



Request for Applications: Family Connections in Correctional Facilities Project

Questions and Answers

Updated: 9/12/2018

Note: The “project team” referred to below is a group of representatives, researchers, and practitioners from the National Institute of Corrections, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Urban Institute, and Community Works West.

Location of Application Materials and General Information

1. Where can I find more information?

Additional information about this training and technical assistance (TTA) opportunity, and the request for applications, is available on NIC’s microsite at: <https://info.nicic.gov/fsp/>. Login using the following credentials:

- Username: guest-user
- Password: guest-pass

You can also create your own account for accessing the microsite. Click on the “Create an Account” link in the upper right hand corner of the webpage. Follow the prompts on the next screen for creating a username and entering your email address.

2. Is there a recording of the informational webinar?

Yes, a recording of the webinar is available on the NIC microsite at: <https://info.nicic.gov/fsp/>. The recording is under the “Webinar Recording” header in the upper right hand corner of the webpage. The video will open in your web browser.

3. Can you please direct me to the TTA application?

To view the request for applications, please visit NIC’s microsite at: <https://info.nicic.gov/fsp/>. The request for applications is under the “Apply for Consideration” header in the upper right hand corner of the webpage. The document will open as a PDF in your web browser. Required elements of the application can be found on Page 4 of the PDF.

4. When are applications due?

Applications are due to Lindsey Cramer, Urban Institute project manager, by 11:59pm Eastern Time on September 28, 2018. Applications should be emailed to lcramer@urban.org.

5. How much funding is available through this opportunity?

There is no direct funding available through this opportunity. This is an opportunity to receive no-cost targeted TTA from a team of qualified experts to implement model practices. Up to five applicants will be selected to receive the TTA. This assistance will be provided for a maximum of 12 months.

6. Can I access the *Model Practices* guide?

Yes, the *Model Practices* guide is available on NIC's microsite at: <https://info.nicic.gov/fsp/>. You can log in to the NIC microsite by clicking on the word "Login" in the upper right hand corner of the webpage (the word "Login" appears in light brown text). Please use the following credentials:

- Username: guest-user
- Password: guest-pass

After you log in, you can click on the header called "View the Model Practices Guide". You can also create your own account for accessing the microsite. Click on the "Create an Account" link in the upper right hand corner of the webpage. Follow the prompts on the next screen for creating a username and entering your email address.

The *Model Practices* document includes a set of policies, programs, and practices that agencies should consider for improving family connections for the parents incarcerated in their facilities. Applicants should select the practice(s) that best fit the needs of their agency/facility and incarcerated parents.

7. For those interested in the way this project rolls out at each site, will there be an opportunity to read updates posted online or will there be a final report posted once the TTA involvement ends in 12 months?

It is the aim of the Family Connections project to update and publicly release the *Model Practices* guide based on the lessons learned through the implementation and evaluation of the practices in the pilot sites. The project team is planning to disseminate the lessons learned through this project through the NIC and BJA websites, Urban Institute website, conference presentations, and webinars.

8. Will there be future opportunities for funding or additional TTA?

At this time, there are no specific plans to offer additional TTA or funding for the implementation of the model practices beyond the current opportunity.

Eligibility and Site Selection

9. Is this TTA only for adult facilities?

Yes, this TTA opportunity is for adult facilities only.

10. Who is eligible to apply for this opportunity? Who would spearhead applying for the TTA award?

Any adult correctional agency or facility within the United States is eligible to apply and participate in this project. This could include city or county jails, regional jails, or state or federal prisons. Private, non-profit, community-based, and residential correctional facilities are eligible to apply as long as the parents they serve are still under correctional custody, such as through a contract with a federal, state, or local correctional agency (e.g., Bureau of Prisons, Department of Corrections, Regional Jail Authority, Sheriff's Department, etc.). Applications from facilities that only serve parents who have recently completed their sentence, who are being discharged

while awaiting trial, or who are currently under community supervision (e.g., probation or parole) are not eligible.

Applicants that wish to collaborate with local partners to carry out the practices or assist with developing the application may do so; however, only correctional agencies or facilities may serve as the primary applicant under the authority of the appropriate public administrator such as the county or state executive, commissioner, or correctional department chair or director. We understand that each correctional facility and department of corrections is structured differently and we anticipate applicants would include a project director, program director, commissioner, director of Department of Corrections, or supervising administrator to spearhead the application. Applications must include a cover letter of support from the key public administrator with decision-making power in the agency or facility, such as the commissioner or director of the Department of Corrections or facility.

We encourage applicants to identify and demonstrate the support of partners that would be needed to make the policy or practice successful (e.g., community-based service providers, community supervision agencies, local stakeholders). The strongest applications will demonstrate a commitment from these partners through a letter of support or a memorandum of understanding (as applicable).

11. How many of the prisons/jails in our jurisdiction should we include in our application? Is this opportunity for specific facilities or could multiple facilities under a single DOC/department count as one site? For example, if a department operates several facilities, should only 1 of those facilities apply?

Applicants should outline approaches to implement one or more practices in at least one correctional facility, though we welcome applications that propose implementation plans that involve more than one facility or an entire correctional agency should resources, capacity, and interest allow. The project team does not have a preference for applications that include more than one facility. Applicants will be scored on the strength of their implementation and TTA plans, which should be calibrated to the capacity and interests of their agency and needs of their incarcerated parents.

12. Will proposing to implement the practices in more than one facility increase our likelihood of being selected?

No, the rating of applications will not be based on the number of facilities included in the implementation plans. Every effort will be made to identify applicants where the conditions for maximum implementation progress, success, and impact are present.

13. What if we are already implementing a program/policy/practice and want to receive TTA to make it better; can we still apply?

Yes, applications can include implementation plans and TTA plans that build on existing programs, policies, and practices. However, applicants are expected to clearly outline their specific need for TTA through this opportunity and outline the ways selection for this opportunity would improve or expand on current practices. Applicants need to demonstrate how current implementation efforts align with the model practices. We will assess all

applications using the same criteria, including a site's ability to use this opportunity toward implementation progress, success, and impact.

14. How will the sites be selected?

With a maximum score of 100, the following weighting criteria will be used to score applications:

- Interest statement (15 percent)
- Implementation plan (50 percent)
- Training and technical assistance needs (10 percent)
- Timeline (10 percent)
- Data capacity and availability (15 percent)

15. How many sites will be selected?

The project team will select up to five applicants to receive TTA. Applicants can include one or more facilities or an entire correctional department. The project team endeavors to select five applicants that are, collectively, geographically diverse, represent a range of security levels, and serve male and female populations. Individual applicants are not expected to represent this level of diversity.

16. Are you able to share what other sites from each state are interested/applying so that stronger partnerships may be built with them?

We do not have details on which sites are considering applying for this opportunity. We encourage interested applicants to share this opportunity widely with relevant stakeholders in their jurisdictions to build strong applications.

17. We have applied for the OJJDP grant addressing the needs of incarcerated parents. Our proposal includes implementation of the model practices. If we receive that grant, could we still be eligible for this?

Yes, applications can include implementation plans and TTA plans on existing programs, policies, or practices occurring in adult facilities. Applicants are expected to clearly outline their specific need for TTA through this opportunity and outline the ways TTA would improve or expand the existing practice or program. All applications will be assessed using the same criteria, including a site's ability to use the TTA opportunity to maximize implementation progress, success, and impact.

Application Components

18. Should applications specify what kind of TTA is needed?

Yes, applicants are expected to specify how they envision using/needing experts and partners to support their implementation plan. However, applicants do not need to specify the amount, type, or modality of TTA they anticipate receiving (e.g., one in-person presentation, three phone calls, etc.). Rather, applicants should be as specific as possible in identifying where they would like help from the TTA team to execute their implementation plan. The project team will finalize the TTA plan in close partnership with the selected sites.

19. Do the partners have to use a specific program or can we choose our own program?

No, applicants are not expected to use a specific program. The *Model Practices* guide includes a set of policies, programs, and practices that applicants should consider to improve family connections for incarcerated parents. Applicants must reference the guide and identify which of the model practices they wish to implement. Applicants are not expected to propose implementation plans that include all the practices outlined in the guide. Applicants should select the practice(s) that best fit the needs of their agency/facility and incarcerated parents.

20. How many model practices are expected to be targeted?

We expect applicants to target at least one model practice. Applicants should select the practice(s) that best fit the capacities of their agency and the needs of their incarcerated parents.

21. How narrow of a focus can we have (e.g., could we choose to focus just on females/female facilities)?

We encourage applicants to outline an implementation plan and TTA plan that best fits the capacities of their agency, needs of their incarcerated parents, and need for TTA from the project team experts. Applicants are welcome to focus their implementation plan and TTA plan on a sub-population of incarcerated parents.

22. Are you looking for university/research partnerships?

Applicants can partner with universities or other research organizations. However, applicants and selected sites are not required to work with a university or research organization.

23. Can we partner with local universities to receive additional technical assistance with implementation/evaluation?

Yes, correctional agencies or facilities that wish to collaborate with local partners to carry out the practices may do so. If applicants are seeking additional assistance with implementation or the evaluation, their applications should specify how this will be different from the support they would receive through this opportunity. We also encourage applicants to demonstrate the support of partners (e.g., community-based service providers, supervision agencies, local stakeholders) through signed letters of support or memorandum of understanding (as appropriate).

Implementation/TTA Plans and Expectations

24. What is the timeline for project implementation? When do you want projects to start?

We will notify applicants of final decisions on or before October 26, 2018. The implementation period will be up to 12 months, depending on the proposed activity. Applicants selected to participate will be asked to complete a set of initial planning tasks, including the identification of key points of contact and key partners; an assessment of potential strengths and challenges to implementing the practice(s); and a project kick off meeting. The project kick off meeting, to be held where the applicant is based and at a time that is convenient for both the project team and the applicant, will occur in late 2018.

25. Who will be providing TTA?

The TTA team includes a team of researcher and practitioner experts from NIC, BJA, the Urban Institute, and Community Works West with significant experience working with correctional administrators and partners. The TTA team may also be supplemented by subject matter experts who have been supporting this project throughout the development of the *Model Practices* guide. The subject matter experts include federal agency staff, correctional staff and administrators, researchers, policy advocates, leaders of community-based organizations, and people with relevant lived experience. These subject matter experts along with the project team has extensive experience in the development, implementation, and study of correctional policy and practice that impacts incarcerated parents and their children.

26. Once the program is implemented, is it up to the department to staff the classes, training materials, etc.? Do you use volunteers to facilitate the classes?

Yes, it will be up to the agency/facility to staff and resource any classes, activities, or other programs and practices proposed in the implementation plan. Applicants selected to participate will receive targeted TTA from a team of qualified experts, based on the implementation and TTA plans. The TTA may include resources, manuals, guides, and activities, as well as thought partnership to help troubleshoot challenges in planning and implementation, guidance on selecting activities or program curricula, formal presentations on model practices, and assistance developing performance measures and other data to document implementation and outcomes. The TTA team can provide selected sites with training materials and/or help guide sites in developing their own training materials. The TTA team is not intended to be used to facilitate or implement classes or activities.

27. What are the expectations of selected sites?

Selected sites are expected to implement one or more of the model practices and to work closely with the TTA team. Selected sites are expected to engage with the TTA team on an ongoing basis, commit to ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and participate in virtual learning opportunities. The TTA team will work collaboratively with the selected sites to provide TTA in a manner that complements the sites' availability and does not place undue burden or time commitments on them or local stakeholders/partners.

28. The Request for Applications mentions that sites must commit to an evaluation. What evaluation expectations and support will be available to selected sites?

The project team plans to conduct a process evaluation and early outcome study of the implemented practices in the selected sites that will coincide with the delivery of the TTA. The evaluation is intended to document sites' implementation progress, successes, and challenges. The study will require sites to provide relevant datasets and to commit to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the practices' implementation and to support an evaluation executed by the project team by participating in interviews, focus groups, and providing administrative data. The evaluation will be used to provide ongoing feedback to the pilot sites on implementation progress, successes, and challenges. Every attempt will be made to ensure the evaluation is not onerous on the selected sites, since no funding is available through this opportunity. Interim and final results from the evaluation will be shared with selected sites individually and broadly with the other selected sites and with the field to promote the uptake of these practices with the

hopes of providing guidance on their implementation to other interested facilities across the country.

Specific Practices

29. Are court-ordered child support obligations identified in the intake process? If so, is there a relationship with state/county child support to request a modification of the child support order if incarcerated for more than 180 days?

Should an applicant propose to implement practices related to the intake process, the TTA team can review the agency's or facility's current process and recommend refinements; this could include adding questions to the intake assessments regarding child support obligations.

30. Have there been any long-term studies on the effects of children visiting parents in prison? Does it "normalize" prison as a life option?

There are very few long-term studies that have examined parent-child visiting. One goal of this project is to contribute to this body of research by demonstrating the potential of these practices. Participation in this project and demonstrating the practices' potential puts selected sites at the forefront of a national discussion on how to mitigate the impact of parental incarceration on children and families.

31. How has this been adapted for Spanish speaking population? How has this been adapted for the LGBT population? Other population sub-groups?

We encourage applicants to adapt the practice(s) in their implementation plans for Spanish-speaking populations, LGBT populations, and other incarcerated population sub-groups, as relevant and appropriate. The project team will tailor its TTA, as necessary, to be responsive to sub-groups.

32. How is privacy dealt with in coordinating a parent/teacher conference? What are general rules around informing others about incarcerated parents?

Should sites want to focus on this practice, they should specify in their applications that they want help addressing these privacy issues in their implementation and TTA plans.

33. Is there an assessment tool that you recommend?

Should a site propose to implement practices related to the intake process, the TTA team can review the process and recommend refinements or help sites implement a different/new tool based on the site's needs. The *Model Practices* guide does not proscribe a specific tool.

34. Please distinguish what practices have been shown to be helpful in jails not just prisons.

There are few studies that have examined the effectiveness of parent-child contact and communication in jail facilities. This is an emerging field of research. One goal of this project is to contribute to this body of research and sites' efforts will be used to demonstrate the potential of these practices. Participation in this project and demonstrating the practices' potential puts selected sites at the forefront of a national discussion on how to mitigate the impact of parental incarceration on children and families.

35. What is the one policy or program that you have found to be most effective in fostering family connections between incarcerated persons and their children?

There are many programs and practices that have the potential to be effective in fostering family connections between incarcerated parents and their children. As outlined in the *Model Practices* guide, we have identified several practices that can help facilitate this goal. At the beginning of each chapter in the guide, we summarize some of the research on that particular practice in the “why is this important” sections.

36. What role does Probation and Parole play in connecting children with the incarcerated parent?

For many incarcerated parents, planning for reentry and reunification is a critical aspect of a successful reentry process. Should applicants wish to focus on reentry practices, applicants are encouraged to partner with community supervision agencies to help implement practices that can support incarcerated parents as they plan for reentry. For more information, see Chapter Ten of the *Model Practices* guide.

37. Do you have resources evaluating how to work with staff who are not supportive or potentially even hostile towards visitation programs in general?

Our project team, through the TTA process, can help applicants address these needs.

38. Do you have some parenting programs that are available for review, other than PIO? Some of the potential road blocks we face are the populations and that are transient. The need is there but real time may not be.

The project team does not endorse a particular parenting curriculum. As listed in Chapter Five of the *Model Practices* guide, some parenting curricula include: Parenting Inside Out, 24/7 Dads, InsideOut Dad, Love and Logic, and Active Parenting Now. Our project team, through the TTA process, can include assist applicants in choosing an appropriate parenting curriculum.

39. How did you address the barriers to full contact visits re: contraband?

Our project team, through the TTA process, can help applicants address these needs.