

# Minnesota Model Jail Practices Advisory Board

## Advisory board member spotlight feature: Ron



“My name is Ron and I am excited to share my journey as a member of the advisory board for the Minnesota model jail practices project. At 45 years old, I have traveled a long and challenging road. My childhood was marked by trauma. I grew up in an abusive and dysfunctional home. At five, I was abandoned by my mother at a social services center in Duluth, leading to a difficult journey through the foster care system. By the age of 13, I found myself in trouble with the law, beginning a tumultuous period of incarceration in a juvenile facility that lasted three years.

After my release, I moved to another foster home and experienced the hardships of living on my own by 17. Unfortunately, I also began experimenting with drugs and spiraling down a dark path. With no direction or motivation, my life became a series of run-ins with the law, punctuated by periods of incarceration and substance abuse. At 21, a fateful night led me to a bar fight where I made a decision that would drastically change my life. I ended up in prison for 51 months due to a violent encounter.

Two weeks into my sentence, I received the news that I was going to be a father. I didn’t see my daughter Haylee until she was three and a half years old—a painful reminder of my choices and their consequences. I managed to stay sober for a time after my release, motivated by fatherhood. However, the grip of addiction tightened again, leading to ten years of chaotic living marked by addiction and petty crimes. I got married, divorced, and had another child, a son, and then in 2014, I welcomed a daughter. In 2016, I faced a near-fatal overdose that resulted in a federal indictment and a 100-month sentence in the Bureau of Prisons. Three years into my sentence, I decided to get sober on March 20, 2020, making a conscious effort to steer my life in a more positive and productive direction.

After my release in March 2024, I wasted no time getting my life back on track. A friend informed me about the Minnesota model jail practices project and I felt compelled to apply for a position on the advisory board. I knew I wanted to use my experiences to help others who are incarcerated stay in touch with their children. This led me to develop a parenting class while I was incarcerated, which eventually became a formal program called [INFACT \(Incarcerated Fathers And Children Together\)](#) [IMPACT \(Incarcerated Mothers Participating in the Advancement of their Child’s Trust\)](#). Through this program, I help parents create custom booklets they can send to their children filled with letters, drawings, and stories to help

maintain those vital connections. Recently, I was accepted into Rice County Jail in Faribault, Minnesota, to teach my class. I aim to eventually turn this initiative into a nonprofit and advocate for parents in the Department of Corrections as well.

As I embark on this rewarding journey, I want to emphasize that no matter what mistakes one makes in life or where they find themselves, it is never too late to turn your life around. The path to rehabilitation is possible, and the power of parenting can bring about positive change not only for oneself but for the next generation. I believe that by sharing our stories and supporting one another, we can inspire others to make life-changing choices for the better. My experiences have shown me that with determination, love, and support, we can overcome any obstacle. I am living proof that rehabilitation is achievable, and I hope to encourage others to strive to be the best parents they can be, regardless of their circumstances.”

## About the advisory board

The advisory board was created to support the work of the Minnesota model jail practices activities. This board consists of nine individuals from across Minnesota who have been directly impacted by the criminal legal system.

## More about this learning community

The model jail practices learning community is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Second Chance Act FY2023. The program expanded in 2024 thanks to approved funding by the 2023 Minnesota Legislature. Toolkits, presentations, and courses information are available on the MDH [supporting children of incarcerated parents](#) webpage.

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