



the NATIONAL REENTRY RESOURCE CENTER

— A project of the CSG Justice Center —

From Arrest to Homecoming Addressing the Needs of Children of Incarcerated Parents



Brought to you by the National Reentry Resource Center and the
Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice

Speakers

- Margaret diZerega
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- Dee Ann Newell
Executive Director, Arkansas Voices for Children Left Behind
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- Yali Lincroft
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Background of Presenters

- Dee Ann Newell, MA, has over 30 years of professional experience to helping vulnerable families. She is the founder and executive director of Arkansas Voices for Children Left Behind, a nonprofit agency supporting services for children with incarcerated parents and their caregivers. Her organization was instrumental in developing state legislation, such as subsidized guardianship for relative caregivers and protection of pregnant incarcerated mothers. In 2006-08, she received the Open Society Institute (OSI) senior justice fellowship to provide TA to 14 states in policy and program development for children of incarcerated parents.
- Yali Lincroft, MBA, has over 15 years experience in policy and program planning at a local, state, and federal level. She was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to provide consultation to the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents' initiative to improve child welfare services for incarcerated parents and is currently a consultant to the Osborne Association's New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents. She is also a consultant to First Focus on immigration/child welfare issues. Her recent publications include "After the Earthquake: A Bulletin for Child Welfare Organizations Assisting Haitian Families in the United States" and a toolkit for social workers assisting incarcerated parents to be published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in the Fall 2010.

Presentation Outline

- Introduction/Background of Presenters
- About Children of Incarcerated Parents
- The Importance of Maintaining Parental Contact
- Typical Feelings of Children with Incarcerated Parents
- Stress Points – from Arrest to Homecoming
- Tips and Suggested Models
- Resources and More Information
- Special Populations – Children in Child Welfare and Immigrant Families
- Q&A

Audience Poll

What best describes where you work?

- Inside a prison/jail
- In the community with justice-involved individuals
- I do not interact directly with incarcerated individuals or their families but support those agencies that do

About Children of Incarcerated Parents

5x more men are incarcerated than women – 1 in 18 men vs. 1 in 89 women. (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009)

Between 1995 and 2005, the number of incarcerated women increased by 57% vs. 34% for men. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006)

90% of children with an incarcerated father live with their mothers. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)

50% of children with an incarcerated mother live with their grandmother. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)

About Children of Incarcerated Parents

There are great parental racial incarceration disparities:

- 1 in 15 black children have a parent in prison
- 1 in 41 Hispanic children have a parent in prison
- 1 in 110 white children have a parent in prison

(Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008)

55% of parents in state correctional facility and 45% of parents in federal correctional facility reported never having had a personal visit from their child(ren).

(Mumola, C., Department of Justice 2000)

11% of children in foster care have a mother who is incarcerated at least some period of time while in foster care; however, 85% of these children were placed in foster care prior to the mother's first period of incarceration.

(Ross, T., Khashu, A., Vera Institute of Justice, 2004)

The Importance of Maintaining Parental Contact

Information excerpted and adapted from: *Children of Prisoners Library Pamphlet # 102* and *“Child Protection Best Practices Bulletin: Connecting Children with Incarcerated Parents.”*
Corinne Wolfe Children’s Law Center. <http://jpl.unm.edu/childlaw/docs/BEST-PRACTICES/0709-ConnectingChildrenWithIncarceratedParents.pdf>

Separation due to incarceration has immediate effects on children such as feelings of guilt and shame, fear of abandonment and loss of financial support. Long-term effects of separation can range from maturation regression to impaired ability to cope with future stress or trauma. Regular contact can help decrease the negative impacts of incarceration.

- **CONTACT VISITS** – a child’s ability to touch his/her parent helps maintain the parent/child bond. This bond is essential for healthy child development and is a protective factor for adolescents.
- **CHILDREN’S COPING MECHANISM** – Maintaining contact helps normalize the interaction between parent and child and benefits children emotionally and behaviorally.
- **RECIDIVISM** – Parents who have regular contact with their children while incarcerated are much less likely to commit another crime.
- **REENTRY** – Regular contact during a parent’s incarceration helps family reunification when the parent is released. The stronger and more current an incarcerated parent’s relationship with his/her children, the smoother the parent’s reintegration into the family.

The Importance of Maintaining Parental Contact

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FOR CHILDREN IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM:

- Maintaining contact with their children helps parents maintain their parental rights. The Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) states that a child who has lived in foster care for 15 of the previous 22 months needs to be evaluated by child welfare for permanency. In these situations, in order to retain parental rights, a strong and continued bond with the child must be proved. Visitation helps maintain this bond.
- It's the law. It's not a choice. Unless the court has determined that visiting the parent will put the child in danger, children and incarcerated parents have the right to regular, ongoing visits.

SUMMARY – The Potential Benefits for Children in Maintaining Relationships with their Incarcerated Parents

- Minimizing or repairing attachment disruptions
- Correcting frightening or idealized images
- Learning you are not alone
- Preventing termination of parental rights
- Healing grief and loss
- Preparing for release

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Children of Incarcerated Parents – Typical Feelings

FEAR – Children are afraid of being abandoned, of never seeing their parents again, and of being taken away from their caregiver.

WORRY – Children are concerned about the well-being of their incarcerated parents. They also worry about their often elderly relative caregivers and not being able to care for them.

CONFUSION – Children are often not told the truth about their parent's whereabouts, about what is true and not true.

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Children of Incarcerated Parents – Typical Feelings

SADNESS –All these feelings will ultimately be about loss and may trigger the pains of previous losses.

GUILT– Children often feel responsible for their parent’s behavior, suffer the guilt of not being a “good enough” motivation to change their parent’s behavior.

ISOLATION – Caregivers may attempt to distract or protect the children from distress, avoiding conversations about the parents leaving the child.

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The Effects of Stress/Trauma on Children

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES (often un- or misdiagnosed or poorly treated) – Separation and attachment disorders, depression, eating and sleeping disorders, anxiety and hyper arousal, attention disorders, and developmental regressions, post-traumatic stress reactions.

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES (often expressions of feelings and/or symptoms of distress) – Physical aggression, acting out inappropriately/disruptive behavior, anti-social behavior/conduct disorder, violent or serious delinquent behavior.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES (often emotional and behavioral influences on the learning process) – Difficulties in paying attention, learning disabilities, diminished academic performance, behavioral problems, truancy.

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Stress Points from Arrest to Re-entry

- Arrest – Fear, confusion, panic.
- Pre-Trial/Trial– Anxiety, frustration.
- Sentencing – Hopelessness, helplessness.
- Initial Incarceration – Abandonment, stigma, loyalty.
- Incarceration Stage 2 – Resentment, balance.
- Pre-release – Fear, anxiety, anticipation.
- Post-release – Ambivalence, chaos.

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Audience Poll

Which of the following populations do you work with?

- Incarcerated parents
- Children of incarcerated parents
- Caregivers of the children
- More than one of the above

Tips for Service Providers

- Programs should include clients as staff and advisory members (i.e. formerly incarcerated or children of incarcerated parents).
- Programs should have a non-judgmental, holistic viewpoint regarding the parent/child/caregiver relationship, focusing on the child in the context of the family.
- Programs should resist the temptation to implement “one size fits all” responses.
- Programs can use this “crisis opportunity” for quality parent/child interaction and wrapping services both inside/outside the corrections setting and partnering with multi-disciplinary partners like school, mental health, and others.

Suggested Models – Peer-to-Peer Support Groups

CA/Project WHAT! – Since 2006, this program, run by Community Works in the San Francisco Bay Area, raises awareness about the effects of parental incarceration on children. The program employs young people who have experienced parental incarceration as the primary curriculum content developers and facilitators for trainings. Written in plain language, the resource guide is written by and for teenagers and youth answering common questions that children have when a parent is incarcerated. It includes a CD of stories by youth.

www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/ResourceGuideforTeens.pdf

NY/Hour Children Women-to-Women Mentoring Program - This program provides mentoring to adult women pre and post release, which complements their child mentoring program. www.hourchildren.org

Suggested Model: The Co-Parenting Agreement

*For more information, contact Arkansas Voices for Children Left Behind,
www.arkansasvoices.org*

- A Co-Parenting Agreement is a written agreement, without legal standing, developed between parent and caregiver, facilitated by a neutral third party such as social workers, service providers, and others trained in family conferencing and decision making.
- The purpose is to have agreements in writing, with dates, to reduce misunderstanding among all parties with copies given to all involved (including children) and commonly signed in front of a witness.
- Children should not be forced to visit their parent; if a child wishes to visit, and the caregiver opposes, the agreement could include discussions about non-contact visits such as letters, phone calls, etc.
- The agreement can spell out the practical aspects of co-parenting issues between incarcerated parent and caregiver, such as the cost realities of phones calls, transportation issues, etc.
- The agreement needs to be revisited over the incarceration period and re-entry considerations should be developed at the time of entry.

About the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated

Many of these slides are used courtesy of Ann Adalist-Estrin and reprinted with permission from the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Family and Corrections Network (NRCCFI). NRCCFI provides a variety of resources and training opportunities including: **Homecoming: The Impact of Parole on Children of Incarcerated Parents and the Programs that Serve Them.** For more information, go to www.fcnetwork.org.

Resources and More Information

- *Handbook for Kinship Caregivers* by Arkansas Voices for Children Left Behind,
[www.arkansasvoices.org/Handbook for Kinship Caregivers.pdf](http://www.arkansasvoices.org/Handbook%20for%20Kinship%20Caregivers.pdf)
- *A Behavioral Health Toolkit for Working With Children of the Incarcerated and Their Families* by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services,
[www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/Behavioral Health Toolkit.pdf](http://www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/Behavioral%20Health%20Toolkit.pdf)
- *How to Explain Jails and Prisons to Children — A Caregiver's Guide* by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and Friends Outside, www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/HowToExplainJails.pdf

Resources and More Information

- *Children of Incarcerated Parents – The Scholar and Feminist Online Issue 8.2 (Spring 2010)* published by The Barnard Center for Research on Women, www.barnard.edu/sfonline/children/issue.htm
- *It's My Life: A Young Mother's Guide to Surviving the System* by Baby Mamas United: A Project of the Center for Young Women's Development, www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/ItsMyLife.pdf. This guide, written by and for teen mothers, answers common questions and helps young incarcerated mothers understand their rights.
- *Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Action Plan for Federal Policymakers*, published by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, www.reentrypolicy.org/jc_publications/federa_action_plan. Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Open Society Institute, the plan outlines promising practices and 70-plus recommendations for improving outcomes for the more than 1.7 million children of incarcerated parents.

Audience Poll

What phrase best describes your experience?

- Most** of the families I work with have **child welfare involvement**.
- Most** of the families I work with have **immigration-related issues**.
- Most** of the families I work with have **child welfare involvement and immigration-related issues**.
- Most** of the families I work with have **child welfare involvement**, but **few** have **immigration-related issues**.
- Most** of the families I work with have **immigration-related issues**, but **few** have **child welfare involvement**.
- The families I work with **rarely** have **child welfare involvement** or **immigration-related issues**.

Special Populations – Child Welfare

Information excerpted and adapted from: “Out of the Shadow: What Child Welfare Workers Can Do to Help Children and their Incarcerated Parents,” (Spring 2008), Northern California Training Academy, The Center for Human Services, UC Davis Extension, www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/Out_of_the_Shadows.pdf

- An estimated 10-20 percent of children in foster care in California have a parent who is currently incarcerated.
- Incarcerated parents with children in foster care frequently have sentences longer than the federal Adoption and Safe Family Act (ASFA) deadline, leading to termination of parental rights. The Act says that if a child is in foster care for 15 out of 22 months, then an agency is required to file for termination.
- Accommodating the rights of incarcerated parents to connecting with their children can be a real challenge for child welfare workers and foster parents. It is important for parents to document their participation in programs like substance abuse and parenting while incarcerated, as well as document their regular contacts with their child through letters and calls.

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- Many incarcerated parents do not understand their rights to visitation and family reunification services. Many social workers do not understand the jail/prison setting (i.e. locating parents, visitation rules, etc.) and there are often transportation and other barriers facing relatives, caregivers, and foster parents for children in foster care.
- The social worker has an important role in facilitating communication and providing best practice for these families (i.e. court notification, establishment of paternity, visitation policies, etc.).

Child Welfare Models & Resources

San Francisco Human Services Agency has recently enhanced their incarcerated parents policies and procedures through support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. A description of their programs is available at www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/ChildrenInChildWelfare.pdf.

New York City's Administration for Children's Services has one of the oldest incarcerated parents programs in the country, Children of Incarcerated Parents Program (CHIPP), which provides transportation and services for incarcerated parents and their caregivers to NY prisons and jails. Information is available at http://home2.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/evens/christmas_cheer_2009.shtml.

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services has online training on children of incarcerated parents geared for child welfare staff, available at www.dshs.wa.gov/incarcerated/.

Resources for Incarcerated Parents with Children in the Child Welfare System

Rise - A Magazine By and For Parents in the Child Welfare System (Summer 2008). In this issue, parents in prison write about their efforts to stay connected to their children in foster care and to reunify after release, available at www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/RiseAMagazine.pdf.

Incarcerated Parents Manual: Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities (2007). Produced and Distributed by Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and Prisoner Legal Services, this manual is written for a parent in jail or prison and is designed to answer many of the legal and practical questions that parents have about custody of their children, both during and after incarceration. Available at www.prisonerswithchildren.org.

Special Populations – Immigrant Parents

Information excerpted and adapted from: “Caught Between Systems: The Intersection of Immigration and Child Welfare Policies,” (May 2010), First Focus, www.firstfocus.net/library/reports/caught-between-systems-the-intersection-of-immigration-and-child-welfare-policies

- Immigration enforcement activities have significantly increased and many jurisdictions have signed formal agreements between local police and the Department of Homeland Security to transfer incarcerated individuals to immigration officials once the person’s criminal case is concluded.
- Many immigrant families are “mixed status” (i.e. undocumented parent and U.S. citizen children) and these deportations can occur even for minor offenses.
- It is helpful for social service agencies to have relationships with their local immigrant community service providers such as Catholic Charities, CLINIC and others who can assist the families in these situation. The consulate can also be a helpful resource.

Special Populations – Immigrant Parents – Resources

- Detention Watch Network (DWN) is a national coalition of organizations. Their website, www.detentionwatchnetwork.org, includes information in English and Spanish for detained clients and their family members, including resource links.
- American Humane Association website includes a toolkit for social workers working with immigrant families in the public child welfare system, available at www.americanhumane.org/protecting-children/programs/child-welfare-migration/tool-kits.html.
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center, www.ilrc.org, has legal information written for attorneys, social workers and agencies, as well as their fee-for-service “lawyer of the day.”



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