

Young Fathers Program

The Young Fathers Program is designed to educate young fathers and potential fathers who are incarcerated at Juvenile Hall. Many of these young men come from female, single-parent homes. If a male role model is present, i.e., an older brother, an uncle or grandfather, they are not usually someone who can show the characteristics of fathering.

This program will be facilitated by members of this institution: the Chief of Probation, the Assistant Chief of Probation, four line-staff who are fathers and three female staff members who have children.

Our sole purpose is to bring awareness through our own parenting experience during the 16 hours each day, 40 hours each week that we are here with these young people.

There are three areas that will be focused on in this program: responsibility, bonding, and maturity.

Responsibility: Most of these young people have no idea what it means to be a responsible father. Our purpose is to have them develop their potential as fathers.

Bonding: Many men of color shy away from the concept of bonding. We do so due to lack of reference in our own backgrounds. Expressing closeness means showing emotions. Bonding is the willingness of a father to set aside ego and express feelings for his child.

Maturity: the big "M" comes from time and experience. The ability to focus on positive aspects has a direct bearing on one's leadership skills as a father. Maturity is coming to the realization that serious and difficult choices have to be made – choices not based on selfish wants, but unselfish needs.

These three areas are the three cornerstones in raising a family: Responsibility when we expect our children to witness, without any instruction, the steps of responsibility without teaching what those steps are. Bonding - my three female colleagues are developing curricula based on this concept. They know what they expect from the fathers of their children and will teach what mothers expect of fathers in this class. Maturity – The foundation of a family is the level of maturity in the adults that head up that family. In many cases with teen fathers, there is no level of maturity. They simply mimic or continue the same lacking family dynamics that they witness. Maturity develops patience and growth in character.

For those young men who currently have children and had had problems in the areas of responsibility, bonding and maturity, we expect to develop awareness of their potential in personal growth and the importance of fatherhood in the family structure. The hope is that their participation in this program will help them grow-up and become better fathers.

Submitted: Joseph Tanner
Author and Program Coordinator