal, a substandard visitation environment that is not conducive to positive family interaction can be counterproductive in strengthening family bonds (Nesmith, 2008).

While the relationships between incarcerated fathers and their families are important, studies show fathers must be willing to confront the issues that may have negatively affected their relationships before they were jailed (Swanson et al., 2013).

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<sup>6</sup> Father-child contact is determining factor, not the mere circumstance of being a biological parent. See Visher, Bakken, & Gunter (2013).

Further, imprisoned fathers must be to improving those connections. However, inmates may face obstacles that are beyond their control when they attempt to better these relationships. Among these are the arrangements and surroundings available for in-person visits. Distance from the prison and his family's home is just one. There are also the effects of prison protocols on visiting family members to consider. Invasive searches, unpleasant interactions with facility staff, and long waits can be a deterrent to in-person visits. The high cost of collect calls between fathers and their families also can be problematic (Swanson et al., 2013).

### **Keeping a Positive Attitude**

The ability of fathers to stay positive while incarcerated is crucial to their ability to adjust to incarcerated life and in preparing for re-entry into society. The attitude of and outward demeanor of a father while he is confined can affect his interactions with other prisoners, facility staff, and his children and other family members when they visit. To be sure, much of the inability to reconnect with family after release has been attributed to the father's attitude and behavior. This is to be expected, given that fathers in these circumstances are more likely to have egocentric and antisocial attitudes (Dyer, 2005). If the interactions between fathers and their families are unpleasant during his incarceration, these visits can be damaging to relationships and dissuade his children's desire to reconnect after release.

The importance of a positive attitude to incarcerated fathers can be more easily understood when considering how critical successful reintegration is to reducing the chances of re-arrest. Familial relationships are important to a successful transition and



familial relationships are impacted by the quality and frequency of contact between incarcerated fathers and their families, which is dictated, at least in part by the ability to fathers to maintain a positive attitude while incarcerated (Acock et al., 2005).

The importance of a positive attitude exhibited by incarcerated fathers, while important, must be viewed in context. The institutionalization effect of imprisonment can make maintaining a positive attitude much more difficult than it would be otherwise. “Normal” reactions to the stressful environment created by prison life can work against an incarcerated father’s attempts to maintain a positive attitude. So, it may be difficult for incarcerated fathers to do so (Haney, 2002). However, negative attitudes displayed by incarcerated fathers can discourage family and children from visiting. The loss of that contact with family can have a regressive effect on his attitudes (Bales & Mears, 2008). Conversely, frequent visits can have a positive effect on a father’s attitude, which is reflected in lower recidivism (Visher, 2013).

### **Legal Concerns of Custody or Visitation**

Incarcerated fathers, while they have temporarily lost their freedom, are still parents. While the services available to prisoners may be scarce, there may be services available to them of which they are unaware. While there may be limited options, incarcerated fathers can educate themselves in ways to aid their families in maintaining contact. For example, inmates may be confined in facilities that are closer to their families. Knowing what resources are available during a jail term could make a difference in the ability of fathers to keep their relationships with their children healthy and strong.

Visitation between incarcerated fathers and their children, being an important tool in the rehabilitation and reintegration into society after release, has been the focus of many court proceedings. Courts have ruled that denial of visitation between incarcerated parents and their children is a violation of the protections granted to them in the first and fourteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution (Lewis, 2004).

## **Issues That May Arise After Release From Prison**

### **Re-Integration in to Community and Family Role**

It is important for incarcerated fathers to accept that the effect of their incarceration can be felt long after he leaves prison. While the period during their incarceration can be taxing for the men, their children experience just as many problems immediately after their father returns home (Acock et al., 2005). According to Travis & Wahl (2003), more than three million children in the United States are in contact daily with someone who was recently released from incarceration. In these cases, the children's father is that person the vast majority of the time (Acock et al., 2005).

Being released from prison is part of a larger process of re-assuming the many roles that fathers are denied during incarceration. While incarceration forces fathers to react and adapt to the atypical lifestyle of confinement, there is an expectation to adjust to normative behavior once released. While the period of incarceration is over, fathers are expected to be "decisive, responsible, and reliable members" of society and their families (Roy & Dyson, 2005, pg. 291). However, this adaptation to life after incarceration may be just as difficult for fathers and their families as the adaptation to

incarceration. The expectations placed on fathers after returning home can be a source of stress, and this transition can cause changes in internal self-image and external behavior (Palkovitz & Palm, 2007).

Upon release, it is important for fathers to develop and re-enforce productive behavior and attitudes. Data suggests that reassuming conventional roles such as spouse or parent assists fathers in the development of positive social identifiers (Visher, 2013). These findings are in line with pre-existing studies that conclude that when fathers spend time with their children after being released from incarceration, they lower their risk of re-offending. The conclusions drawn by this research show that family attachment maintained after release from confinement can mitigate negative outcomes of re-entry.

### **Avoiding Re-Arrest**

The preparation for reintegration into a family is useless if a father can't stay out of jail long enough for these preparations to be of use. While the ability of a father to maintain his relationships has a profound effect on his transition after release from prison, the ability to avoid re-arrest, and therefore re-incarceration, is also of the utmost importance. While prison is rarely seen as a culture, it exists nonetheless. Though they are required to obey the formal rules that are enforced by the institution, they are also subject to the unwritten rules that are the norm in a prison environment. For some, this means defending themselves against the most extreme and dangerous conditions. Incarcerated fathers are sometimes forced to embrace this culture in order to survive. It is important to know that prisoners are given no alternative to this environment during incarceration. Those who are incarcerated can become accustomed to this environment,

and this atypical behavior becomes the norm (Haney, 2002). This can make it difficult for inmates, once released, to set aside behaviors that were necessary during their confinement, which can complicate their ability to re-integrate into normative behavior of the free-world, this increasing their chance of re-arrest.

Given that drug-related convictions are responsible for much of the growth in the prison population, those with alcohol and drug problems are over-represented in federal and state prisons. At least fifty percent of parents in federal or state prisons abuse or are alcohol or drug-dependent, compared to only nine percent of the general public (Gleeson et al., 2009). This can negatively affect children. Both parental substance abuse and parental incarceration are well-established indicators of negative child outcomes such as emotional and behavioral problems. Parental substance abuse also increases the possibility that the children also will abuse drugs or alcohol (Gleeson et al., 2009). With this in mind, addressing substance abuse can have a profound effect on a father's ability to avoid re-arrest after his is released from incarceration.

Behaviors that reinforce pro-social attitudes can help a father avoid re-arrest. Studies have shown that fathers with stronger connections with their children are typically less likely to commit crimes or be re-arrested in the months following their release (Visher, 2013). It should be noted that the effects of father-child relationships on recidivism depends on frequent contact between the recently released fathers and their children (Bakken et al., 2013). Also, assuming other traditional roles such as spouse or domestic partner has been shown to be beneficial in helping these men avoid re-arrest (Bakken et al., 2013).

## **Employment**

Finding stable employment can mean the difference between success and failure for fathers in transition. Research has shown that, among other factors, establishing employment assists in the adjustment to post-incarceration life (Maruna, 2004). The benefits of retaining stable work after their release can have other positive outcomes for fathers. For example, employment can reduce the opportunities or inclination to renew criminal behavior and allow fathers released from incarceration to re-affirm their roles as providers. This could also act as a relief to fathers who bear the guilt of being incarcerated and leaving their partners with the financial burden of caring for their children in their absence (Chui, 2016).

## **Chapter III.**

### **Organization and Content of the Handbook**

#### **Chapter Purpose**

While the purpose of the literature review chapter was to establish the reasons why this handbook is needed; this chapter explains what information and material will be contained in the handbook and how that information will be organized. The issues examined in chapter two influenced the content of the *Second Chance 4 Change* handbook, hereinafter referred to as the Handbook.

#### **Analysis of Existing Data**

Since the *Handbook* is designed to serve Texas fathers, Texas government Internet sites, including the information and documents contained within them, were utilized to identify organizations that provide useful services for incarcerated or recently released fathers. The following table illustrates the resources used to locate the aforementioned services that available to these fathers across the State of Texas and is organized by the conceptual framework developed from Chapter II (See Table 3.1) (Shields and Rangarajan, 2013).

**Table 3.1: Operationalization of Conceptual Framework**

Resource	Category	Subcategory
	Before Release	
<p>Txaccess.org  <a href="http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/">http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/</a></p> <p>The Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG)  <a href="https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf">https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf</a></p> <p>The Travis County Domestic Relations Office (DRO)  <a href="https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/">https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/</a></p>		<p><b>Establish/Maintain Contact with Children</b></p>
<p>Txaccess.org  <a href="http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/">http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/</a></p> <p>Texas Law Help  <a href="https://texaslawhelp.org/family-divorce-children/child-custody-visitation">https://texaslawhelp.org/family-divorce-children/child-custody-visitation</a></p> <p>Parenting Programs that are unique to the detention facility would be appropriate for this section.</p>		<p><b>Keep a Positive Attitude</b></p>
<p>Txaccess.org  <a href="http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/">http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/</a></p> <p>The Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG)  <a href="https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf">https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf</a></p> <p>The Travis County Domestic Relations Office (DRO)  <a href="https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/">https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/</a></p> <p>Texas Law Help  <a href="https://texaslawhelp.org/family-divorce-children/child-custody-visitation">https://texaslawhelp.org/family-divorce-children/child-custody-visitation</a></p>		<p><b>Legal Concerns (custody/visitation)</b></p>
	After Release	
<p>National Responsible Fathers Clearinghouse  <a href="https://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit/work/incarcerated-and-reentry-fathers">https://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit/work/incarcerated-and-reentry-fathers</a></p> <p>The Travis County Domestic Relations Office (DRO)  <a href="https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/">https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/</a></p> <p>Parents Anonymous  <a href="http://www.parentsanonymous.org">www.parentsanonymous.org</a></p> <p>2-1-1 Texas  <a href="http://www.211texas.org/">http://www.211texas.org/</a></p>		<p><b>Community/Family Involvement</b></p>
<p>2-1-1 Texas  <a href="http://www.211texas.org/">http://www.211texas.org/</a></p> <p>Texas Workforce Commission  <a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/">http://www.twc.state.tx.us/</a></p> <p>Capital IDEA  <a href="http://www.capitalidea.org">www.capitalidea.org</a>                      Goodwill Job Help Center  <a href="https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job">https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job</a></p>		<p><b>Employment</b></p>

Capital IDEA <a href="http://www.capitalidea.org">www.capitalidea.org</a> Goodwill Job Help Center <a href="https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job">https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job</a>  Texas Workforce Commission <a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/">http://www.twc.state.tx.us/</a>  Alcoholics Anonymous <a href="https://austinaa.org">https://austinaa.org</a>  Center Texas Area Narcotics Anonymous <a href="http://www.na.org">www.na.org</a>  2-1-1 Texas <a href="http://www.211texas.org/">http://www.211texas.org/</a>		<b>Avoiding Re-arrest</b>
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Table 3.2 lists the websites, briefly summarizes the scope of the document and explains how it is useful for incarcerated or recently released fathers. The Internet can all have drawbacks. One such disadvantage is the vast amount of information that is made available on the world wide web. While access to such an endless supply of data can be useful, it can also be overwhelming. Another negative aspect of the Internet is that there are very few vetting procedures. A web search for a basic topic and yield a wide array of results, some of which are unrelated the issue (Essays, UK., 2013). These issues are less applicable here given that most of the Internet resources used in this case are owned and operated by official government entities and are therefore well vetted and reliable. The level of unfamiliarity with computer and Internet use for men recently released would also present a challenge.

**Table 3.2 Resources and Utility of Services Provided**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Usefulness to Fathers</b>
<a href="https://austinaa.org">https://austinaa.org</a>  1825 Fortview Road, Suite 102, Austin, TX 78704 (512) 444-0071	Austin Alcoholics Anonymous is a source from group counseling to assist those who suffer from alcohol addiction.	Alcohol abuse is an addiction that affects large numbers of in our prison population. The availability of resources to assist fathers in addressing this could have a positive effect on a successful transition post-release
<a href="http://www.capitalidea.org">www.capitalidea.org</a>	Capital IDEA is a community	Capital IDEA provides



<p>Capital IDEA 835 N. Pleasant Valley Rd. (Third floor) Austin, Tx 78702 (512) 457-8610 <a href="mailto:info@capitalidea.org">info@capitalidea.org</a></p>	<p>based, non-profit organization that provides education, training, support services, as well as counseling and case management.</p>	<p>training for employment in the fields of health care, the high tech sector, and accounting. This resource also provides support to include childcare, transportation, emergency assistance, and counseling. All of these areas are vital to a father's success reintegration</p>
<p><a href="http://ctana.org/">http://ctana.org/</a>  1108 Lavaca Street Ste 110-284 Austin Texas 78701 (512) 480-0004</p>	<p>Central Texas Area Narcotics Anonymous provides information regarding group sessions for those who suffer from addiction to narcotics. This resource also provides information about other methods and assistance for those who suffer from this addiction.</p>	<p>Addiction to illegal drugs, much like alcohol, affects many in our criminal justice system. CTANA provides help to fathers so that they may manage and possibly defeat their addictions.</p>
<p><a href="https://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit/work/incarcerated-and-reentry-fathers">https://www.fatherhood.gov/toolkit/work/incarcerated-and-reentry-fathers</a>  National Responsible Fathers Clearinghouse Toll Free: 1 (877) 432-3411</p>	<p>This resource provides tools for fathers recently released from incarcerated to assist them in a successful re-entry. Specifically, this resource provides tips for dads in the unique circumstances created by absence due to incarceration, information for their families, and resources to help with the stresses associated with the post-release period.</p>	<p>Fathers can use the information in the National Fathers Clearinghouse toolkit in a to assist in many areas of their transition where they may find the information useful.</p>
<p><a href="https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job">https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job</a>  <u>Goodwill Job Help Center</u> 2001 Rosewood Ave., Bldg. B #2101 Austin, Tx 78702 Tues. &amp; Wed. (9am-12pm &amp; 1pm-4pm) <a href="mailto:intake@goodwillcentraltexas.org">intake@goodwillcentraltexas.org</a> (512) 637-7580</p>	<p>This resource provides employment resources. Goodwill connects local and government employers with potential employees for temporary and permanent positions. Job training and education are also made available here.</p>	<p>This resource can be useful in helping fathers find employment after they are released which is vital to their successful transition.</p>
<p><a href="http://parentsanonymous.org/">http://parentsanonymous.org/</a></p>	<p>"Parents anonymous provides" guidance from parents to help build strong, resilient parenting skills. "Parents anonymous" also provides information to assist parents in their roles as caregivers and providers for their children.</p>	<p>Parents Anonymous is a useful tool for fathers who seek guidance in the important role of being an involved parent.</p>
<p><a href="https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf">https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf</a>  Office of the Attorney General (Child Support Division) P.O. Box 12017 Austin, Tx 78711-2017  Email: <a href="http://www.childsupport.oag.state.tx.us">www.childsupport.oag.state.tx.us</a> Customer Service Center: (800) 252-8014 Paternity Opportunity Program: (866) 255-2006  24 hr Payment and Case Information: (800) 252-8014  For the Deaf or Hearing Impaired: (800) Relay-TX /</p>	<p>The Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG) offers usual information regarding child support for fathers who are about to be released. There is also information provided to assist incarcerated fathers in reviewing their case and providing guidance on issues like establishing paternity and information on the terms of child support orders.</p>	<p>The issues of custody and visitation rights concerning their children are central to fathers paternal identity. The OAG provides important information about important issues like child support and verification of paternity.</p>

(800) 735-2989		
<a href="https://texaslawhelp.org/home">https://texaslawhelp.org/home</a>	Texaslawhelp provides free legal assistance for civic issues. This resource provides information and assistance on issues from child custody to removing arrests from one's criminal record.	This resource can be useful to fathers who are in need of legal advice and information regarding a wide array of issues ranging from concerns about their criminal records to custody issues.
<a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/">http://www.twc.state.tx.us/</a> WF Solutions Career Center 6505 Airport Blvd. Ste. 101 Austin, Tx 78752-3627 (512) 454-9675 www.wfscapitalarea.com Mon.-Fri. (8am-5pm)	This resource is helpful to fathers after their release from incarceration due to the focus on aiding those with criminal records find employment. This resource also provides training and job placement services.	The Texas Workforce Commission is a useful resource for fathers who find themselves in the unfortunate circumstance of needing employment with the added challenge of a criminal record.
<a href="http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/">http://www.txaccess.org/group/incarcerated-parents/</a> Access and Visitation Hotline: 1(866) 262-4636 (10am-6pm)	Txaccess.org is operated by the OAG and provides a guide for incarcerated parents and custodial parent(s), information for the time during incarceration As well as after release.	This resource provides useful information about positive communication while fathers are incarceration like tips for in-person, letters, and phone calls while incarcerated. There is also usual information regarding the process of establishing paternity in the case of unwed parents.
<a href="https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/">https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/</a> The Travis County Domestic Relations Office (DRO) 1010 Lavaca Austin, Tx 78701 (Mon.-Fri. 8am-5pm)  (Mailing Address) P.O. Box 1495 Austin, Tx 78767 (512) 854-9020	The Travis County Domestic Relations Office (DRO) provides services for parents in the form of conflict resolution meetings, civil legal action, classes to improve cooperative parenting skills, and referral for mediation between parents.	The resource is helpful for fathers seeking assistance in productive and collaborative parenting.
<a href="http://www.211texas.org/">http://www.211texas.org/</a> 2-1-1 Texas I&R Network P.O. Box 149347, MC 2077 Austin, TX 78714 1-877-541-7905 (if 2-1-1 does not work from your phone)	2-1-1 Texas is a multi-faceted resource that connects those in need with many different types of assistance. Whether the need is in the area of housing, child care, crisis counseling or substance abuse treatment, 2-1-1 Texas connects people to the appropriate resources in their area.	2-1-1 Texas is useful to fathers because provides a wide range of assistance in one place. Many of the challenges faced by fathers after they are released (e.g. housing, substance abuse treatment, and counseling) can be daunting and 2-1-1 Texas consolidates many of the resources meant to help in these areas.
<a href="http://www.addictioncareoptions.com">www.addictioncareoptions.com</a>  <b>1(800) 784-6776</b>	The National Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Information Center provides information about the leading alcohol and substance abuse centers nationwide through their comprehensive database.	They can provide information about treatment for alcohol and drug abuse, detox, as well as intervention and addiction assistance. The resource can be useful to dads who face the difficult task of battling and addiction during the already challenging circumstance of the post incarceration transition.

<p>Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (Texas HEAP)  Texas Department of Housing &amp; Community Affairs  P.O. Box 13941  Austin, Texas 78711-3941  TEL: (512) 475-3951  FAX: (512) 475-3935  E-MAIL: <a href="mailto:michael.deyoung@tdhca.state.tx.us">michael.deyoung@tdhca.state.tx.us</a>  WEB SITE: <a href="http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/community-affairs/index.htm">http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/community-affairs/index.htm</a></p>	<p>Utility expenses can seriously impact a family's financial well-being. Texas HEAP is a federally funded program designed to assist in supplementing a household's annual energy expenses. HEAP also offers assistance in repair and/or replacement with malfunctioning heating equipment.</p>	<p>This resource can be useful to fathers because it offers help in one of the most important societal roles of a father, providing financial support and security for their children and families.</p>
<p>Texas Education Agency  1701 N. Congress Avenue  Austin, Texas, 78701  Website: <a href="https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/">https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/</a>   Phone: (512) 463-9734  Email: <a href="mailto:teainfo@tea.texas.gov">teainfo@tea.texas.gov</a></p>	<p>Lack of formal education can be one of the most significant barriers to success. The Texas Education Agency offers opportunities to obtain high school equivalency through the High School Equivalency Program (HSEP). HSEP also provides information related to job searches and training.</p>	<p>HSEP can be useful to dads who seek to increase their capabilities through education and job training.</p>

## Organization of Handbook Content

The organization and content of the *Second Chance 4 Change* handbook is an important aspect of this endeavor. The handbook should be arranged in a manner that is both relevant to the reader and easy to understand. The handbook should also be written in a fashion that takes into account the potential reading and cognitive abilities of the intended audience. The language should be plain, to the point, and accommodating to fathers who are recently released, or who are about to be released from incarceration. While not meant as an insult, it is understood that this handbook's readers are likely to have deficiencies in education and literacy<sup>7</sup>. The handbook itself will be organized into categories that specifically address the factors that affect fathers at particular stages of their reintegration into society. Each of these categories will be arranged into

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<sup>7</sup> Over 70% of inmates cannot read about a fourth grade level. See Music, Emily (2012).

subcategories that address the unique issues dads may face in that particular stage of their transition.

The layout of the handbook is an important aspect that greatly affects its usefulness. The handbook can't do much good if no one reads it. This required the use of some sources that were, to say the least, unconventional. Some of the tips and suggestions for building and organizing a handbook came from websites that were specifically focused on the development of employee handbooks. While this handbook has a different purpose, the overall goal, conveying useful information to the intended audience, is essentially the same. Methods as simple as changing the handbook's name can have the effect of increasing the reader's level of interest. It is important to recognize the needs of the reader, in this case recently released father. The handbook should take the large amounts of information and assistance available and adapt it to the needs of fathers so that it may be of use to them (Flower, 2000).

### **Researching the Design of the Handbook**

The *handbook* should be viewed as a resource, not a "rule-book". The situations faced by the audience are unique to the individual and there is no "one size fits all" item that will answer every conceivable scenario. As a tool that can aid fathers facing the transition from jail to society, the *handbook* is designed to provide helpful information to ease that transition. However, effort is still required on the part of the father to make that transition successful. The benefits of better fathering should provide an incentive to avoid situations, which would lead to re-incarceration. At its best, the *handbook* is part of a larger support network that helps in that effort. For example, it

should help the reader become a more responsible, and financially self-sufficient person.

While it may seem counterintuitive, the timing of the reader's exposure to the handbook could improve the possibility that it will be of use to them. Eighty percent of those released to a supervised status such as parole (Hughes & Wilson, 2004). The parole officers who are responsible for the post-release supervision of fathers could look favorably upon those that use of the resources in the handbook. If dads show that they are willing to actively seek assistance on their own, it could make their transition that much more likely to succeed. This is important considering many on parole are remanded back to prison due, not to new criminal charges, but for violating the terms of their supervision (Grattet & Lin, 2016). Further, fathers may be more apt to use the *handbook* during this time because data suggests that the external motivation of the legal system can result in better outcomes (Knight et al, 2000).

The organization of this *handbook* should align with the sequence of events that occur during this transition. The transition from prison, for the purposes of this particular resource guide, is divided into two categories; issues before incarcerated fathers are released, and issues after fathers are released from confinement. Each of these categories has subcategories that highlight specific points of importance that can uniquely affect fathers in that area. These topics are accompanied in the *handbook* with resources that can aid fathers in tackling these specific issues. The resources include websites, phone numbers, physical and email addresses, and other information. The *handbook* will also contain a section that will index the resources throughout so that readers can easily find the help they need and all contact information that is available

regarding the resources. The handbook will provide as much information as possible given that the ability to take advantage of these resources will also depend external factors such as the facility the involved, the circumstances of release and the individual circumstances concerning the fathers themselves.

### **Issues before Incarcerated Fathers are Released**

This section of the handbook deals specifically with the period immediately preceding dad's release from jail. It focuses on three main areas of concern that can impact the success of their transition:

- Establishing/Maintaining Contact with Children
- Keeping a Positive Attitude
- Legal Concerns such as Custody and Visitation Rights

The resources in this section provide information and assistance in the areas of mentioned above. The information in the resources found in this section deals with important factors like positive communication with children. Things like tips about in-person visits, letters, and phone calls between incarcerated dad and their children can be useful to fathers that want to insure that the contact they have with their children before they are released is positive so that they can build on this once they are released. This section also provides useful information legal concerns that fathers may have regarding their rights as parents. This issue is of particular importance given that healthy relationships between previously confined dads and their children have been linked to lower recidivism rates. If dads are informed about their rights in regard to having

contact with their children they can be better equipped to take the necessary steps to build on, and improve these relationships.

### **Issues after Fathers are released from Incarceration**

After fathers are released from jail they face significant challenges on both social and personal level. The reclamation to free society can be a daunting experience. Unlike other instances in which fathers are reintroduced to their families, such as military deployment, the return home after being released from jail can bear the stigma of the “ex-con” which only compounds an already stressful transition. This section of the handbook is meant provide assistance to dads during this period; the time following their release from jail. The following three issues were chosen because they can significantly affect the success of fathers’ successful transition:

- Reintegration into Community/Family
- Obtaining Employment
- Avoiding Re-arrest

The resources provided in this section are aimed that these specific issues. Information in the section can be helpful for dads and their families that are in the unique circumstances presented by their release from jail and can help with the stresses associated the post-release period. Obtaining employment after release is important to dads during this transition. This section provides information that can help in this area like job placement services, training, and resume building. As mentioned on the

literature review chapter, many dads are re-arrested with three years of their release. Avoiding re-arrest is key to the success of a father's transition after his is released from jail. To do this, dads need to avoid the influences and negatives environments that can only work against their efforts. This section provides information that can help with locating essential aid in areas like housing and substance abuse treatment. The handbook should promote a tenacious attitude in the father. While there resources in the handbook are meant to aid fathers in their transition process, it requires mental discipline for fathers to be successful. To do this the reader will need to be steadfast; willing to forego short-term, transient desires, which could encourage behavior similar to what contributed to his initial confinement in favor of long-term, higher-order goals (Dweck at el., 2011)

## **Resources Section**

The resources in the *handbook* are arranged throughout according to the specific issue they are meant to address. However, one may find need for help in a particular area and to this end, this section of the handbook has the resources therein listed in index form. This allows readers to reference individual resources should they have the need to do so. This section provides additional resources that may be useful to the fathers during their transition.

The literature review chapter of this paper explains the need for the handbook. This chapter is meant to explain the organization and content of the handbook. The next chapter of this paper combines the data in the literature review and the framework laid out in this chapter to create the handbook itself.



## **Chapter IV.**

This chapter contains the handbook discussed throughout the paper. The *Second Chance 4 Change* handbook is designed to communicate directly with dads who are about to be and who have recently been released. The *handbook* is written in a manner that is easy to understand for this audience given the likelihood that they have lower reading comprehension and education levels. The *handbook* also uses second person language so that the tone is more personal and relaxed. The goal of this handbook is to relay the information compiled in this paper to the fathers that need it and to do it in a way that they can easily understand<sup>8</sup>.

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This handbook will be submitted by Brandon Patrick Brinson to the Department of political science at Texas State University (San Marcos, TX) in partial fulfillment of conditions required for the Degree of Masters in Public Administration.

## **Second Chance 4 Change: A Handbook for Determined Fathers**

This handbook gives you resources and information to help you deal with the difficulties of being in jail and the challenges after you are released. It can be hard readjusting to life when you are back in your communities, and most importantly, in lives of your children. The handbook contains details about agencies and organizations that provide services aimed at helping you during this transition including web sites, phone number and physical addresses, where available.

For information not found in this handbook refer to **2-1-1 Texas**. **2-1-1 Texas** connects you to local resource and service providers throughout Texas 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If your transition is going to be successful you have to start getting ready before you are released. With this in mind, this handbook is divided into two major categories;

- Issues faced while incarcerated
- Issues faced after release.

### **Before Release**

#### **Contact with Children**

**The Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG)** gives you information regarding child support for fathers who are about to be released. There is also information to assist incarcerated review their case and provides guidance on issues like establishing paternity and information on the terms of child support orders. The **OAG** provides information about important things like child support and, if needed, confirming that you are the biological father of your kids for legal reasons. The **OAG** can be accessed using the Internet

(<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf>), telephone, or by mail. The **OAG** also offers 24 hour payment and case information for fathers inquiring about their child support status.

Email: [www.childsupport.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.childsupport.oag.state.tx.us)

Customer Service Center: (800) 252-8014

Paternity Opportunity Program: (866) 255-2006

24 hour Payment and Case Information: (800) 252-8014

It is important to stay in touch with your kids while you are away. Writing them letters, talking to them on the phone, and encouraging them to come and visit can help both of you during this difficult time. You can also use this time to help your kids prepare for your return.

**Txaccess.org** is operated by the **OAG** and provides a guide for incarcerated parents and custodial parent(s), information for the time during incarceration, as well as after release. Txaccess.org provides useful information about positive communication while fathers are incarcerated like tips for in-person visits, letters, and phone calls. There is also information about the process of establishing paternity in the case of unwed parents.

Txaccess.org can be reached at its Access and Visitation Hotline: **1(866) 262-4636 (10am-6pm CST)**

### **Keeping a Positive Attitude**

Staying positive while you are away can have a good effect on your transition. It can also help you have healthy communication with your children and family as well. Keeping a positive attitude can also make the time away from your kids less stressful for you. Taking part in programs put on by the facility can give you valuable tools that are helpful in staying positive. Things like visits from children and family can improve your mood while you prepare for your release. Coming home with the right attitude can help after you are released. Having strong connections to come home to can also help you avoid getting arrested again. This section is aimed at providing you with the tools that can help maintain a good attitude before you are released from jail.

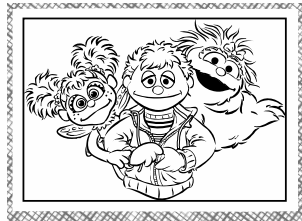
**Sesame Street** provides tips for you to stay active in your children's lives. During the separation children will, no doubt, have questions about the ordeal that are difficult to answer. Further, these answers and the children's reaction to them can have significant influence on the children's ability to cope as well as their willingness to see or speak to their fathers while they are away. **Sesame Street** can also offer useful tips to help your answer these important questions. The website itself also has helpful videos and activities that can help you tell your kids about this difficult time in their lives. The information on the following page was obtained from **[sesamestreet.org/incarceration](http://sesamestreet.org/incarceration)**.





LITTLE children  
BIG challenges: incarceration

## Tips for Incarcerated Parents



**You will always be a parent.** Even though you are incarcerated, you can still play an important role in your child's life. Try these actions to assure your child that you still care about her and will always be her parent.

### Answering difficult questions

Your child may have trouble understanding why you're gone. There are ways you can answer his questions truthfully and in ways that he can understand.

- Where are you?  
"I'm in a place called prison [jail]. Grown-ups go to prison [jail] when they break a rule called a law. I'm not here because of anything you did. This is not your fault."
- When will you be home?  
"I won't be home for a while. I'm waiting for more information and will let you know when I find out. I'd rather be home with you but know that wherever I am, I'm thinking about you."
- Will I get to see you?  
*If your child can visit:* "You can visit me in prison once in a while. Your caregiver will let you know when. Between visits we can write letters and talk on the phone."  
*If your child cannot visit:* "We may not be able to see each other often, but I want you to know that I'm always thinking of you."

### Connecting through visits

Seeing you can assure your child that you are okay. Here are some things you can do:

- Help your child feel comfortable  
Your child may feel nervous at first. Let her know you are happy to see her. Continue any rituals or customs you have together such as singing a song. Ask her questions about herself, such as: "What do you do with friends? What have you learned in school?"
- Make the most of your time together  
Take turns describing something you see and asking her to guess it; making funny faces; or discussing favorite colors, music, or sports teams.
- Make good-bye easier  
Saying good-bye is hard. Come up with a special phrase you both can say at bedtime or something you will both do at the same time each day even though you are apart.

Good communication is one way to help support your child.  
Build a positive relationship with her caregiver so she experiences support and love from you both.  
Talk to your child's caregiver about visits, letters, and phone calls.

The **Texas Inmate Families Association (TIFA)** provides education and support for you and your family. **TIFA** can also help you stay connected with your children while you are away. **TIFA's** storybook program allows you to record readings of children's books that can be played for kids. This can help you and your children feel closer while you are away. Services like this allow fathers to remain close to their children during a difficult time.

**Phone:** (512) 371-0900

**Email:** [tifa@tifa.org](mailto:tifa@tifa.org)

### **Legal Concerns**

**The Travis County Domestic Relations Office (DRO)** provides services to help in these areas:

- Conflict Resolution
- Civil Legal Action
- Parental Skills Classes
- Parental Mediation Referrals

The **DRO** is also helpful for fathers seeking assistance in productive and collaborative parenting.

**Phone:** (512) 854-9020

**Website:** <https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/>

**Texaslawhelp** provides free legal assistance for civic issues. This resource provides information and assistance on issues from child custody to removing arrests from one's criminal record.

**Website:** <https://texaslawhelp.org/family-divorce-children/child-custody-visitation>



## After Release

### Reintegration into Community/Family

Becoming part of your community and family again after you are released is important to your transition. The resources in this section can help you feel comfortable again with your family and friends.

**2-1-1 Texas** is a useful one-step phone number that can help with many different types of assistance. It can connect you with help in things such as:

- Housing
- Childcare
- Crisis counseling
- Substance abuse treatment

Phone: **2-1-1; 1-877-541-7905** (if 2-1-1 does not work from your phone)

**The Domestic Relations Office (DRO)** can help you to rebuild relationships with kids, and family members. This resource is useful to father both before and after they are released.

Phone: **(512) 854-9020**

Website: <https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/>

**Parents Anonymous** offers help with the hard job of being a parent.

Phone: **1-855- 4A PARENT (1-855-427-2736)**

Email: <http://www.parentsanonymous.org/>

### Employment/Financial Support

Finding and keeping a job after you are free is an important step in helping you stay out of jail. Your children depend on the money you make to live and working allows you a way to provide for them. The resources in this section are aimed at helping dads obtain employment and/or alternative means to support their children.



**Capital IDEA** is a community based, non-profit organization that provides education, training, support services, as well as counseling and case management. **Capital IDEA** provides training for employment in several fields.

This resource also provides support in the following areas:

- Childcare
- Transportation
- Emergency Assistance
- Counseling.

Website: [www.capitalidea.org](http://www.capitalidea.org)

Phone: (512) 457-8610

Email: [info@capitalidea.org](mailto:info@capitalidea.org)

**Goodwill** can help you find a job as well as job training and education.

Website: <https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job>

Phone: (512) 637-7580

Email: [intake@goodwillcentraltexas.org](mailto:intake@goodwillcentraltexas.org)

Having a criminal record can look bad on a job application. The **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)** can help.

Website: <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>

Central Texas Specific Info Website: [www.wfscapitalarea.com](http://www.wfscapitalarea.com)

Phone: (512) 454-9675 (Mon.-Fri; 8am-5pm/CST)

**2-1-1 Texas** has a lot of resources and many areas that can help you. Whether your need is:

- Housing
- Child Care
- Crisis Counseling
- Substance Abuse Treatment

**2-1-1 Texas** can get you the help you need.

Phone: Dial 2-1-1; 1-877-541-7905 (if 2-1-1 does not work from your phone)

Utility expenses can seriously impact a family's financial well-being. **Texas HEAP** is a federal program that can help you with your energy bills. **HEAP** also helps you with the costs of maintenance and repair for broken heating equipment.

Website: <http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/community-affairs/index.htm>

Phone: 1-877-399-8939

### Avoiding Re-arrest

One of the biggest challenges you will face when you are released is staying out of jail. This section is dedicated to helping you deal with the negative influences that could lead you back to prison by providing resources aimed at helping you avoid major factors that can lead to bad behavior.

Lack of formal education can be one of the most significant barriers to success. The Texas Education Agency is a way to get your high school equivalency through the **High School Equivalency Program (HSEP)**. **HSEP** can also provide help with job searches and training.



Website: [https://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/](https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/)

Phone: (512) 463-9734

Email: [teainfo@tea.texas.gov](mailto:teainfo@tea.texas.gov)

Austin **Alcoholics Anonymous** offers group counseling to assist if you suffer from alcohol addiction. Alcohol abuse affects many in our prison population and it doesn't just disappear when you are set free.

Website: <https://austinaa.org>

Phone: (512) 444-0071

**Central Texas Area Narcotics Anonymous (CTANA)** provides information about group counseling for those who suffer from drug addiction. **Narcotics Anonymous** also provides information about other methods and assistance to those who suffer from this addiction. Addiction to illegal drugs, much like alcohol, affects many in our criminal justice system. The **CTANA** provides help managing and overcoming your addictions.

Website: <http://ctana.org/>

Phone: (512) 480-0004



**The National Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Information Center** gives you information about the leading alcohol and substance abuse centers. They can provide information about:

- Treatment For Alcohol And Drug Abuse
- Detox
- Intervention
- Addiction Assistance

You can use this information to help with the difficult task of battling addiction during the already challenging circumstance of the post-jail transition.

Website: **[www.addictioncareoptions.com](http://www.addictioncareoptions.com)**

Phone: **1(800) 784-6776**

If there is help you are looking for that is not in this handbook **2-1-1 Texas** is a good place to look. Whether the need is in areas like housing assistance, counseling, or childcare, **2-1-1 Texas** has information about services available to dads in these areas and many more.

Phone: **Dial 2-1-1; 1-877-541-7905 (if 2-1-1 does not work from your phone)**

*You are more than capable of rebuilding your life after jail, and changing for the better. This handbook can help you as long as you are willing to do the work and make the effort. You play a huge part in your kids' lives and they look to you for guidance and support. Your kids need you, and you can be the father they deserve. **NOW GO DO IT!***

## **Chapter V.**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter summarizes the previous chapter review and contents of the *Second Chance 4 Change* handbook. The information and resources contained in the *handbook* are intended to provide substantive assistance to the intended reader: fathers who are returning to society, and their parental roles after being released from incarceration. The goal of this paper was to justify, organize, and develop a comprehensive resource guide that could be used by fathers who are about to be or are recently released from incarceration.

The chapter discussing the literature surrounding the issue of father absence due to incarceration points out the many, often overlooked, areas of impact. The consequences of the mass imprisonment of dads can be felt on a societal, as well as personal level. The literature review chapter discusses not only the impact of father incarceration on their children but also the factors that contribute high level of incarceration at the outset. The issues of alcohol and substance abuse, mental illness, culture, over-criminalization are also addressed. All of these factors form the basis for the development of a comprehensive handbook to offer assistance with the issues that fathers could face when they are released from jail.

While the literature review chapter justifies the creation of the handbook itself, the organization and content of the handbook is addressed in a separate chapter. Chapter III discusses the layout and framework of the handbook. In chapter III, the data contained in the literature review is used to select and organize resources that could be useful to fathers in this

unique circumstance. This method is used to develop the handbook itself which is contained in Chapter IV. The handbook is the compendium of information focused on areas that could present challenges to dads who are dealing with the obstacle of reintegrating into life after being released from confinement. While the handbook may be useful, it does not purport to be a complete solution to any challenge these dads may face, but rather a tool that can be used to assist with some of the most common issues that could arrest during this time.

Those who conduct research surrounding the reintegration of fathers after they are released from jail could benefit from widening their focus. While there are programs and resources available to fathers presently, their impact of and success are much harder to measure. For many, this period is a confusing and challenging time and uncertainty can have negative impacts, often leading dads back into behavior that led to their initial incarceration. Research focusing on the most productive and successful programs and practices is needed to discern what factors and circumstances yield the best results for fathers and their families during the transition from jail to home. The importance of this issue, on a societal level, demands that more be done to address it.

## Resources

2-1-1 Texas. [www.211texas.org](http://www.211texas.org).

Al-Anon. [www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org).

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