

Helping ex-cons & families adjust

BY JOYCE SHELBY
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Thursday, March 27th 2008, 4:00 AM

Men and women just out of prison aren't the only ones who need help adjusting to being home. Their families do, too, a group that just opened a center in East New York says.

The agency, Episcopal Social Services, will reach out to families on April 2, letting them know about support available both before and after an inmate is released.

"Families may be very excited that a loved one is coming home, but they may not understand that the adjustment after being confined is huge," said Anne Williams, director of network programs for Episcopal Social Services.

"First, there is joy to have the family member home," Williams said. "But if communication isn't good, lots of problems can ensue."

Williams directs two programs for Episcopal Social Services - Network in the Prisons, which helps inmates prepare for parole, and Network in the Community, which assists afterward. The group has programs in eight correctional facilities and community programs in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Damon Moore, director of the East New York community site, said since it opened in January, he's heard about children who resent being bossed around by parents who were away for so long. He's heard from parents who wanted their recently released children out of their homes immediately.

"We can offer alternatives," said Moore, who served nearly 10 years on an armed robbery conviction.

Moore has also talked with wives who cannot understand why their husbands do things like suddenly stop talking to them or playing with the kids.

"We call that DOC (Department of Correction) mode. When a guy knows he's not in the best of moods, he decides it's better not to say anything. In prison, you don't talk things out. You go back to your cell and think things out," Moore said.

"But once outside, people will say, 'Why didn't you tell me what bothered you?' You have to learn after you've been released that you can talk things out," Moore said.

At the April 2 meeting, the Network in Community staff will be talking things out with families, identifying areas where they most need help, and explaining services available.

A parole officer will be present to tell what's involved with being on parole. Many families don't know, Moore said.

"Everything leading to incarceration was about wrong choices," Williams added. "From here on, it has to be about right choices and support."

jshelby@nydailynews.com