

Guide to Educational Programming with Incarcerated Audiences

Family Living Programs University of Wisconsin-Extension

Deciding possible educational roles you may have with emerging issues is of critical importance for Family Living Program colleagues. Often, a clear educational role is apparent; other times, more thought is needed to make an informed decision. This can be especially true when the audience or setting may be unfamiliar or possess unique characteristics.

As FLP colleagues consider working with learners in the correctional system, it is important to ensure that our efforts adhere to our educational mission, program guidelines, and are likely to positively impact the learners. The following questions are designed to help you make an informed decision about the possibility of working with incarcerated audiences. These questions may also be helpful as you consider working with audiences affiliated with the correctional system, but not incarcerated themselves (i.e., persons on probation or parole and inmates' family members).

Program Planning Considerations

1. Who has identified educational programming with incarcerated individuals as a **local priority**? Are they informed and reliable sources of such information? What level of local **stakeholder support** exists from the Extension Committee, FLP Advisory Group, County Board, County Administrator, etc. for you to program in this area?
2. Have you secured **local data** (#'s of incarcerated, average length of jail stay, gender, age, etc.) that defines and justifies the need for programming with incarcerated audiences?
3. How does educational programming with incarcerated individuals **fit into your plan of work**? Does it lend itself to building a comprehensive local family living program of inputs, outputs and outcomes?
4. To what degree do you **collaborate** with the county Criminal Justice Council (or similar group) and partners from the correctional system? Are there opportunities to **build relationships** with these key partners? Is there **support from jail/prison staff** for educational programming with inmates?
5. What potential exists for the learners to **use and apply the educational information** you might provide? Does their confinement impede their ability to utilize the information? Is their release from the correctional facility in the near future, thus allowing them to practice the information they receive?
6. How will your efforts **complement other programs** for the incarcerated audience and lend towards building a **comprehensive corrections program** for inmates that includes academic, vocational and social support?

7. What are the program outcomes for which you will be held accountable? Are these program **outcomes consistent with key stakeholders' expectations**? (Note: Be extremely cautious in claiming that reduced recidivism will be an outcome of your efforts.)

Educator Skill, Comfort Level and Safety Concerns

8. Before beginning any program, are you able to participate in **professional training** that provides insight and information about the educational needs and learning styles of incarcerated learners?
9. Is there **training that jail or prison staff** will provide you before you begin teaching in the correctional facility?
10. What is your **comfort level** when thinking about working with incarcerated audiences? Are you overly nervous about direct teaching with inmates? Could this concern impede your effectiveness? Can you put aside any pre-conceived notions about the audience you might teach?
11. What facilities will be used for direct teaching? How does the **facility** protect your **safety**? What safety measures would be in place to ensure a safe learning environment?

Educational Program Design and Content

12. What are the unique educational needs and learning styles of this audience? What means will you use to identify these **needs and learning styles**?
13. Do you have **access to effective educational resources** (such as curricula and written materials) that have been designed or adapted to meet the unique needs and learning styles of incarcerated learners? How is research on educational programs with incarcerated audiences incorporated into the educational materials?
14. What **evaluation evidence** is there that the program you may use has already been effective and holds promise for success with incarcerated learners?
15. Is the planned educational program of enough **intensity and duration** to result in beneficial changes among the incarcerated individuals?
16. Does the program content **complement the program focus** of Family Living? Is the focus **educational in design** or does it carry more of a treatment, service delivery or mandated program emphasis?
17. Are there **specific subgroups** affiliated with incarcerated individuals with whom you could target programming, i.e., Huber clients, persons on probation, parents, inmates' family members, or caregivers for children with incarcerated parents?

Other Considerations

18. Could this audience and/or their families be reached in other ways through **alternative teaching techniques** i.e., printed materials, on-line classes, satellite, etc.?
19. Will work in this area contribute to the components of **scholarship** (creative, intellectual work; reviewed by peers; communicated and shared; valued by learners)?
20. What is the process for **fair selection of participants** for the programs you may provide? Who will be involved in selecting participants – correctional system staff? you? participants?
21. As you plan program evaluation methods, have you taken the appropriate steps for **Human Subjects Protection** approval?

ANALYSIS SHEET

Consider the following responses to each question to help you determine your best course of action.

Program Planning Considerations

	Pursue	Don't Pursue	Need More Information
1. Local Priority, Stakeholder Support	At least one or more local stakeholder group has identified as priority; united support from Extension Committee	No indication from local stakeholders, collaborators or clientele of priority area for programming; lack of united support and remaining questions create doubt from key supporters	Yes or No
2. Local Data	Reliable data shows increasing demand and need over time	Unconfirmed or conflicting data creates questions around need	Yes or No
3. Fit into Plan of Work	Fits well in plan of work, builds more comprehensive local FL program	Poor fit; will be an "add-on" and not complement existing program efforts	Yes or No
4. Collaborate and Build Relationships with Key Partners, incl. Jail/Prison Staff	Solid relationships, clear roles, ongoing communication; support from facility staff for program efforts	Few opportunities to build relationships and roles; communication is difficult; corrections staff show disdain or disregard for educational efforts	Yes or No
5. Use and Apply Educational Information	Learners can practice skills despite their confinement and are due for release within near future so they can apply their skills in real world	Learners have no control over the environment and can not apply newly learned information and skills; long-term confinement limits application of new skills	Yes or No
6. Complement other Programs, Build Comprehensive Corrections Program	Avoids duplication or provides necessary reinforcement of learning	Viewed as duplicating services already being provided; turf issues apparent	Yes or No
7. Outcomes Consistent with Stakeholder Expectations	Stakeholder expectations are realistic and in line with program goals	Expectations are beyond the scope of the program and resources available	Yes or No

Educator Skill, Comfort Level and Safety Concerns

	Pursue	Don't Pursue	Need More Information
8. Professional Training	Plan to participate in opportunities to increase expertise	No plans to participate in relevant professional development	Yes or No
9. Training from Jail/Prison Staff	In-house training will be provided; familiarity with personal safety measures	No guidance from facility staff on personal safety	Yes or No
10. Comfort Level	Few reservations; unbiased opinion regarding inmates and incarcerated	Doubts and nervousness regarding direct contact	Yes or No
11. Facility Safety	Safeguards are in operation at building (alarms, guards, cameras, etc.)	Safeguards are not present, not in operation or minimal	Yes or No

Educational Program Design and Content

	Pursue	Don't Pursue	Need More Information
12. Audience Needs and Learning Styles	Needs assessment has been done to identify learner needs	No information exists to inform about learner needs and learning styles	Yes or No
13. Access to Effective Educational Resources	Ready availability of curriculum and other resources designed for incarcerated audiences; materials reflect pertinent research	Little or no access to (or awareness of) resources designed for specific audience; materials lack research base and references	Yes or No
14. Evaluation Evidence	Data shows evidence of effectiveness with audience	Evaluation is weak in design and effect	Yes or No
15. Program Intensity and Duration	Program content presented in multi-sessions that build on prior learning	Programs presented in piecemeal, 1-shot approaches; minimal number of sessions to show impact	Yes or No
16. Complement the Program Focus, Educational in Design	Program complements the educational mission, of Family Living Programs and UW-	Program is outside the scope of FLP and UW-Extension; more oriented to treatment, mandated services,	Yes or No

	Extension	etc.	
17. Specific Sub-groups	Access to specific sub-groups exists and would be a viable program audience	Access to specific sub-groups will be difficult to the degree of impeding program success	Yes or No

Other Considerations

	Pursue	Don't Pursue	Need More Information
18. Alternative Teaching Techniques	Educational needs of learners could be met via non-face to face instructional methods	Non face-to-face instruction methods are not available or reasonable to implement	Yes or No
19. Scholarship	Work will make a contribution to the field and be useful for other educators	Work holds little potential for generating new knowledge or contributing to colleagues in the field	Yes or No
20. Fair Selection of Participants	All potential learners have equal access to participate in the program	Unfair restrictions are placed on who can and cannot participate in the program	Yes or No
21. Human Subjects Protection	HSP approval is being sought and adequate procedures are in place	HSP approval is not granted for the work you propose	Yes or No

Making an Informed Decision

Your decision about whether to move forward in educational programming with incarcerated populations may still not be absolutely clear, but you should be more aware of the many considerations involved. Do you need more information before making a decision? Do you think you should pursue the programming effort as planned, revise it, or perhaps not pursue it? If you decide to move ahead, please refer to the “Incarceration in Wisconsin County Jails and Implications for Inmate Education” report that will be posted on the FLP website. This tool speaks to specific implications educators should consider when working with incarcerated audiences. It may also prove useful with your partners in the correctional setting who support your work.