

Offender Services & Programs: Family and Community Support Research Agenda 2012/2013

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To promote and negotiate relevant research into the family and community support needs of offenders. Specifically, to identify or inform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • best practice standards; • program & service evaluations; and • integrated responses to families and communities affected by the criminal justice processes.
<p>Current situation</p>	<p>There is an absence of evaluation studies on the role, and impact, of offender’s families as a source of support and assistance in the Australian correctional context.</p> <p>It is widely accepted that families can provide vital support to offenders throughout their sentence, particularly when the offender is reintegrating into the community. International research highlights the important role of family and community support in contributing to desistance from crime and that family-based intervention in general (i.e. interventions that focus on improving relationships and parenting skills within the family) are effective in reducing reoffending. Receiving family visits while in prison has been associated with successful employment and accommodation outcomes and also been found to reduce the chances of prisoners reoffending after release. Best practice internationally suggests that maintaining family connections can also protect children of offenders from becoming offenders themselves.</p> <p>While it is widely acknowledged that the families of offenders are a potential source of support and assistance, it must also be acknowledged that Offenders and their families are also some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded people in the community. It is well documented that families of offenders are highly likely to experience social isolation and stigma, financial difficulties, unstable living arrangements and mental health problems as a result of a family member’s criminal behaviour and conviction. The impact of offending can also be inter-generational and a large proportion of offenders’ come from family and community backgrounds that are characterised by systemic disadvantage and negative lifestyles. Another common attribute of persons in conflict with the law is the absence of family support.</p> <p>Research is needed to better understand the factors that facilitate, or hinder, families in helping offenders make and sustain the changes needed to turn away from crime. Research is also needed on ways to achieve or improve effective and integrated responses to these families and their communities in order to reduce the risk of re-offending.</p>
<p>Research interests</p>	<p>What are the best practice models for offenders’ family and community support approaches?</p> <p>What are the key components of these models that are most relevant for reducing reoffending by supporting the families of offenders? What are the implications for existing programs and services, other family members, caregivers and community support agencies?</p> <p>What are the relevant programs and services implemented both internationally and in Australia and what impact have they had?</p> <p>What are the key components of these programs and services that effectively support the families of offenders and assist them to contribute to the offender’s desistance from crime?</p> <p>What workforce profile can best facilitate effective family focussed programs and services? How should they be trained and supported?</p>

<p>Research projects (September 2012)</p>	<p>Breaking-the-cycle: Parenting programs to support mothers' and fathers' transition from custody to family life.</p> <p>Objective: To develop a framework for the delivery of parenting programs for mothers and fathers in prison and post-release that will seek to address the following questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can parenting programs improve the ability of parents to build family & community connectedness, problem solving skills, resilience and parenting self-efficacy? • What are the needs of parents as they transition from custody to family life in the general community? • How and when should an action plan for evidence based parenting programs be implemented? <p>Contacts: Professor Debra Jackson, Professor Cathrine Fowler, Professor Christine Duffield and Dr Angela Dawson from the University of Technology, Sydney, Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Health.</p> <p>Allison Jones, Principal Advisor Family & Community Support Corrective Services NSW Deirdre Hyslop, Principal Advisor Women Offenders Corrective Services NSW</p>
	<p>A Strategic Framework for the Management of Australia's Ageing Offenders</p> <p>Objective: To develop a framework for the management of ageing offenders in the Australian correctional context that will seek to address the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the characteristics of the ageing offender cohort? • What are the particular issues and challenges faced by corrections services (including corrections, health and pre- and post-release services) in the management of this particular prisoner group? • What strategies will be most appropriate and effective for the management of ageing offenders? <p>Contacts: Associate Professor Christopher Trotter and Research Fellows Susan Baidawi and Phillipa Evans, from Department of Social Work Monash University Allison Jones, Principal Advisor Family & Community Support Corrective Services NSW</p>
	<p>Impact of Incarceration on children's Care: A Strategic Framework for Good Care Planning</p> <p>Objective: To investigate how the care needs of children can be best met when a primary carer is incarcerated and to propose a best practice care planning framework. The study will focus on the care planning experiences and needs of children, in Victoria and N.S.W., when their primary carer is imprisoned at key points in the criminal justice process which can have an impact on children: arrest, sentencing/imprisonment. The study will seek to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the current care planning practices and experiences of children and families where a primary carer is imprisoned? • What are the strategies that will support best practice responses for good care planning for these children and families? <p>Contacts: Associate Professor Christopher Trotter and Phillipa Evans, Research Fellow, from Department of Social Work Monash University Allison Jones, Principal Advisor Family & Community Support from Corrective Services NSW Deirdre Hyslop, Principal Advisor Women Offenders Corrective Services NSW</p>

What makes a good visit

Objective: The aim of this research is twofold. First to assess the impact of prison visits on recidivism in the attempt to replicate American data, which found prisoners who received visits were less likely to reoffend than prisoners who did not receive prison visits. This component of the study will examine the number of visits received and the type of visits received by offenders. The second aim of the study is to assess the quality of prison visits for offenders and their families to identify core components that make a prison visit a 'quality' visit which CSNSW can target to support future improvements to prison visits.

Contacts:

Megan Macadam, Master of Psychology (Forensic) student from University of NSW
Allison Jones, Principal Advisor Family & Community Support from Corrective Services NSW