

## MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS

### The Issue

Over 2 million children in the United States have a parent in prison. Growing up with an absent parent, many experience social, emotional, and economic hardships that can lead to an unproductive or destructive life. In fact, many end up in prison themselves.

Research has shown that adult mentors can break the lockhold of crime and help the children of prisoners develop resilient, productive lives. Mentoring the children of prisoners lowers their rate of truancy, substance abuse, and criminal behavior while improving school grades and fostering prosocial behavior.

“Dare Mighty Things saved our program and in the process many thousands of kids received the help they needed to succeed.”

- Harry Wilson, Associate Commissioner,  
HHS Family and Youth Services Bureau

### Our Client's Challenge

In 2003, the President announced a national initiative to mentor 100,000 children of prisoners by the end of 2008. The Department of Health and Human Services was charged with developing and implementing the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program to achieve this goal.

However, initial efforts produced disappointing results: fewer than 10,000 mentoring relationships had been established during the first fifteen months. Grantees were flailing in their efforts to recruit mentors and work with the families of prisoners, and the initiative was falling far short of the administration's goal. Concerned HHS leaders instituted a series of reforms and reached out to Dare Mighty Things for help.

### Enter Dare Mighty Things

In 2006, Health and Human Services (HHS) hired Dare Mighty Things to help them get the Mentoring Children of Prisoners initiative on track. With time running out, DMT went to work to boost program results.

Working closely with HHS leaders, DMT implemented an integrated training and technical assistance strategy that included intensive onsite technical assistance, regional and national training events, and online learning opportunities. Within months, the trajectory of the initiative had changed. By September of 2008, the initiative had achieved its goal and over 100,000 children of prisoners had been mentored.

### Results

DMT helped our client dramatically boost the performance of the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program and exceed its goal of 100,000 mentoring relationships.

