



# **Children of Incarcerated Parents Project**

## **Report to the Oregon Legislature on Senate Bill 133**

December 2002

“One of the strongest risk factors for juvenile delinquency is a parental history of criminality.”  
(Kemper & Rivera, 1993)

## **Executive Summary**

The number of children whose parents are incarcerated has increased dramatically over the last decade, a phenomenon that is challenging communities nationwide. In the United States, more than two million children have a parent incarcerated in prison or jail and many more have experienced a parent's incarceration at some point in their lives (Katz, 1998). Studies show that children of incarcerated parents suffer emotional and psychological effects when separated from their parent(s). Normal development is disrupted by the loss of a parent and as a result, these children often present with poor social and academic skills and are at a higher risk than their peers for juvenile delinquency, depression, drug abuse, and eventual incarceration.

In Oregon alone, more than 15,000 children have a parent in prison. However, Oregon is quickly on its way to becoming a national leader in providing effective services to those children with a parent involved in the criminal justice system. The Children of Incarcerated Parents Project was developed to foster community partnerships and programs that help break the intergenerational cycle of criminality. The project's mission is to improve the health and well being of children whose parents are incarcerated.

The 2001 Oregon Legislature approved Senate Bill 133 and put the workgroup into law, charging it to develop recommendations for improving parent-child relationships while parents are involved in the criminal justice system. The goal of the recommendations is to create effective, yet manageable, programs and policies that will reduce the trauma experienced by children and increase the health of the parent-child relationship throughout the parent's involvement in the criminal justice system. To accomplish this goal, the committee identified the five stages that a parent may go through (arrest, judicial proceedings, jail, prison, and reintegration), and developed recommendations based on the short and long term needs of the children during the five stages. This report presents those recommendations.

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# **Report to the Legislature on the Children of Incarcerated Parents Project**

**as directed by 2001 Senate Bill 133  
December 2002**

## **Introduction**

Studies show that children who have an incarcerated parent are five to six times more likely than their peers to someday be incarcerated themselves. Nationwide, more than two million children have a parent incarcerated in prison or jail and many more have experienced a parent's incarceration at some point in their lives (Katz, 1998). Further, approximately 6 percent of women entering prison are pregnant (CWLA, 1999). Since 1991, the number of children with a parent in prison has increased by more than 50 percent. Most of these children have an incarcerated father, but a growing number (currently 8 percent) have an incarcerated mother (Katz, 1998).

It is known that children of incarcerated parents suffer emotional and psychological effects when separated from their parent(s). This may impede the child's ability to grow and develop within the normal developmental stages. Children of incarcerated parents often display low self-esteem, anxiety, low achievement motivation, poor conscience development, poor social adjustment and peer relations, depression, juvenile delinquency, aggression, drug abuse and other problems (Katz, 1998).

In recognition of these concerns and in an effort to begin to address them, the 2001 Oregon Legislature passed SB 133. The bill requires agencies to work together to develop recommendations designed to improve outcomes for children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system and to report those recommendations to the appropriate legislative committee.

## **A National Problem**

To begin addressing the issues outlined above, there has been a rise in the number of programs focused on improving the relationship between incarcerated parents and their children. In both of his *State of the Union* addresses, President Bush asserted the need to improve services for children of incarcerated parents. In 2001, the president supported the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Initiative as part of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001. This initiative provides funds, up to \$5 million per grant, to develop and enhance programs for children of incarcerated parents (Waldman, 2002).

The national focus on children of incarcerated parents results in part from what the research suggests is necessary for healthy child development. Studies show that good parenting during infancy and early childhood contributes to the development of

emotional security, curiosity, and stronger math and verbal skills. They also show that higher levels of involvement by parents in activities with their children are associated with fewer behavioral problems, higher levels of sociability, and higher levels of school performance among children and adolescents (Waldman, 2002).

Further, studies indicate that improving the relationship between children and their incarcerated parents, when it is in the best interest of the child, is vital to preventing the intergenerational cycle of criminality. When it is appropriate, children are less traumatized when they maintain a consistent relationship with their parent during incarceration. Likewise, incarcerated parents are better equipped to raise healthy and successful children in the long term if they maintain a relationship with their children, attend parent education classes during incarceration, and receive additional support following incarceration (Covington, 1995).

### **The Trauma of Arrest**

Arrest is often the most stressful phase for children. Many children suffer the trauma of witnessing their parent taken away by force. It is estimated that one of every five children whose mother is arrested witness the event. Those who do not often fabricate much worse ideas about their mother's fate (Covington, 1995).

**National Data:** A national study done in 1998 estimates that of the parents arrested, 67 percent were handcuffed in front of their children, 27 percent reported weapons were drawn, 4.3 percent reported a physical struggle, and 3.2 percent reported the use of pepper spray (Phillips, 1998).

**Arrest Practices When a Child is Present:** In response to the lack of child-sensitivity in arrest and policing practices, the New Haven Department of Police Service in Connecticut developed the Child Development -- Community Policing Program. CD-CP focuses on reorienting "police officers in their interactions with children in order to optimize the psychological roles which they can play as providers of a sense of security, positive authority, and models for children," (Macdonald, 2002).

The program requires that new officers participate in a ten-week seminar on child development and policing practices. Police supervisors are also designated as "child development fellows." These individuals take a three-month course at the Yale Child Study Center, which familiarizes them with concepts of child development, patterns of psychological disturbance, methods of clinical intervention, and settings for treatment and care. The program also includes a consultation service allowing officers to make referrals and request immediate guidance in dealing with children in crisis. Child clinicians are on call 24 hours a day to see children who are in need of immediate counseling (Macdonald, 2002).

**Child Placement:** Appropriate child placement and care is a primary concern when a parent is arrested. Often, it is particularly difficult to find a stable living arrangement when a child's mother is arrested. On average, children of incarcerated mothers live with at least two different caregivers. The caregivers are frequently low-income and

struggle with taking on the child's financial and emotional needs (Covington, 1995). In 2000, the Oregon Department of Corrections conducted a survey that found when the mother is arrested, 36 percent of children live with their father, 54 percent live with a relative and 15 percent live in foster care. Likewise, when the father is arrested, 81 percent of children live with their mother, 14 percent live with a relative, and 5 percent live in foster care. Currently, approximately 40 percent of children in foster care have a parent who is or has been involved in the criminal justice system (Combined Child Welfare and Corrections Data, 2002).

## **Judicial Proceedings**

***Rates of Parental Incarceration:*** Women are being incarcerated at a rapidly increasing rate. Of the 90,000 women in prison nationally, 75 percent are mothers of multiple children (Seymour, 1997) and 72 percent lived with their children before entering prison (Seymour, 1999). More disconcerting is the fact that one in five of the women now in prison lived in foster care or a group-care facility as a child (Seymour, 1997) and a percentage of their children are placed in foster care as a result of their incarceration. The majority of male inmates are also parents. Currently, 55 percent of male inmates are fathers (Seymour, 1999) and half of them lived with their children prior to incarceration (Seymour, 1997).

***Court Programs:*** Historically, officers of the court have not taken into account the effect of a parent's incarceration on their children. Few programs exist in the country that consider a defendant's parental status as a factor in sentencing. Yet, as the number of parents who are being incarcerated increases, so does the need to address the impact on their children. Some counties in Oregon are taking a leading role in recognizing the needs of children of incarcerated parents and developing programs to meet those needs.

***Progressive Programs in Oregon:*** "Project Bond" in Marion County allows defendants who are pregnant or who have children ages 0 to 24 months to enter diversion if they are willing to attend parenting classes and learn about the importance of attachment and bonding for their children. In Multnomah County, the Children of Incarcerated Parents workgroup is working with Circuit Court Judge Michael Marcus to include an offender's active parental status as a factor in the Sentencing Practices Database, a program that utilizes empirical data to determine the most effective sentence for each defendant. Multnomah County has also developed a program that provides a safe and comfortable place for children to wait when their parents are involved in court proceedings. Likewise, in Deschutes County and Jackson County, an Integrated Family Court Model has been implemented. The model focuses on addressing the needs of the entire family and bringing together all necessary service providers to create a cohesive plan that strives to accommodate the needs of the entire family. The Integrated Family Court model is being adopted in other counties across the state.

## **Parent-Child Relationship During Incarceration**

Historically, jails and prisons were not designed to be child-friendly or to take into consideration the parent-child relationship. Visiting areas are usually uninviting and, at times, even frightening for children. Children may be required to sit across a table from their parent or be separated by a glass partition (Hairston, 1998). The schedule of visiting hours can be confusing and inconvenient for caregivers who are transporting children a long distance to see their parent. These circumstances are discouraging for the caregiver who may already be concerned with what effect visiting the prison will have on the child. As a result, many caregivers perceive it to be in the child's best interest to not visit their parent (Covington, 1995).

***Oregon Data:*** Lack of visiting and phone contacts for many children exacerbates their distress while their parents are incarcerated. This increases the challenges of reuniting them with their parents following incarceration. According to the Oregon DOC survey conducted in 2000, 57 percent of women and 48 percent of men planned to eventually be reunited with their children. Yet, of the mothers who were expecting to live with their children after release, 50 percent had no visits, 15 percent had no phone conversations, 30 percent received no letters, and 8 percent had no contact at all with their children in the three months prior to the survey. Likewise, of the fathers expecting to live with their children following incarceration, 70 percent had no visits, 40 percent had no phone conversations, 40 percent had received no letters and 20 percent had no contact at all with their children in the three months prior to the survey (DOC Survey, 2000).

***Prison Programs for Mothers:*** In recent years, some states have attempted to provide services that facilitate healthy relationships between children and their parents in prison. One of the most notable programs for mothers is the Children's Center at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Bedford Hills, New York. The Children's Center is considered to be the national leader in its progressive approach towards children and incarcerated mothers. The Children's Center offers a wide range of services to inmate mothers and their children, "to help women preserve and strengthen family ties and receive visits from their children as often as possible in a warm, nurturing atmosphere," (Roulet, 1993). The center strives to keep inmate mothers informed about their children's physical, intellectual, and emotional well-being while they are apart (Roulet, 1993).

***Prison Programs for Fathers:*** Two leading programs in parent education for fathers in prison are "Family Works" at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, New York, and "P.A.C.T" (Parents and Children Together) at the Federal Correctional Institution in Fort Worth, Texas. Family Works provides both parent education and a children's center for father-child visits ("What Happens to Children?" CWLA, 2002). P.A.C.T. provides similar services as well as a support group for children of incarcerated fathers held at the institution and in the community. P.A.C.T. also sponsors "Children's Day," where children are escorted into the compound and allowed to visit their fathers' rooms, eat lunch, and spend quality one-on-one time with their fathers (Key, 1993).

Fathers also are receiving attention at the national level. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) developed the Fatherhood Initiative "...to assist states with increasing the involvement of fathers in their children's lives," (Waldman, 2002)." The Fatherhood Initiative focuses on multiple populations, including incarcerated fathers. Studies done by the DHHS Fatherhood Initiative show that:

Many positive outcomes can result from increasing a father's emotional and financial involvement in his children's lives. One such benefit is reducing recidivism. Fathers who have a connection to their children may be less likely to re-commit a crime. (Waldman, 2002)

***Oregon Prison Programs for Mothers and Fathers:*** Oregon Department of Corrections is also progressive in its programs currently available to parents. Mothers of children ages 0-3 are encouraged to participate with their children in the Early Head Start program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville. EHS provides comprehensive services to children including education, health and nutrition services, family support, and transition planning for the child upon the mother's release from prison.

Coffee Creek Correctional Facility also provides the Girls Scouts Beyond Bars Program for inmate mothers and their daughters. Twice a month inmate mothers participate in a troop meeting with their daughters at the prison and engage in positive activities that promote a healthy mother-daughter relationship. In addition, mothers attend two meetings a month focused on improving their parenting skills and their daughters attend two additional troop meetings a month in the community.

Parent Education classes are available to mothers and fathers as a pilot program in several prisons in Oregon. The curriculum was jointly developed with the Oregon Social Learning Center and focuses on parenting effectively, both while the parent is incarcerated as well as upon release. The 12-week course uses the first comprehensive curriculum designed to address the unique challenges of parenting from prison. Upon successful completion of the coursework, some inmates are eligible to practice their parenting skills with the child and the caregiver. To determine program effectiveness, the Oregon Social Learning Center has applied for a grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health to conduct an evaluation. If the funding is granted, the evaluation will include a five-year longitudinal study on the impact of parent education on the children of the inmates.

***Jail Programs:*** Programs for parents in jail are less common. In California, Marin County's Centerforce is leading in its services to children and families with a parent in jail. Centerforce provides resources and child-oriented visiting opportunities for families to help maintain family ties. They also provide parent education for inmates focused on parenting, reunification, and coping skills (Centerforce, 2002).

## **The Challenges of Reintegration**



Successful reintegration of the parent back into the community often depends on the foundation laid during their incarceration and on the support they receive during reintegration. Upon reintegration, parents must endure financial, occupational, residential and social pressures while simultaneously reestablishing a relationship with their children (Moore, 1998). Parents must be prepared to resume caring for their children and children must adjust to their parent as the primary caregiver again.

Without preparation and support for the parent during and following their incarceration, “the stresses associated with community and family reintegration may increase the risk of abuse or neglect” of the child (Seymour, 1998). Likewise, without support, parents are more likely to return to their old peer group, increasing their risk of re-offending (Rose, 2001). The potential for recidivism is greatly reduced when ongoing support services are provided to both the parent and the children during this challenging transition. Currently, there are few reintegration programs available to offenders focused specifically on parenting.

***DOC Partnership with the Portland Relief Nursery:*** Oregon Department of Corrections is addressing the challenges of reintegration in part through the development of a demonstration site at the Portland Relief Nursery focused on improving outcomes for children with a parent involved in the criminal justice system. The Relief Nursery’s successful model of social support and activities for at-risk children and their parents will be used to focus efforts on the state’s largest population of children with parents involved in the criminal justice system. The program will use a family oriented case management model to match services and interventions to individual family needs. Caseworkers will guide participants in accessing the full range of appropriate services including parenting education and training, and social support.

The demonstration site will also provide a forum for program evaluation. By combining diverse programs into one demonstration site, we will be able to measure not only the effectiveness of each individual component, but also the synergy of the combined interventions. The Research and Analysis Unit of the Oregon Department of Corrections and the Oregon Social Learning Center will work to evaluate the individual and combined effectiveness of the programs. The data created will be used to further refine the programs at the demonstration site and to design replicable intervention programs based on measures of family success.

### **Oregon Children of Incarcerated Parents Project**

Children of incarcerated parents in Oregon are a growing population in need of immediate attention. The DOC 2000 survey showed approximately 15,000 children in Oregon have a parent in prison. Sixty-seven percent of the women and 59 percent of the men in Oregon’s prisons have children under the age of 18, and 57 percent of women and 48 percent of men expect to live with their children upon release. Most of these children are between the ages of three and 10. A follow-up survey, providing more-detailed information is underway; results will be available early in 2003.

A systematic approach that addresses the needs of these children in the community throughout their parents' involvement in the criminal justice system is critical. The Oregon Children of Incarcerated Parents Project workgroup has focused on better understanding the issues present in their lives and developing recommendations to help improve their outcomes. Recognizing that it is more difficult to parent effectively when joblessness and homelessness are issues, the recommendations include providing training in fundamental life skills, such as Adult Basic Education and job training. While many of the recommendations are in line with other programs across the nation, some are truly innovative and address child welfare issues that have not been raised elsewhere.

## About the Recommendations

Although the initial focus of the Oregon Children of Incarcerated Parents Project was on incarceration, it quickly became clear that to meet the needs of the children, the group must also address arrest, sentencing and reentry into the community after release from prison. Subgroups of the Children of Incarcerated Parents Project worked on the specific issues and problems faced by the children of parents involved in the criminal justice system in the following five categories:

1. Arrest
2. Judicial Proceedings
3. Jail
4. Prison
5. Reintegration

Significant differences exist between the state and local programs, as well as among counties, both in terms of funding and population. These recommendations are designed for those across the criminal justice spectrum to use as a resource to help improve outcomes for these children. The recommendations are intended to be implemented only when in the best interests of the child.

The recommendations are meant to make the proper tools available; case-by-case assessment is essential. While some of these recommendations can be implemented with little or no new revenue, others require resources that have not yet been identified. For example, each of the subcommittees identified the strong need for child advocates throughout the criminal justice system; few components of the system have such advocates in place.

Implementation of the Children’s Project recommendations requires involvement by all sectors of the law enforcement community including city and state police, sheriffs’ departments, tribal police, the training academy, adult and juvenile corrections both at the state and local level, parole and probation, as well as educators and human service workers.

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### Definitions and terminology

- Inmate ..... An incarcerated individual, whether in a state prison or local jail.
- Offender ..... An individual released before sentencing or to probation or parole or post-prison supervision.
- Caregiver ..... An individual responsible for the care of a child with at least one incarcerated parent. The caregiver may be a parent, relative, foster parent or other person.
- Prison..... A state-operated incarceration facility for felons sentenced to serve more than one year.
- Jail ..... A county-operated facility for those inmates sentenced to one year or less.

## **Recommendations for Child-Sensitive Arrest Practices**

**Outcome:** Provide appropriate support for children so they experience minimal trauma during a parent’s arrest, and minimal disruption after the arrest.

*Arrest with Child Present (when appropriate, plan arrest when child is not present):*

**Consider the risks to children at the point of arrest and minimize trauma when possible:**

- Separate the child from arrest activity as soon as possible.
- Involve an individual to stay with the child during the arrest (child advocate, child welfare/social services worker, community volunteer, another officer) to ensure the child is safe and that the child’s immediate needs are met.
- Explain to the child in an age appropriate way what is happening and what will likely happen in the near future. It is usually best if someone the child knows and trusts provides this information.
- Ideally, provide comfort to the child with an alternative focus such as a teddy bear, game or other toy. (In some jurisdictions, officers already carry “child packs” for such situations.)
- Whenever possible, transport the child separately from the person being arrested (ensure proper child safety seats).

*Arrest when child is not present:*

**If an arrest is planned or if there are no children present during the arrest, try to determine:**

- How many (if any) children live in the household, and what ages
- Child location during the arrest
- Who is responsible for the child
- If a child advocate has been contacted
- If there is a familiar adult who can locate the child and inform him or her of their parent’s arrest. (If possible, this individual should stay with the children until a caregiver is designated.)

**Providing information – Checklist for officers:** In the event that a family member, neighbor, or friend agrees to provide a temporary living arrangement for the child, officers need to ascertain certain information. Develop a checklist on a laminated card with referral phone numbers on the back that each officer can carry. The checklist may include the following:

- Does the child know this person?
- Name, address and phone number of the person (ability to confirm).
- Quick criminal history check.
- Will the child have a place to sleep in a safe and appropriate setting?
- How will the child get to school?

- Are they willing and able to administer any required medication?
- Are they able to feed the child?

**Informational flier for caregivers:** Law enforcement or an advocate for the child may provide an informational flier to the caregiver, which may include the following:

- Arrest process and what to expect in the first 24 hours.
- Phone numbers to call for more information.
- Information on the child’s needs (tips on explaining the situation to the child, information on school notification and child attendance, etc.).

**Child welfare notification:** Consistent with local policy, law enforcement should notify child welfare, preferably within eight hours of arrest, unless the child is left with custodial parent.

**Child advocate role:** It is important to keep as much stability in the child’s life as possible. If a child advocate is available in the community and a child is likely to be present at the time of arrest, arrange for the advocate to be on hand. This may be someone from the child welfare system, a social service worker or a volunteer. The child advocate can assist in finding a safe home for the child in his or her school area. Ideally, the advocate may provide comfort to the child, using methods such as a teddy bear or a game.

**Potential law enforcement training:**

- Stages of child development and age-appropriate interaction.
- Impact of parental arrest on children, including the negative effects of multiple moves.
- The impact of domestic violence laws on children.
- Child-sensitive arrest practices, including how to effectively listen to what children are saying and needing.
- Securing safe and appropriate placement of children.
- Cultural awareness related to children and families.

## **Recommendations for Judicial Proceedings**

**Outcome:** Provide officers of the court with resources and information needed to make decisions that minimize trauma and disruption to children.

*If the child’s testimony is required:*

**Preparation for testimony:**

- **Visit to the courtroom.** Allow the district attorney and victim’s assistance advocate to bring the child to the courtroom prior to the child’s scheduled testimony date. This will give the child an early view of what his/her surroundings will be and may ease some fears. The following could be done during the visit to the courtroom:

- Allow the child to see the courtroom and meet court personnel.
  - Give the child an idea of where he/she will sit and where the other people involved will sit, including the defendant in a criminal case. The child could also be told where someone from victims' assistance might be sitting in the courtroom or someone from his/her family.
  - When appropriate, assure the child that no harm can come to him or her and that he or she will be protected.
  - The child should also be reminded about the importance of telling the truth and other things relating to the examination.
  - Inform the child that if necessary, he/she can ask the judge for a recess.
- **Arrangements with the court:** Arrangements should be made with the court if the child has to be brought from somewhere. The court should also be made aware of any special problems or needs the child may have.

*If appropriate, another location or method of testimony could be used other than having the child appear in the courtroom (i.e. video tape the child's testimony).*

#### **Testimony:**

- The person(s) with custody of the child should be seated in a place that makes the child feel comfortable.
- When the child comes up to testify, introduce the attorneys and jury. Let the child know the jury is there to listen.
- Ensure attorneys ask age-appropriate questions.

**Referral:** When a judge hears any type of case and has concerns about the children that may warrant intervention, it is appropriate to make a referral to the Department of Human Services Child Welfare.

**Plea agreement:** When developing plea agreements for defendants with children, advise district attorneys and defense attorneys to take into account the needs of the children. Consider recommending alternative sanctions to prevent interruption of child-parent relationship when appropriate.

**Sentencing:** When considering a sentence of incarceration and judicial discretion is applicable, judges are encouraged to consider the following when imposing a sentence of incarceration on an individual with a child:

- Relationship between child and parent.
- Who will care for the child.
- Where the child will live.
- Financial implications for the child.
- Ability to arrange visits.
- Advisability of prohibiting contact.
- Support available from other relatives, agencies, groups, etc.

**Ask about childcare:** Judges may ask a person being adjudicated if he or she has children, and if so, who is caring for the children. The judge may then make suggestions concerning the children. (Note: The attorneys need to be given notice if the court wants to consider such information.)

**Caseworker present at sentencing:** When appropriate, ask the caseworker to be present for sentencing.

**Training:** Provide continuing education for judges, court personnel, district attorneys, and defense attorneys through seminars, peer training and educational literature including:

- ASFA (Adoption Safe Family Act) vs. sentencing guidelines
- Best practices

## **Recommendations for Jails**

**Outcome:** Enhance safety, security, and support for children during parent's incarceration in jail and maximize contact with the parent when appropriate.

### ***Jail Provisions for Incarcerated Parents:***

**Intake/Booking:** The Intake/Booking process could include gathering information on children. Possible questions to ask include:

- Do you have children under the age of 18 for whom you are responsible?
- If yes, were these children living with you at the time of your arrest?
- Gather specific information on each child, such as date of birth, gender, and caregiver (other parent, grandparent, etc.).

**Inmate assessment:** Through a coordinated approach with the jail and community corrections, an assessment/evaluation may be conducted to identify the needs of the inmates. The DOC uses an effective inmate assessment tool adapted from the Canadian model.

**Inmate support services:** Services that improve the social, educational, cognitive and parenting skills of inmates are shown to increase their success in making good life and parenting choices.

- **Parent education/referral:** Many incarcerated parents did not receive appropriate parenting as children. As a result, they did not have positive role models and do not practice appropriate parenting skills themselves. Parent education classes can help offenders learn and practice the skills and techniques necessary for positive parenting.

- **Cognitive programming:** Offenders generally lack the cognitive behavioral and social skills necessary for success as productive members of society and as parents.
- **Education:** Often, inmates' lack of education hinders gainful employment. Adult Basic Education, General Education Development, and English as a Second Language help inmates identified as having an education need obtain the necessary skills.
- **Mental health services:** Mental illness can have a devastating effect on families when left untreated. It is vital for the children of inmates identified with a mental health need that their parents receive appropriate services including treatment, medication management, education and/or referrals for community-based treatment.
- **Substance abuse services:** A large percentage of the inmate population abuses or is addicted to alcohol and other drugs. Substance abuse often plays a significant role in criminal thinking and behaviors. Education, treatment and/or referrals for community-based treatment are essential. Coordinated programming involving family members and inmates is frequently necessary for sustained positive change for the entire family.
- **Community volunteer services:** Jails may find the use of community volunteer programs and services helpful. These may include:
  - Narcotics Anonymous.
  - Alcoholics Anonymous.
  - Prison Fellowship.
  - Rational Recovery.
  - Alcoholics Victorious.
  - Faith-based organizations.
- **Community Resources:** Ensure inmates can access community resources and social service agencies.
- **Information display:** Provide resource information to inmates such as:
  - Department of Justice Child Support information.
  - "How to Explain Jail and Prison to Children – A Caregiver's Guide," developed by the Children of Incarcerated Parents project to provide a rational and consistent approach to explaining incarceration to children.
  - Community resources.
  - Legal aid for parental rights termination.
  - Alcoholics Anonymous.
  - Narcotics Anonymous.
  - Oregon Health Plan.



*Prison Accommodations for Child and Parent/Caregiver:*

**When possible, provide a family friendly environment:**

- **Mail, phone, and visiting policies:** Identify and implement changes that promote family contact and eliminate barriers to positive interactions between families and inmates.
- **When possible, make visiting convenient for families:**
  - Visit Length:** Consider expanding visit length when family members travel a great distance.
  
  - Children Under 16:** If there is a maximum number of people allowed on a visiting list, do not count children under the age of 16 against the number allotted.
- **Contact visits:** When appropriate, allow contact visiting between parent and child.
- **Positive family interaction atmosphere:** Create a positive visiting area by providing:
  - Appropriate toys and books.
  - Nutritious snacks in vending machines.
  - Friendly attitudes toward visitors.
  - Visitor-friendly signs.
  - Comment cards to allow jails the opportunity for continued improvement.
- **Resource Display:** Provide families with ready access to resource information in jail visiting areas, including:
  - Booklet explaining jails and prisons to children.
  - Child support information and contacts.
  - Support group information and contacts.
  - Community resources and social services information.
- **DOC Information:** When inmates are being sentenced to the DOC, provide families and friends information in video or booklet form. The information should address the following types of frequently asked questions:
  - What are the visiting rules?
  - How can I make phone calls?
  - What do I do in the event of a family emergency?
  - What are the DOC's rules of conduct?
- **Staff Training:** Provide staff training in the following areas to ensure staff have the information to understand, empathize, and respond appropriately in a variety of situations:
  - The impact of incarceration on the child and family.

- Understanding age appropriate interactions and expectations of behavior.
- Family oriented communication skills and enhanced customer service.
- Cultural awareness related to children and families.

## Recommendations for Prisons

**Outcome:** Strengthened families during parental incarceration and transition back into the community, when in the best interests of the children.

### *Prison Provisions for Incarcerated Parents:*

#### **During prison intake and assessment:**

- **Gather information on children:** During the assessment process, inmates will be asked if they have children under the age of 18. If so, were they living with the child at the time of arrest? Additional information on each child will be requested, such as age, date of birth, gender, and caregiver (other parent, grandparent, etc.)
- **Corrections Plan:** Results of the assessment will be incorporated into the inmate's Corrections Plan (requiring parent education, etc.) if needed. With appropriate programming, incarceration can provide an opportunity for the inmates to improve their lives and the lives of their children.
- **Release of information:** Encourage inmates to sign a release of information form to allow open communication between all parties, including families. During the intake and assessment process, the Department of Corrections must explain to the inmate the importance of signing the form and how it will enhance family relationships during parental incarceration.
- **Family/caregiver input:** Families and caregivers should be given the opportunity to provide input into the inmate's needs assessment and the development of the Corrections Plan. This step would supplement the inmate's assessment by providing the family/caregiver perspective, when appropriate. This opportunity will also give family members and the Department of Corrections insight into one another's expectations and responsibilities.
- **Program options:** Discuss with the inmate his or her Corrections Plan and program options available for each need identified. Allow the inmate to have a say in what available programs may work best for him or her. Research has shown that people are more successful in changing personal behaviors after a significant emotional event, such as incarceration. Inmates may be more invested in the positive changes necessary for a successful incarceration and eventual transition back to their families and the community if they've been involved in the decision making process.

- **Visitor application process:** Implement a streamlined process that allows children to visit their parents as soon as possible after the transfer from intake to an institution. This will aid in reducing the family separation period.
- **Child support orientation:** During intake, each inmate with a child or children should participate in the Department of Justice's child support orientation. This orientation provides inmates with information about their responsibilities to their families including the process of paying child support while incarcerated.

#### **Upon an inmate's assignment to a prison:**

- **Institution-specific programs:** An inmate should be sent to an institution that best meets the requirements identified in his or her Corrections Plan. The inmate is given information on programs at the assigned institution and informed of the processes required for participation in the programs, including those that will strengthen the family. Allow opportunities for program providers to include the family in programming, when appropriate. For example:
  - **Encourage inmate participation in the parent education classes currently offered by the Department of Corrections in several prisons:** Parent education classes can help offenders learn and practice the skills and techniques necessary for positive parenting. The parent education curriculum was developed jointly by the Oregon Social Learning Center and DOC to address the unique issues faced by incarcerated parents and their families. Included is a 12-week course followed by therapeutic visitation between the inmate parent, child and caregiver. A family therapist should supervise the visitation, where available and appropriate.
  - **Encourage eligible inmates and their children's caregivers to become involved in Early Head Start (EHS) at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility:** Begun in September 2002 in cooperation with Washington County Community Action and funded by federal grants, the program serves up to eight children (newborn through three years of age) of mothers incarcerated at CCCF. EHS provides comprehensive services including education, health and nutrition services to children, family support to mothers and caregivers, and transition planning for the child upon the mother's release from prison.
- **Pro-social activities:** Staff will encourage and support inmate participation in pro-social activities that reward both accountability and responsibility, such as parenting, life enhancement, personal growth, and community-service activities.
- **Resources: "How to Explain Jail and Prison to Children – A Caregiver's Guide":** This booklet will be provided to parents during the health assessment. It will also be available to inmates throughout their incarceration.

### *Prison Support for the Child and Caregiver:*

**Create a family-friendly environment:** Informed families are more successful and effective in working toward a successful transition:

- **Family orientation to the Department of Corrections:** The Department of Corrections and Oregon CURE (an organization composed primarily of families and friends of inmates) partnered in the development of an orientation for family and friends of the newly incarcerated. The orientation provides valuable information regarding the department and what life will be like for the inmate. Currently, the orientation is delivered monthly in only two counties. Oregon counties are encouraged to adopt the orientation and make materials easily accessible through the Internet, e-mail, or mail for those family members who are unable to attend.
- **DOC orientation video:** An orientation video is an effective tool for informing families about what life is like in prison. Informed families are more successful and powerful in working toward successful transition. Counties are encouraged to make the video available for families to check out.
- **Institution-specific orientation video:** A video can provide families and friends relevant information including location, visiting days and times and a brief tour of the institution. It is recommended that the video be available for families to view before visiting.
- **Mail, phone, and visiting policies:** Identify and implement changes that promote family contact and eliminate barriers to positive interactions between families and inmates. Allow videos to be sent to the incarcerated parent when a child has a significant event in life.
- **Positive family interaction atmosphere:** Department of Corrections staff working in the visiting room should be those who want to work with family members and who are naturally helpful, able to exercise good judgment, and solve problems. Create a positive visiting area by providing:
  - Appropriate toys and books.
  - Healthy snacks.
  - Play area.
  - Friendly attitudes.
  - Visitor-friendly signs.
  - An evaluation survey for visitors, which will provide the Department of Corrections with opportunities for continuous improvement.
- **Distance visiting:** Use technology to provide enhanced communication for those families unable to travel to the institution.

- **Family newsletter:** Develop an electronic newsletter for families and friends of incarcerated parents to help them stay up-to-date on what is happening within the Department of Corrections.
- **VINE (Victim Information & Notification Everyday) Hotline:** Encourage inmate families to access the VINE system. VINE is a free, anonymous telephone service that is designed to provide information and notification regarding inmates (1-800-OR-4-VINE). This will help keep families informed when inmates are transferred.
- **Resource information:** Families needing resource information should have ready access to it in all institution visiting areas. An information display may include:
  - Bus routes and schedules for local and statewide mass transit.
  - Motel locations and contact numbers.
  - Booklet explaining jails and prisons to children.
  - Child support information.
  - Support group contact information.

***Provide Training to Staff:***

**Families of the incarcerated:** Provide staff with training on understanding, empathizing, and responding appropriately to families in various situations. Staff training would include:

- Impact of incarceration on the child and family.
- Understanding age appropriate interactions and expectations of behavior.
- Family oriented communication skills and enhanced customer service.
- Cultural awareness related to children and families.

***Work With Community Organizations to Provide Services and Resources to the Incarcerated Parent and the Child and Caregiver:***

**Provide resources to families:** These resources can provide a safe and supportive atmosphere for dealing with issues and feelings stemming from the incarceration of a family member:

- **Family support:** Encourage family support through such means as support groups, therapy for children, social community connections, and child/family mentors.
- **Children's support groups at schools:** Encourage schools to implement a program like Children Made Visible, which provides support groups for children of incarcerated parents.

- **Transportation:** Work with organizations to provide families and friends of inmates transportation to and from the institution when needed.

#### **Keep the incarcerated parent connected to the child's school:**

- **Counselor and teacher involvement:** Encourage the inmate to maintain contact with school counselors and teachers, when in the best interests of the children.
- **Sharing Report Cards:** Modify prison visiting rules to allow children to share their report cards with their incarcerated parents.

## **Recommendations on Reintegration**

**Outcome:** Children will experience less trauma and disruption as parents transition from incarceration back to the community when they, their family, and their incarcerated parent are included in transition planning.

#### ***Preparing for Offender's Reintegration to the Community:***

##### **Transition planning for incarcerated parent and/or child and caregiver:**

- **Counseling:** Counselors meet face-to-face with each inmate to provide guidance and planning for transition (this includes inmates who are under the legal custody of the Department of Corrections but are housed at the Oregon Youth Authority).
- **Multidisciplinary Teams:** Multidisciplinary teams are designed to address the complex issues of inmates being released from prison and develop a coordinated plan. Depending upon the needs of the inmate, they can include community corrections staff, child welfare workers, alcohol and drug abuse professionals, and institution counselors. These teams may also include family members in transition planning.
- **Designating a Family Mentor:** If possible, identify a pro-social family member who may be a critical factor in the offender's successful transition. At the final plan review, ensure the identified family member is appropriate for a mentor role and confirm the interest and commitment of the family member.
- **Locating a Community Mentor:** Connect the inmate with a mentor from the community such as those who work with Relief Nurseries. Mentors can provide guidance and encouragement to the inmate on parenting and other transition concerns within the context of the family's cultural heritage. Successful ex-offenders who are participating in a community program can make excellent mentors. Mentors may also assist in guiding an inmate through services and resources available in the community. **Note:** Depending on an inmate's needs (such as alcohol or other drug problems) additional mentors may be needed.

- **Planning sessions:** Allow opportunities for the inmate to plan his or her transition with various people (planning sessions are not visits and should not count against visiting points). Examples of what planning sessions may accomplish:
  - Bringing the inmate parent and caregiver together using mediation and family counseling when necessary to discuss the change of parental roles. Include the child only when appropriate.
  - Introduction of the mentor(s) to the child and caregiver by the inmate.
  - Introduction of the parole officer to the child and caregiver by the inmate: To begin building a relationship with the child, the parole officer could explain that he or she will be visiting the child's home regularly to ensure his or her well-being. This will help reduce the child's fear and stress during home visits.
  
- **Child support payment plan:** When applicable, the Department of Justice consults with inmates on child support payment plans.
  
- **Parenting education:** Wherever available, begin parent education prior to release.
  
- **Acclimation to living in the community:** Expand current transition classes. Classes may include, but are not limited to: development of self-regulation skills for post-prison supervision, financial management, parent education, gambling, substance abuse, relationships, vocational rehab, employment, housing, Oregon Health Plan, child support, etc.
  
- **Early Head Start/Head Start:** If the child is currently enrolled in the Early Head Start program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, contact the appropriate staff member at Early Head Start to assist in coordinating family plans. If a potentially eligible child is not already enrolled, contact local Head Start/Early Head Start to apply.
  
- **Continuing care:** Set up continuing care as needed, based on recommendations of the multidisciplinary team to ensure families have access to appropriate care. These services may include the Oregon Health Plan, mental health care/medication management, access to necessary medications, alcohol and other drug treatment.

**Provide Training to the Staff:**

- Provide institution counselors with family inclusion and reunification training.
- Provide the multidisciplinary team with training regarding what resources are available in the different counties and communities.
- Provide institution counselors with training on how to prepare for and facilitate effective and productive meetings.

- Provide all trainees with cultural training awareness related to children and families.

*After Release from Prison – supporting the Inmate in the Community:*

**Transition planning:**

- **Continue multidisciplinary team:** Build upon work started during incarceration. Some members of the team will change, the institution counselor will no longer be part of the team and additional members may join. During the first meeting with a new member, revisit roles and responsibilities.
- **Continue mentoring:** Mentors should continue to provide the services started during incarceration.
- **Support parents connection to child’s school:** The multidisciplinary team is encouraged to support the parent’s involvement in the child’s school.
- **Parent support upon release:** Continue parent education/support upon release, or initiate if released parent did not receive parent education while incarcerated.
- **Child Safety:** Provide a safe place for children to stay while the offender meets with his or her parole officer.

*After Release from Prison – Supporting the Child and Caregiver in the Community:*

**Transition planning (may occur as early as six month’s prior to the incarcerated parent’s release or as late as after their release):**

- **Family orientation to parole and post-prison supervision:** Provide families with information on what to expect after the offender is released from prison.
- **Assess the child’s needs:** Connect families to resources in the community.
  - Community connections: Based on assessment, connect child with available community resources.
  - Encourage parents to continue involvement in child’s school activities.
  - Continue family counseling upon release or initiate if it had not begun during incarceration.

**Provide training to community staff:**

- **Criminal justice system home visiting:** Training should include supportive and effective ways of including the child and the caregiver (if the caregiver is living in the same home as the offender and the child) in home visits.



- **Oregon Children’s Plan:** Training on resources available, if any.
- **Meeting Management:** Provide multidisciplinary team’s lead person with training on how to prepare for and facilitate effective and productive meetings.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Provide all trainees with cultural awareness training related to children and families.

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## **Children of Incarcerated Parents Project Workgroup Representation**

Central Oregon Community College  
Children Made Visible, Inc.  
Citizens Review Board  
Commission on Children and Families (Clackamas County)  
Community Corrections (Multnomah County, Washington County)  
CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants)  
Department of Corrections

- Counseling and Treatment Services
- Facilities Division
- Institutions
- Public Affairs Office
- Religious Services
- Research and Evaluation

Department of Education

- Counseling
- Headstart/Early Headstart

Department of Human Services

- Children, Adults and Families
- Mental Health and Addiction Services

Ecumenical Ministries  
Eugene Relief Nursery  
Family Literacy Program  
Girl Scouts Beyond Bars  
Jail Managers' Association  
Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (Clackamas County)  
Metropolitan Family Services  
Mid-Valley Community Action, Inc.  
Next Door, Inc.  
Oregon Commission on Children and Families  
Oregon Social Learning Center  
Oregon State Police  
Oregon State Sheriffs Association  
Oregon Youth Authority  
Oregon Youth Conservation Corps  
Our Time, Inc.  
Portland State University

- Graduate School of Social Work

State Court Administrators Office

- Juvenile Court Programs Division