

The Parent and Child Connection (PACC)

OVERVIEW: PACC is a collaborative program where incarcerated parents are recorded reading books to their children and the book & recording are sent to the child.

CHALLENGE: Arrest and incarceration of an individual often impacts many more people than just that one person. There are ripple effects on their community and loved ones, especially if they have young children; for whom such a development can be both painful and confusing. It can be difficult to maintain the parent/child bond when a parent is incarcerated. One of the many things that can be lost upon incarceration is the simple but powerful act of reading to a child. Kids who are not read to are less prepared for school, are at risk for poor language development and are more likely to need remedial or special education classes. In turn, they are more likely to drop out of school, struggle to find employment, and may run a higher risk of living in poverty and ending up incarcerated themselves.

SOLUTION: The Parent and Child Connection (PACC), program is a collaborative program between the San Bernardino County Sheriff / Coroner's Department and the Office of the Public Defender. It provides an opportunity for incarcerated parents to record themselves reading a book to their child, and then the book and the recording are sent to the child. The program is designed to maintain and strengthen the parent/child bond and encourage literacy.

INNOVATION: 93% of San Bernardino's county jail inmates are released back into the community directly from local jails, so offering programs to help them succeed is critical for public safety and community vitality. A partnership between the Sheriff's Department and the Office of the Public Defender may seem an unlikely one, but it is all the more innovative due to its improbability. These two departments have joined together to work toward the common goal of making our county communities stronger today and for the next generation.

PACC offers participants the opportunity to keep a critical bond – that between parent and child – even while the parent is incarcerated. That bond, and the love between parent and child, can be a powerful motivator for justice involved persons to choose a different path when they are released. Beyond that, PACC encourages literacy building by both the parent, who reads and records a selected book, and the child who receives and reads the book themselves. Many studies have shown a correlation between low

literacy and increased rates of incarceration. Similarly, many studies show a correlation between broken familial relationships and increased rates of incarceration. PACC works to address both of these social determinates of incarceration in a way that is positive and proactive. It is not uncommon for an incarcerated parent to disclose that PACC is the very first time they've read a book to their child.

RESULTS: The successes of the PACC program are multifaceted. By encouraging literacy and maintaining the parent-child bond, there's a decreased risk of detrimental outcomes related to the harms inherent in the adverse childhood experience of having a parent incarcerated. Due to the positive effects of maintaining the parent/child bond and continued encouragement of literacy there is a reduced likelihood of involved kids dropping out of school. The result is a savings \$260k per year per teen—predicated upon the projected cost if they drop out of school, in addition to increased risk of being unemployed, and living in poverty.

There is also the immediate result of improving safety for sheriff's department staff working in the jails and incarcerated persons alike, due to the fact that participation in the program requires an incarcerated caregiver to remain discipline free. There's also the positive effect of reduction of recidivism and attendant result of making the community safer. Over 1000 parents have benefited from the program since 2020.

REPLICABILITY: Other California Counties can absolutely replicate the PACC program with little to no additional costs. The collaboration did not incur any additional operating or capital costs because it functions as a partnership between two county departments that are already funded.

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VIDEO LINK: [PACC \(Parent And Child Connection\) | A component of the Parental Intervention Project \(PIP\): PACC is a reading program designed to strengthen literacy and parent-child relations through... | By SBCSD Community Service & Reentry Division | Facebook](#)