Investing in What Works: Family Support and Connection

Preserving relationships with family members while an individual is incarcerated leads to stronger community ties, promotes rehabilitation, and reduces recidivism. Studies repeatedly find a significant link between family contact and success when returning to community.

In 2021, the Minnesota Legislature passed the first-in-the-country Healthy Start Act, providing incarcerated mothers the opportunity to create strong bonds with their newborn babies and increasing positive outcomes for both mom and baby. The work to support meaningful connections between incarcerated individuals and their families continues with the investments requested below.

These budget requests are targeted at increasing opportunities for incarcerated individuals to meaningfully engage with their family members through more routine contact with loved ones, increased parenting programing for incarcerated moms and dads, and expanded capacity for families and their communities to create positive connections with incarcerated individuals.

**Create a Family Support Unit**

The requested investment of $280,000 in FY 2023 and each year ongoing will create a family support unit within the Department of Corrections that focuses on supporting meaningful connections between incarcerated individuals and their families. The investment will provide the DOC with needed staffing capacity to explore and partner on evidence-based programming with community members and organizations such as parenting programs. The unit will lead the agency on developing strategies and policies to support incarcerated individuals and their families.

**Invest in Connecting Families**

The requested investment of $1.5 million in FY2023 will provide more frequent communications and related supportive services for incarcerated individuals to connect with family members and other approved support persons or service providers through in-person visits, video visits, and phone calls. Those who are incarcerated face challenges in keeping in touch with their families. Notably, family members of those incarcerated often pay the high cost of phone and video calls to support their incarcerated loved ones.