

FATHERLESSNESS IS A PLAGUE EATING AWAY AT THE CORE OF AMERICA!

Historically, three basic institutions have been responsible for training American youth: Home, School, and Church. A fourth institution, Juvenile Correctional Institutions, has emerged of necessity to fill the void of the three basic institutions which have in general defaulted. This fourth entity is tasked to bring social order out of juvenile chaos...somehow to make up for the failure of the three primary care-giving institutions originally tasked to prepare youth for responsible adulthood.

Basically, juvenile correctional facilities and programs are tasked to correct juvenile delinquency caused by **fatherlessness**, yet are not effectively addressing the **root causes** which stem from the absence of adequate paternal oversight, causing juvenile justice officials to agonize over unacceptable recidivism rates.

Single parent homes now constitute half of U.S households; thus millions of juveniles are not under the watch care of responsible fathers.

Schools attempt to address academics without giving attention to the consequences of fatherlessness. Zero tolerance and disciplinary alternative placement are needed, but do not constitute the cure.

Churches reference the Biblical admonition that “A child left to himself brings shame to his mother...and is a reproach to his father.” Yet few churches effectively address the condition of fatherlessness.

Juvenile correctional institutions may be the last place of hope for fatherless, angry boys and vulnerable girls. If so, juvenile correctional programs need refocusing in such a manner as to provide effective compensation for the condition of fatherlessness. The challenge is how to provide the essential components of good parenting, adequate schooling and relevant spiritual focus within an effective correctional detention program that protects society while hopefully helping fatherless teenagers cope with life and prepare for responsible adulthood.

FATHERLESSNESS results in being untethered, unhinged, untrained, undisciplined, unbonded and unfocused on **the essential ingredients of life involving body, soul and spirit**. These three essential elements require attention if juveniles are to be reclaimed from delinquency. Detention that focuses primarily on punitive restraint will always produce a high recidivism rate. Effective juvenile correctional programs must dare to venture into the arenas vacated by parents, schools and churches if true reclamation is to take place. That may be perceived as unfair, unreasonable, impractical or impossible. But, none-the-less, it is essential until and while legislatures and faith based entities find ways to rebuild a culture that has produced fatherless children whose single parent moms cry out in desperation for help!

Help derives from institutions which understand that every individual is composed of the **three essential components of body, soul and spirit**. Effective fatherhood ascertains that all three of these areas are nurtured during childhood and adolescence. The conscientious father makes sure the home provides nutritional food and exercise to build strong bodies, makes sure the child receives an

adequate education, and assures that the child embraces virtues and principles that are foundational to wisdom and character. The absence of attention to these essential elements is to produce juvenile delinquency. Therefore, remedy must, of necessity, address what parents, teachers and clergy are failing to provide for juveniles assigned to correctional institutions.

Each essential element (**body, soul and spirit**) brings into play specific components which are the fabric of individuals. Each is dependent on, and essential to, proper function of the others. A weakness in one affects the others. An anemic or undernourished body affects neurotransmitters. A soul abused by physical and emotional attacks affects the will to survive with dignity. A spirit without hope leads to despondency, lethargy, and loss of life purpose. Effective juvenile reclamation programs will focus on building or rebuilding the interdependent fabric of body, soul and spirit so the juvenile experiences wellness to such an extent that he or she can reenter society as a balanced, functioning person free of the negative consequences of fatherlessness.

Objective assessment of the circumstances which bring youth into correctional facilities compels attention to the basic causes of delinquent behavior...the lack of appropriate paternal oversight during formative growth years. Casting blame at single parent mothers does no good for the mother, child, teacher, probation officer, jailer or church youth department leader. Nor will good result by blaming public school officials exclusively. Neither will positive results emerge by castigating churches for failing to compensate for fatherlessness. The bottom line is that the last bastion of hope for thousands of teenagers rests in juvenile correctional programs! What, then, should be done? What can be done? What will be done? Remedy is currently in a defining process as legislatures, courts, educators, juvenile justice officials, clergy, faith based entities and parents assess what went wrong and how it can be corrected by the people tasked to deal with fatherless youth.

When officials look at the outward symptoms of fatherlessness, they see anger, bitterness, desperation, victim mentality, self-focus, hopelessness, low self-worth, meager aspirations, lack of bonding, careless moral behavior, low academic performance, social misconduct, etc. Juveniles who overcome these negative manifestations encounter adults who help compensate for the juveniles' absence of paternal oversight. Effective compensation programs involve adult attention to body, soul, and spirit. The reasonable conclusion is that juvenile correctional programs have to emulate effective efforts to compensate for the lack of paternal oversight of **body** (nutritional and health issues), **soul** (academic competencies), and **spirit** (exposure to virtues and principles that produce wisdom).

Compensation occurs through oversight by positive male role models, academic studies in virtue-based curriculum, individualized studies that enable rapid make up for scholastic failures, restraint of sensual appetites, inclusion of nutritional food, minerals and vitamins that rebuild neurotransmitters impaired by junk food, spiritual therapy for paternal neglect and physical/emotional abuse, and involvement in noble causes to divert attention from self and provide a purpose driven life. Obviously, most juvenile detention/correctional institutions will have to undergo restructuring, refocusing, and staff development. The purpose of this seminar is to get you started in that direction. Recovering Angry, Fatherless Boys Through 33 Laws of Recovery provides an overview of concepts with which to design and implement a paradigm shift in juvenile justice and correctional programs.

Dr. Ronald E. Johnson is CEO and Chairman of the Board of Paradigm Accelerated Charter School. Correspondence should be directed to P.O. Box 200 Dublin, Texas 76446, Learn@pacworks.com, or PH: 254-445-4272.

