

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/setting-an-agenda-for-family-focused-justice-reform>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Yesterday, [Family Justice Program](#) staff consulted with an outstanding group of advisers to outline an agenda for moving family-focused work forward in the adult and juvenile justice fields. We kicked off the discussion with a brief history of our program and the promising findings from [a new report](#) about the implementation of our Relational Inquiry Tool in a mens prison in New Mexico and a womens facility in Oklahoma.

The group spent the bulk of the day talking about promising practices in the field, such as the [Family and Offender Sentencing Alternative](#), which Bernie Warner, prisons director for the Washington State Department of Corrections, described. Rosa Cho from Brown University and Ann Adalist-Estrin, director of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, discussed research gaps in the field concerning the impact of incarceration on children and families. Mike Bobbitt, director of the Fatherhood Initiative for the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, and Michael Hayes, deputy for family initiatives in the Child Support Division of the Texas Office of the Attorney General, helped connect family-focused work to their areas of expertise and emphasized that understanding clients conception of fatherhood is important to successful programs for low-income fathers.

Throughout the discussion, Laura Dolan, bureau chief of Facility Programs for the Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS), Katayoon Majd, program officer at the Public Welfare Foundation, and Shay Bilchik, director of Georgetown Universitys Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, provided excellent examples of lessons learned from the juvenile justice field, including many promising practices taking root in Ohio, where our program is [working with ODYS](#).

In the coming weeks, we will describe the discussion in greater detail, in a document that will be available on Veras website. We look forward to hearing your feedback on that report.

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