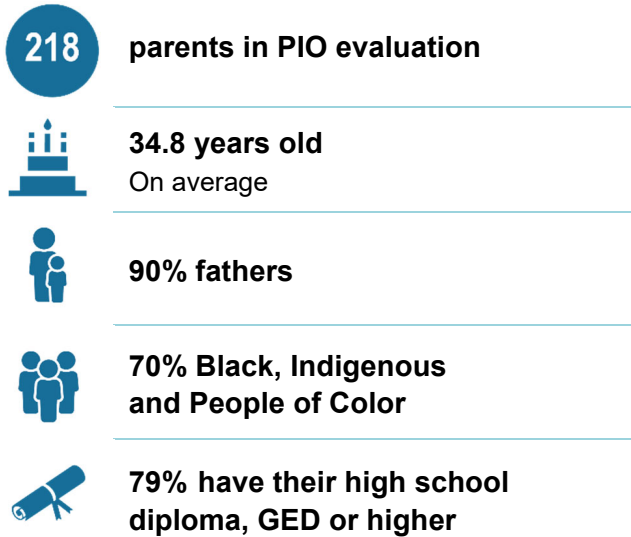


# Lessons Learned from Parenting Inside Out Implementation in Minnesota Jails (2021-2023)

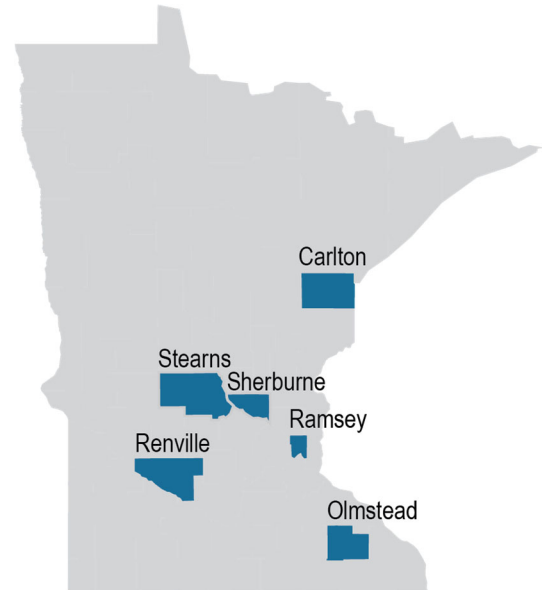
Beginning in 2019, six county jails in Minnesota formed a Model Jail Practices Learning Community (convened by the Minnesota Department of Health and University of Minnesota) focused on implementing new programming and strategies to better support incarcerated parents and their children. As a part of this work, the jails offered Parenting Inside Out (PIO), an evidence-based parenting skills training program for parents involved in the criminal legal system.<sup>1</sup> This brief summarizes findings from surveys completed by PIO participants at the beginning and end of the program, lessons learned from program implementation, and data limitations. A total of 218 people completed at least the pre-survey.

## Who are the parents receiving Parenting Inside Out?



Note: Group sizes vary by data point and range from N=198-218

## COUNTY JAILS OFFERING PARENTING INSIDE OUT



## Many PIO participants are full-time parents.



At the beginning of PIO, nearly half of parents (48%) said they were parenting full-time in the year before they were incarcerated (N=186).

Even more parents (60%) said they hoped to parent full-time after they were released from jail (N=192).

<sup>1</sup> Parenting Inside Out. (n.d.). *Welcome to Parenting Inside Out: Prioritizing, parenting, and protecting our children.* <http://www.parentinginsideout.org/>

## Impacts of Parenting Inside Out



**91%** of parents said the skills and knowledge they learned in PIO will be “quite” or “very” helpful when they are released (N=95).



**68%** of parents said the skills and knowledge they gained in PIO will help them stay out of jail “very much” (N=95).

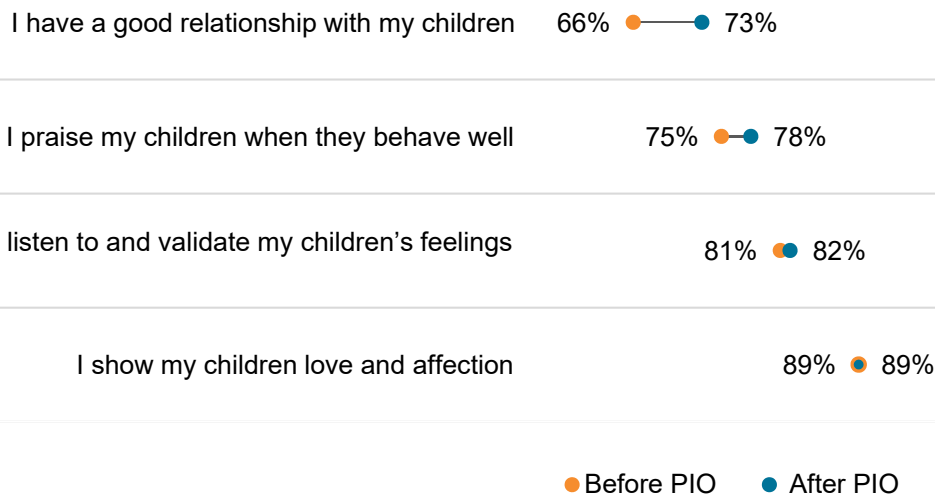


**70%** of parents said they think they will act “quite” or “very” different as a parent after they are released compared to before they were incarcerated (N=94).

### Parents felt the quality of their relationships with their children improved.

Parents reported strong, loving relationships with their children before and after PIO—including listening to and validating their children’s feelings, showing love and affection, and praising their children. Nearly all parents (91%) reported the quality of their relationship with their children improved after PIO (N=89).

#### % OF PARENTS WHO SAID EACH STATEMENT WAS “VERY TRUE” (N=78-87)



### Parents had more frequent contact with their children.

Many parents reported having regular contact with their children via phone calls (61%), visits (27%), and emails, texts, or letters (23%) both before and after PIO. Nearly all parents (88%) reported they started having more frequent visits, letters, and phone calls with their children after PIO (N=92).

## Parents said they would improve their communication, spend more quality time together, and create more structure for their children.

When asked an open-ended question about **how they'll act differently as a parent after release**, 94 parents responded and said they will...



**Improve their communication:** be more patient and understanding, tell and show their children they love them, listen more, and show their children respect (n=42)



**Spend more time together,** be more present and involved (n=39)



Create more **structure, boundaries, and rules** (n=18)

Fewer parents said they will maintain their sobriety (n=8), put their children first (n=5), and get along better with their children's caregivers (n=5).

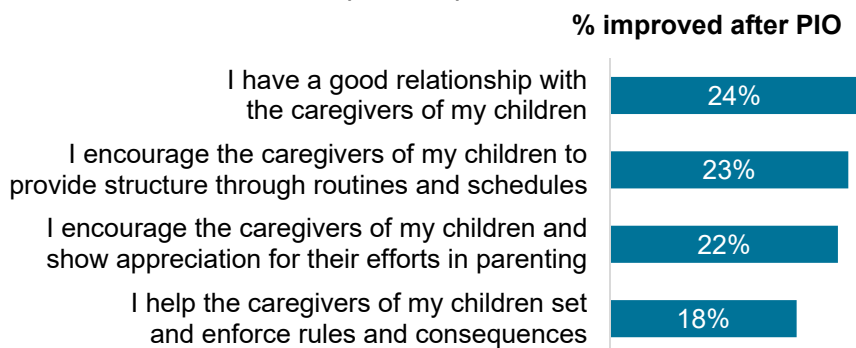


*I will act different because I will have a better understanding for my kids, how to connect with them, how to be more active, make them feel loved and let them know I will always be there for them.*

*I think by spending more time with them, by listening and talk to them more and also just being there for them and being involved more in their life. Trying to make them feel love.*

## Parents felt the quality of their relationship with their children's caregivers improved.

**% OF PARENTS WHOSE RELATIONSHIP AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN'S CAREGIVER IMPROVED AFTER PIO (N=87-89)<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> Parents were asked to reflect on several statements about their children's caregivers, and self-reported if each statement was "very," "somewhat," or "not at all" true for them. Parents' attitudes "improved" if they said a statement was "very" true for them after PIO and said it was "somewhat" or "not very" true before PIO, or if they said a statement was "somewhat" true after PIO and said it was "not at all" true before PIO.

## Participant feedback on Parenting Inside Out



Out of 104 parents, **85%** were satisfied with the parenting information they received in PIO.

### Parents liked the PIO class content, instructors, and interactions with other parents.

When asked an open-ended question about **what they liked most about the PIO class**, 97 parents responded and said they liked...



The **class content** on specific topic areas (e.g., child development, emotional regulation, discipline), role-playing scenarios and hands-on learning, and helpful, in-depth examples (n=59)



PIO **instructors**, who were helpful, caring, non-judgmental, and understanding (n=31)



Interacting, sharing, and **developing relationships with other PIO participants** (n=10)

*I learned a lot that I will actually use in my everyday life with my kids. Most helpful and involved parenting class I've ever done. Best incarceration one I've ever been a part of.*

*My instructor was very thorough and patient with us and not judgmental at all made it comfortable to open up.*

*The teacher I feel like she is very nice, genuine and care for us as well. I feel she is giving us the true knowledge we need to be better fathers.*

### Parents had few criticisms of PIO.

When asked an open-ended question about **what they liked least about the PIO class**, 78 parents responded and most said they liked the class and did not have critical feedback. Among parents who had feedback about the program, most often, parents said...



**Class materials could be improved** to be less outdated, and include more content on older children and teens (n=15)



The class **wasn't long enough** (n=12)



It would be helpful to have **access to parenting classes** and information in a non-incarceration setting (n=3)

## Key takeaways from implementing Parenting Inside Out

- Given the high rate of turnover among participants, implementing PIO in a jail setting was challenging. Jail programmers benefitted from learning from others about strategies for successful program implementation (e.g., increasing the frequency of sessions during a week; identifying opportunities for parents to continue participation post-release).
- Staffing levels following the COVID pandemic challenged jails' abilities to implement all the programming they may have wanted.
- The benefits and supports parents receive when participating in PIO (e.g., face-to-face non-contact visits with children, electronic visits) should not be discontinued when participants complete the program. Lack of continuity of family supports may detract from the positive impacts of the program for participants.

## Limitations of the data

Many members of the Learning Community reported experiencing challenges implementing PIO in a jail setting, particularly because of the high rates of turnover among incarcerated individuals. Some participating jails experienced challenges related to data collection and consistently implementing the correct survey forms due to staff turnover, changes to the forms over time, and limited resources. Adding program evaluation activities (e.g., administering pre- and post-surveys) takes staff time and reduces the already limited time that PIO coaches have with participants. Less than half of all PIO participants (N=218) finished the whole program and completed both the pre- and post-survey.

Because not all PIO parents participated in the evaluation, these findings may not reflect the experiences of all PIO parents. Additionally, smaller group sizes make it more challenging to understand change over time and understand differences in experience between participants of different identities (e.g., differences by race and ethnicity). Because just 10% of PIO participants were mothers, we cannot compare differences in moms' and dads' experiences with PIO. In the future, with more data, we hope to better understand how participants of different identities and backgrounds may experience and be impacted by PIO differently.

*The work described in this infographic was made possible from funding by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Award #s: 2020-CZ-BX-0008 and 2020-IG-BX-0005).*

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Suggested citation: Austin, J., Atella, J., & Schlafer, R. (2024). *Lessons learned from Parenting Inside Out implementation in Minnesota jails (2021-2023)*. Wilder Research.

APRIL 2024