

# FACT SHEET

## St. John Christian Care Center C.H.O.I.C.E.S. Mentoring Project

Life is a series of choices. Good choices. Bad choices. Choices that can impact our lives forever. It's all about the CHOICES we make in life:

Children that have one or more parents incarcerated in state or federal correctional facilities are living every day with the results of choices made by their parents. Some of their parents' choices will negatively impact their young lives in profound and significant ways, and as a result, it is vitally important that these young people be inspired and empowered to make personal choices that lead to more positive outcomes in their lives.

The St. John CCC C.H.O.I.C.E.S. Mentoring Program serves the needs of children and youth in Oklahoma County, Oklahoma with one or more incarcerated parent. The target age group is 4-18 years old. The program partners with **caring** adult mentors and others who are committed to **helping** the children of incarcerated parents **overcome** many of the challenges and obstacles in their lives by **inspiring** them to make life-changing choices that will **empower** them to **succeed**.

The program staff coordinates a network of volunteers, service providers and resources designed to provide each program participant (children of prisoners) with a unique and potentially life-changing experience that provides a combination of a meaningful relationship with a caring adult (mentoring), support for academic and vocational success (education/training) and referrals to a variety of community-based services to address the many problems in their young lives (resources) on an as needed basis. Critical program components involve the recruitment, screening and training of adult mentors; identification, recruitment and assessment of mentees; and successful matching of mentor/mentee pairs. In addition, the project staff offers a coordinated schedule of cultural and social activities to support the development of positive mentor and mentee relationships. Project staff also coordinates implementation of the PEN OR PENCIL initiative developed by the National Alliance of Faith and Justice (NAFJ), a social action and educational movement designed to positively influence the lives of youth at greatest risk of academic failure and potential incarceration. ([www.penorpencilmovement.org](http://www.penorpencilmovement.org))

This program is a community-based, one-to-one mentoring program operated by the St. John Christian Care Center, Inc., a 501© 3 non-profit organization affiliated with St. John Missionary Baptist Church. Direct programmatic oversight is provided by the M. L. Jemison Criminal Justice Commission, a collective of local criminal justice professionals (including a federal judge, district judge, pardon and parole board member, prison warden, prison chaplain, juvenile justice professional, attorneys and others) who are committed to introducing programs that benefit the Oklahoma City community. Partnerships have also been established with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, the National Alliance for Faith and Justice and others to facilitate implementation of the program. Mentors are actively recruited from local churches, alumni and collegiate chapter of various fraternities and sororities, and other community groups. These individuals all undergo comprehensive, federal background checks and rigorous training to prepare them for working with program participants.

For more information about the C.H.O.I.C.E.S. Mentoring Program, please contact one of the program coordinators, Angela Beatty or LaTiffany McCaskill, in the St. John Church Office at 405-478-3344.

## C.H.O.I.C.E.S.

**Caring. Helping. Overcoming. Inspiring. Changing. Empowering. Succeeding.**

