

Disparities Due to Incarceration

Keeping Dads in the Picture to Improve Family Health

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, men make up 90 percent of both prison and local jail populations nationally—and more than half of those men are fathers to minor children.¹ Black Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at nearly five times the rate of white Americans—and as of May 2022, 65 percent of the Monroe County jail population was Black.²






Starting Point: Children of Incarcerated Dads Face Health Risks

Research shows that children raised without fathers at home are at greater risk of social issues that negatively impact their health. When fathers are absent, children are more likely to live in poverty, drop out of school, commit crimes, and end up incarcerated themselves. Those children are also at a greater risk of infant mortality, abuse, neglect, behavioral issues, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and obesity.

When fathers are actively involved in their children's lives, those risks reverse. Stronger family ties also help incarcerated individuals transition from custody to home and can reduce reincarceration.

Answering the Community's Call

In 2021, URMCM researchers worked with community partners to identify Rochester's most pressing health issues and inequities. From a list of 15 top concerns cited in community health assessments and strategic plans of social service agencies, community advisors selected reducing incarceration as one of five priorities on which URMCM should focus its research efforts.

-  Incarceration
-  Safe, affordable housing
-  Mental health & substance use disorders
-  Violence prevention
-  Chronic disease prevention & management

Those priorities laid the foundation for URMCM's Office of Health Equity Research, which was launched later that year. The first project funded by the Office in 2023 aimed to prevent reincarceration of fathers in Monroe County.



"We know that incarceration has incredible implications for the incarcerated individuals' life trajectories, as well as the trajectories of their families, their children, their spouses and partners," said Edith Williams, director of the Center for Community Health & Prevention and the Office of Health Equity Research at URMCM. "We are trying to intervene not only with regard to the lives and wellbeing of the incarcerated, but also thinking even more broadly about interrupting those negative trajectories of particularly the children involved, that can lead to patterns of multi-generational incarceration."

Spotlight: Helping Dads in Jail Engage with Their Families

URMCM researchers Amina Alio, PhD, professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences and Center for Community Health & Prevention, and Diane S. Morse, MD, associate professor of Public Health Sciences, Medicine, and Psychiatry, implemented the InsideOut Dad[®] program for fathers incarcerated in Monroe County jails. Developed by the National Fatherhood Initiative, the program helps incarcerated fathers to reengage with their families and successfully



¹ Nellis, A. The color of justice: racial and ethnic disparity in state prisons. [The Sentencing Project](#). Published October 13, 2021. Accessed September 12, 2024.

² Exploring jail incarceration trends in Monroe County. [Vera Institute of Justice](#). Published 2023. Accessed September 12, 2024.



Reginald "Reggie" Cox

executive director of Fatherhood Connection Incorporated, was one of three facilitators engaged in this project.

"A lot of the fathers who participated didn't have two healthy parents in their home, and many had to take on roles that normally a child wouldn't have to take on," said Cox, who has over two decades of experience facilitating men's parenting and personal development. "They didn't get the proper nurturance when they were young and now, they struggle to provide that for their own children."



Amina Alio, PhD

"I had the privilege of participating in two of the sessions, and you can see the pattern," Alio said. "It's such a cycle that needs to be broken. One way to do that is to make sure that the men in this program become a father figure and an example for their own kids, so that the cycle doesn't repeat in their family."



Diane S. Morse, MD

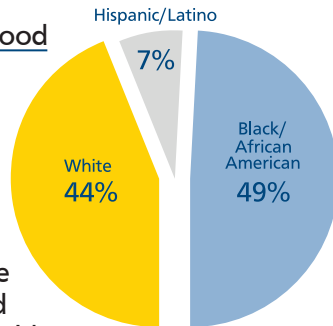
Forty-three fathers or father figures, ranging in age from 20 to 66, participated in at least a portion of the program. Participants had anywhere from one to six children and were disproportionately Black or African American.

"African American men in particular are disproportionately incarcerated," said Morse, who is also the associate director of the Office of Health Equity Research. "That's why our next step is to implement InsideOut Dad® as a reentry program specifically for Black fathers."

reenter their communities. The six-week curriculum includes 12 sessions that are both educational and therapeutic. Trained facilitators lead sessions on topics like family history, what it means to be a man, healthy emotion management, child development, and fathering on the inside.

Reginald "Reggie" Cox,

InsideOut Dad® Participants



What's Next: Supporting Black Fathers After Incarceration

Starting in the fall of 2024, Alio and Morse, partnering with the Reentry Association of Western New York, will implement a culturally adapted version of InsideOut Dad®



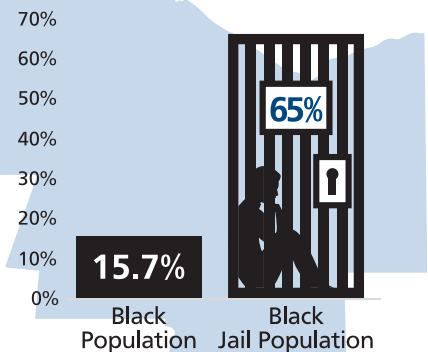
InsideOut Dad® facilitators (left to right) Norman Roberts, Reginald Cox, and Arthur Dilbert pose together after a team meeting.

for Black fathers recently released from incarceration in Monroe County. This version of the program will incorporate sessions focused on reentry-related topics like responsibilities and child support, visits upon release, money management, and fathering on the outside.

The team will test how participants' knowledge and feelings about fatherhood and themselves change over the course of the program.

In the longer term, Alio and Morse hope to implement this program on a larger scale and to track participants' progress and family outcomes over a longer period of time.

Inequities of Incarceration



Black people represented 15.7 of Monroe County's total population but 65 percent of the inmates incarcerated in County jails, according to a 2022 Vera Institute report.

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About Health Equity Updates

Faculty and staff members across URMC are working to reduce health inequities through research, education, and improved access to care. These updates provide snapshots of specific challenges being addressed and progress being made with community partners toward our ultimate goal of equal life expectancy for all.