

Fathering Court Helps Transition From Prison To Parenthood

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Eight ex-offenders were back before a judge Friday. But this time, they were there to graduate from D.C.'s Fathering Court.

Most dads feel overwhelmed by the demands of fatherhood, at least some of the time. But for parents who have been in prison, learning to be a good dad can be especially hard.

"The stigma of being incarcerated is a heavy stigma to work with," says Judge Milton Lee.

Lee presides over Fathering Court, a D.C. Superior Court program that helps formerly incarcerated parents catch up on child support and reconnect with their children.

"..[It's] consistency. It's gotta be that I'm there today and I'm going to be there tomorrow," Lee says.

For instance, Kevin Ross has learned it's the little things that make a difference in his daughter's life.

"She's a real particular eater...She likes a lot of cheesy foods. She likes cheese burgers. She doesn't like onions. So those little personal things...I just store them in my head and I remember, 'OK, she doesn't like onion,'" he says.

Sixteen parents have graduated from Fathering Court since the program began several years ago. Only one has gone back to prison. Judge Lee says that's because the dads now have so much to lose.



Kevin Ross says he's picked up important tips about connecting with his daughter in Fathering Court.