

The Incarcerated Parent: Empowering Family Connections through Parent Education

Presented by

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Role



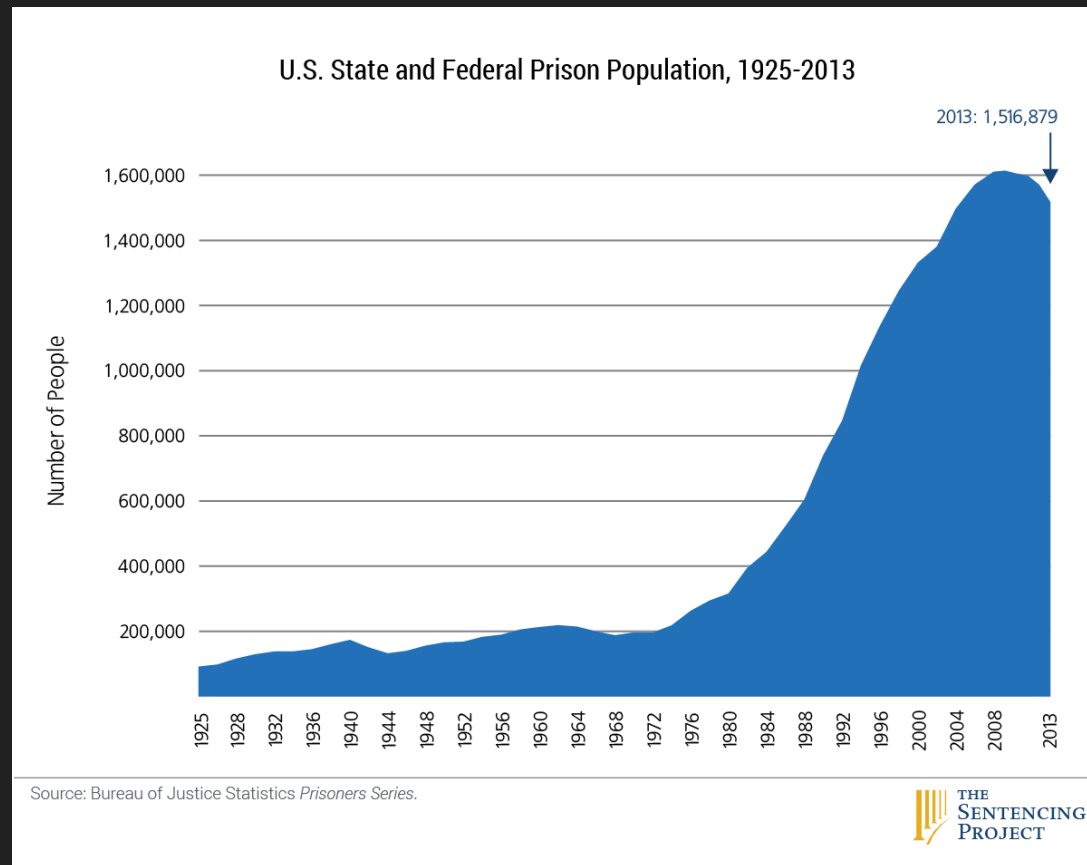
- Shauna Staranko
 - Parent and Community Educator
 - Family Therapist
 - Parenting Instructor at Westmoreland County Prison

Incarceration in the United States

“The United States is the world's leader in incarceration with 2.2 million people currently in the nation's prisons or jails -- a 500% increase over the past thirty years.”

<http://www.sentencingproject.org/>

- The majority of prisoners are parents
- 3.6 million parents are under *some form of* corrections supervision



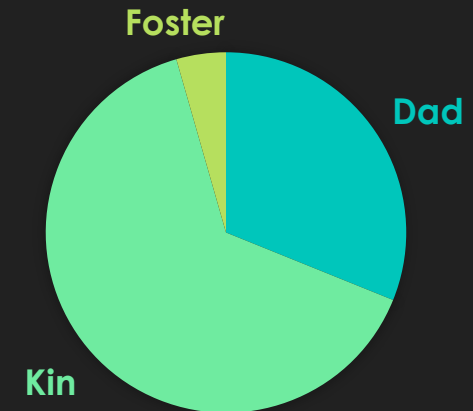
Incarceration in the United States

- **2.8 million** children have an incarcerated parent
- **10 million** children have had an incarcerated parent sometime in their lives
 - The Pew Charitable Trusts: Pew Center on the States. (2010)
- **1 in 14** children have lived with a parent who was incarcerated at some point after the child's birth (Child Trends, 2015)
- 2 in every 100 children have a parent in state or federal prison (Mumola, 2000)



Incarceration in the United States

- 92% of incarcerated parents are male and 8% are female
- 90% of children with an incarcerated father live with their mother
- Children with an incarcerated mother:
 - 28% live with dad
 - 58% live with kin (grandparent, aunt, etc)
 - 4% are in foster care
- Parents who maintain connections during incarceration experience significantly greater success and less recidivism when paroled



Ethnicity and Incarceration

- African American children are **nine times** more likely to have an incarcerated parent than Caucasian children
- Latino children are **three times** more likely to have an incarcerated parent than Caucasian children

Challenges for Children and Families on the Outside

- Instability in family structure and relationships
- Residential mobility
- Financial instability and added expenses of maintaining a parent-child relationship while incarcerated
- School performance problems
- Shame and stigma
 - Ann E. Casey Foundation, 2008



Barriers to Maintaining Family Relationships during Incarceration

- Dealing with the non-incarcerated family members (parents, kin, caregivers)
- Distance/transportation
- Hostile Prison Environment
- Rules/Policies
- Barriers to Communication
- Finances
- Legal Time Frames
- Lack of Programs and Services
- Personal Circumstances

“Limited visiting hours, lack of privacy, restriction on movement and physical contact diminishes the effort men and women make to stay connected.”
(Incarceration and the Family: A review of Research)

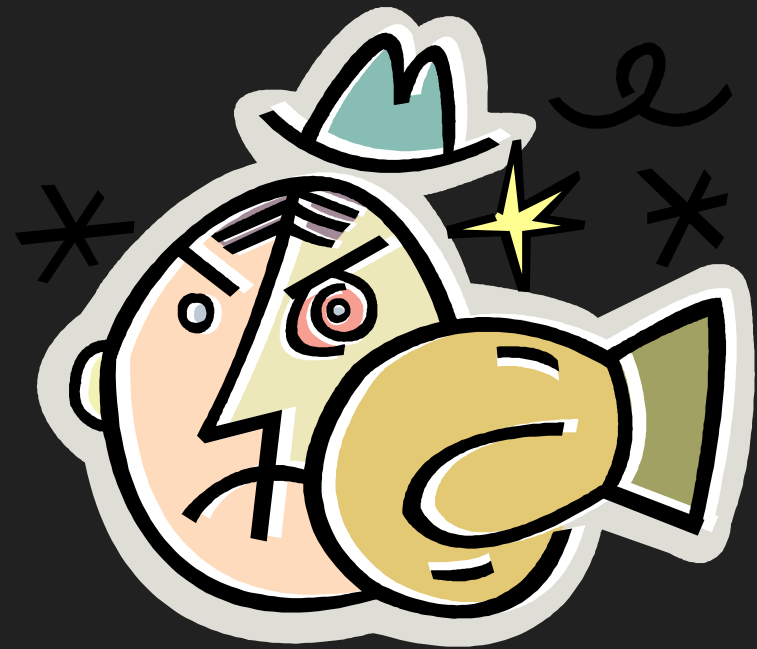


The Children

Seeing it through their eyes

Risk Factors for Children

- Abuse of Drugs/Alcohol
- Antisocial Behavior
- Higher Drop-Out Rate
- Academic Problems
- Truancy
- Aggression
- Disruptive Behaviors
 - Snyder, 2001



Common Reactions

- Crying
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Worry
- Anger
- Acting out
- Development Regression



Children as Witnesses

- 67% see their parent handcuffed
- 27% witness weapons being drawn
- 4.3 % witness a physical struggle
- 3.2% witness their parent being pepper sprayed



Trauma

A psychologically distressing event outside the range of usual human experience, often involving a sense of intense fear, terror, helplessness, and that produces psychological injury or pain



Trauma

- Creates a prolonged stress response
- Is typically unexpected which leads to distrust
- Is uncontrollable which creates a sense of helplessness
- Can be triggered and re-experienced through various sensory triggers

Trauma Inducing Events

- Abuse in all forms
- Witness to domestic violence
- Violence in their community
- Frequent housing changes
- Chronic health problems
- Mental health issues of caregiver
- Institutional care and multiple foster placements

Higher Risks

- Having an incarcerated parent is also associated with higher risk for other Adverse Childhood Experiences
 - Living with someone who has a substance abuse problem
 - Experiencing parental divorce or separation
 - Witnessing violence between parents or guardians
 - Witnessing violence in their neighborhood
 - Living with someone who is mentally ill or suicidal
 - Experiencing the death of a parent
 - Murphey, D. & Cooper, P.M. (2015)

Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) Studies

As the number of ACE increase, the risk for the following health problems increases in a strong and graded fashion:

- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Depression
- Fetal death
- Health-related quality of life
- Illicit drug use
- Ischemic heart disease (IHD)
- Liver disease
- Intimate partner violence
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies
- Early initiation of smoking
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Adolescent pregnancy

Impact of Parental Incarceration affected by

- Age of child at time of incarceration
- Length of separation
- Level of disruption
- Number of previous separation events
- Availability of family and community support
- Relationship to parent

Children of Incarcerated Parents

A Bill of Rights

- 1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parents arrest.*
- 2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.*
- 3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.*
- 4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parents absence.*

Children of Incarcerated Parents

A Bill of Rights

- 5. I have the right to support as I face my parent's incarceration.*
- 6. I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent.*
- 7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed, or labeled because my parent is incarcerated.*
- 8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.*

Contact Outcomes

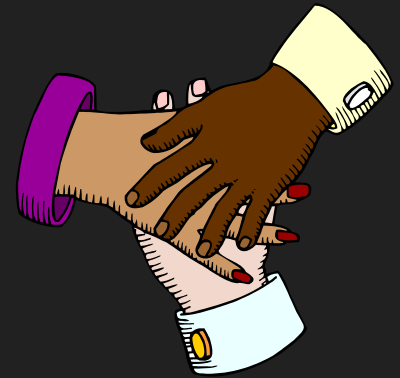
- Better inmates
- Inmate has smoother reentry/less recidivism
- Child is less stressed
- Child experiences fewer behavioral, emotional, and developmental concerns
- Less worry about parent and self
- Kinship and foster caregivers feel more supported and better
 - See Carlson 1998, Hauck & Loper 2002, LaVigne, Naser, Brooks, & Castro 2005, & Poehlmann et al, 2010.

Addressing the Issue

*Addressing the needs of the incarcerated parent,
their children, and the non-incarcerated parents
and caregivers*

Key Players

- The inmates
- Their children and families
- Family support workers
- Corrections and Administration



Parent Education

- Curriculums Specifically for Incarcerated Parents
 - Parenting from the Inside: Making the Mother-Child Connections by Ann Booker Loper
 - Inside Out Dad by the National Fatherhood Initiative
 - Parenting Inside Out®

FSWP has no commercial relationships with any of these curriculums

Parenting from the Inside

- A curriculum designed for incarcerated mothers to help them connect with their children
 - MOM-OK
 - Mellow-Out
 - Mind
 - Other Thoughts
 - Kids
 - Listening with your Ears, Eyes, Heart, and Mind
 - Ears- tone of voice, what your are saying, what they are saying
 - Eyes- body language
 - Heart- empathy
 - Mind- development, special needs

Parenting from the Inside

- Curriculum continued...
 - Asking Smart Questions
 - Asking about children's interests, allowing them to be the expert, asking about feelings
 - Avoiding Yell-at-ya, Yes/No, and Secret Agent questions
 - Writing Letters
 - Using Smart Questions
 - Age-appropriate letters (e.g. using colors and pictures)
 - Encouraging child development through mail

Parenting from the Inside

- Curriculum continued...
 - Effective Phone Conversations
 - Using emotion regulation skills
 - Planning ahead
 - Managing time
 - Connecting with the Caregiver
 - Teamwork
 - Stay calm
 - Empathize
 - Talk Openly
 - Having Tough Conversations
 - Age appropriate ways to talk about being incarcerated

Parenting from the Inside

- Curriculum continued...
 - Giving Guidance from Prison
 - Take care of your own feelings
 - Listen
 - If you want your child to hear you, LISTEN FIRST
 - Give Advice
 - Brainstorm solutions
 - Give Truth, Love, & Consequences
 - Team up with caregiver
 - Admit your regrets

Inside Out Dad

- Role of a Father- What are admirable characteristics of a father
- **5 Characteristics of an Inside Out Dad**
 - **SELF-AWARENESS**- He is aware of the role he plays in his children's lives and how his decisions impact his relationship with them. He is aware of his feelings, his strengths, and his challenges.
 - **CARING FOR SELF**- He is both physically and mentally fit. He is a good role model for self-care to his children. He has a strong connection to his family and community.
 - **FATHERING SKILLS**- He is aware of his role in his family and models being a good man to his sons and daughters.
 - **PARENTING SKILLS**- He nurtures his children. They feel safe with him and he uses discipline to teach and guide.
 - **RELATIONSHIP SKILLS**- He builds and maintains safe and healthy relationships with his children, their mothers, and other caregivers. He knows that his relationship with his children's caregivers affects them.

Inside Out Dad

- Definition of Manhood
 - Empowering men to set their own definition
 - Domestic Violence Education
- Emotion Management
 - Identifying emotions
 - Respect Self, Others, Environment
 - Grief and Loss
- Mental and Physical Health
 - Developing Self-care Plans

Inside Out Dad

- Communication
 - Styles of Communication- Fight or Flight, Defensive/Closed, Open for Change
 - Working with Mom and Co-parenting
 - Value need to change and listen
 - Value other person
 - Compromise
 - Best interest of Child
 - Communicating with Child
 - Honor what they want
 - Avoid bad labels
 - Focus on the goal

Inside Out Dad

- Child Development
 - Appropriate expectations for ages and stages
 - Tips for supporting healthy development and self-worth
- Discipline
 - To teach or guide
 - Role Modeling
 - Parenting Styles
 - Rewards vs. Punishments
- Connecting with your Child
 - Phone calls, letters, and visits
 - A commitment, Allowable, Doable

Westmoreland County Prison Parenting Program

- Classes consist of 30 men or 15 women, and 1 facilitator
- Participants sign up on their unit, some are court ordered
- 8 session, 90 minutes, twice a week for one month
- Classes are monitored by video surveillance, and support staff are available by telephone
- We use gender specific curriculums to meet the unique needs of men and women
- At completion of the class, parents are eligible for contact visits with their children arranged through their counselors

Engaging and Empowering Incarcerated Parents

- Establishing a Join
 - Respecting Parent as Expert
 - Remember that Good Parents can become Incarcerated
- Treat Parent with Dignity
- Empathy
- Incentives

“Stop categorizing us as all one person”

“Visits are what get us through the week”

“Patience”

“Compassion”

“We will be more emotional”

Child-Friendly Visitation

- The Prison can support children's relationships with their parents through:
 - Providing quality parent education programs
 - Having a warm and friendly visitation room
 - Providing toys and games for parents and children
 - Treating children kindly and with respect

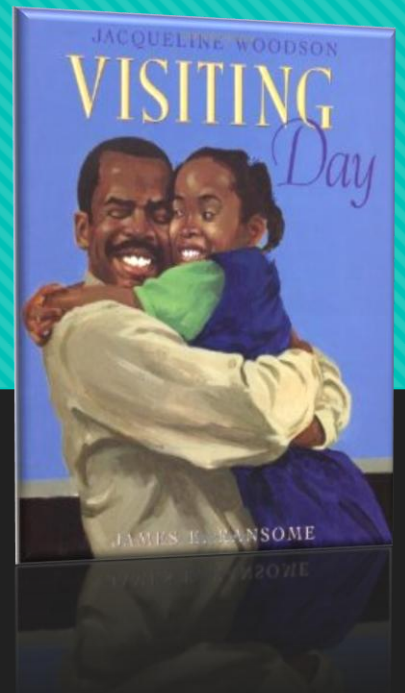
Ideas for Parenting from a Distance

- Parents may need to get creative in finding ways to connect with their children
 - Drawing pictures for children to color
 - Making flash cards to support children's learning
 - Joint story telling through letters
 - Trace hand on paper, have child trace hand inside to "hold hands"
 - Have person on outside buy "care items" like special band aids or chocolate kisses for child
 - Singing on the phone



Other Ideas!?

Helping Families: Books



When Andy's Father Went to Prison by Martha Hickman

A Visit to the Big House by Oliver Butterworth

Visiting Day by Jacqueline Woodson and James E. Ransome

Joey's Visit by Donna Jones

Let's Talk About When Your Parent Is in Jail by Maureen K. Wittbold

Just for You – Children with Incarcerated Parents - Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents, Pacific Oaks College and Children's Programs, 714 West California Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91105

My Mother and I Are Growing Stronger by Inez Maury

Two in Every Hundred: a special workbook for children with a parent in prison

There Are Some Real Special Kids In Our Class by Frank M. Black

Keeping in Touch by Long Distance by Ann Kerniski

A Visit With Daddy by Frank M. Black

My Mom Went to Jail by Kathleen Hodgkins and Suzanne Bergen

Mama Loves Me from Far Away by Pat Brisson and Laurie Caple

Dad's in Prison by Sandra Cain and Margaret Speed

I Know How You Feel Because This Happened to Me -
Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents, Pacific Oaks College and Children's Programs, 714 West California Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91105

A Visit with Daddy by Frank M. Black

A Visit with Mommy by Frank M. Black

Help for Kids Understanding Your Feelings About Having A Parent in Prison or Jail For Kids Ages Six and Older by Carole Gesme

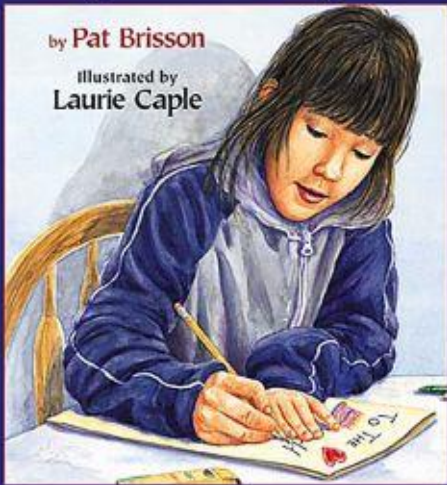
When a Parent Goes to Jail A Comprehensive Guide for Counseling Children of Incarcerated Parents by Rebecca Yaffe and Lonnie Hoade

Regarding addiction: *"My Dad Loves Me, My Dad Has A Disease"* by Claudia Black

Mama Loves Me from Away

by Pat Brisson

Illustrated by
Laurie Caple



For More Information

Organization

- Bethesda Family Service Foundation (www.bfsf.org)
- Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (www.pa-fsa.org)
- Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (www.e-ccip.org)

Organization

- National Fatherhood Initiative (www.fatherhood.org)
- PA Dept. of Corrections (www.cor.state.pa.us)
- Pennsylvania Prison Society (www.prisonsociety.org)
- Sesame Street- Little Children, Big Challenges (www.sesamestreet.org)

Thank You
Very
Much



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