

Focus On: Decatur Correctional Center's Moms and Babies Program

Women's Prison Program Fosters Family Unity, Community Reentry

Babies need love.

It's a simple statement, confirmed by stacks of research on early childhood development.

In the academic world, attachment theory shows that the infant/caregiver bonds in a baby's first year are crucial for developing the emotional connections that foretell the child's social competencies in later life.

This widely accepted model underlies the Moms and Babies program at the Decatur Correctional Center. Here, incarcerated mothers of newborns receive counseling and parenting training while their infants remain in their care. A key aim of the program is to provide mothers with training and hands-on experience that will help them parent their children in healthy ways when they return to the community.

Moms and Babies is a partnership between the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), TASC, and a team of community-based partners who work together to provide both in-prison and community-based services for mothers and their babies. The program features strength-based assessments, counseling, bonding groups for mothers and babies, family outreach, and intensive post-release case management.

The program began in 2007 and IDOC



Mothers sit with their children in the common area of their ward at the Decatur Correctional Center on February 18, 2011 in Decatur, Illinois. (Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images)

was awarded funding in 2011 from the federal Second Chance Act to enhance the services available to women and their children. It is one of only a handful of programs nationwide that keeps incarcerated women and their infants together. Prison nurseries prevent foster care placement while enabling the formation of critical infant/mother bonds.

TASC began providing services for the Moms and Babies program in January 2012, offering both pre-release services

and post-release case management. In-prison services include the facilitation of support networks, parenting classes, training on communication and relationships, healing of trauma, and preparation for parenting outside the walls. As mothers are released from incarceration, TASC provides ongoing case management, home visits, and referrals to services and support in the community.

According to the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice at the Women's Prison

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TASC, Inc. (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities) is an independent, statewide, nonprofit agency that advocates for people in need of health and other rehabilitative services. We work in partnership with Illinois courts, prisons, child welfare programs, and community-based service providers to help adults and youth get the help they need to rebuild their lives. Please visit us online at www.tasc.org.

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TASC & Rockford Celebrate Recovery Rally on the Rock

Each September, communities across the country commemorate National Recovery Month to promote the message that millions of people can and do recover from addiction and mental health problems.

Forty-two events took place last September across Illinois, with TASC participating in family days, recovery walks, conferences, and rallies across the state.

In Rockford, Illinois, the third annual *Recovery Rally on the Rock* featured music, inspirational speeches, and family-friendly fun.

TASC's regional staff in northern Illinois, including Kate Craig, TASC recovery coach and one of the event's co-founders, partnered with

the recovery community in Rockford to help plan the event.

"This is what it's all about," said TASC Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Peter Palanca, who attended the event along with TASC Board Chair

Jim Durkan. "People helping people, sharing their stories, and giving hope to others. Recovery is becoming a part of everyday life now, and that's something to celebrate."



Bridget Kiely (center), administrator for TASC's services in northern Illinois, talks with volunteers and supporters at Rockford's recovery rally.

The national theme for Recovery Month 2013 will be *Join the Voices for Recovery: Together on Pathways to Wellness*. To plan your 2013 Recovery Month celebrations, please visit www.RecoveryMonth.gov. ■



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