

Children of the Incarcerated: Collateral Victims of Crime



A RESOURCE GUIDE

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**UF LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RACE AND RACE RELATIONS**

MARCH 2015



CSRRR Mission Statement

The CSRRR is committed to de-stigmatizing race. With the objective of fostering communities of dialogue, the Center embraces historically and empirically based thinking, talking, teaching, and writing on race. To this end, the Center creates and supports programs designed to enhance race-related curriculum development for faculty, staff and students in collegiate and professional schools. Of the five U.S. law schools with race centers, the CSRRR is uniquely focused on curriculum development.



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Collateral Victims of Crime
A RESOURCE GUIDE

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Research and writing by

Katheryn Russell-Brown, J.D., Ph.D., Professor of Law &
Director, Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations

Anju Kaduvettoor Davidson, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations

Andrea Davis, Ph.D.
Research Associate, Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations

Cover art by Abbi Seaman, age 6

Design by Lynn Stuart

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1.7 MILLION CHILDREN: Having a Parent Behind Bars

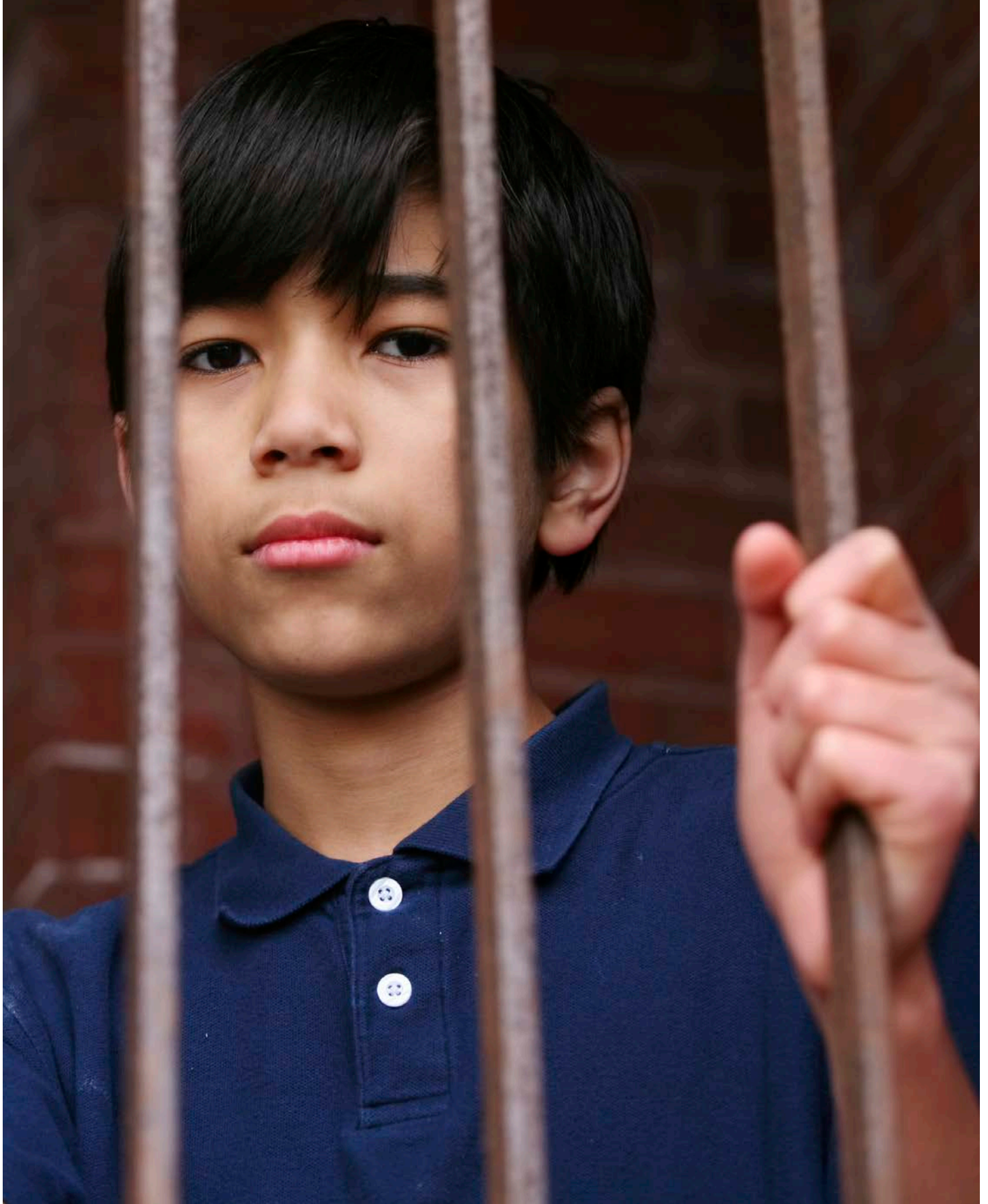
In the United States today, there are over 1.5 million prisoners behind bars in state and federal prisons. When prisoners serve time, so do their families. This includes their children, who are among the indirect victims of crime. In the U.S., there are approximately 1.7 million children under the age of eighteen who have a parent behind bars. Overall, 2.3 percent of the 74 million minor children have an incarcerated parent.

Parental incarceration has a racially disparate impact. Seven percent of Black children have a parent behind bars. This compares with 2.4 percent of Hispanic children, and less than one percent of White children. These figures reflect the overall racial disparity in incarceration rates.

Far too little public attention has been given to the impact of parental incarceration on children. Children with parents behind bars often struggle with embarrassment and stigmatization and fear that their “family secret” will be exposed. Some of these young people have abandonment issues and experience stress related to not knowing when or if they will see their absent parent. In fact, the majority of parents in state prisons have not had visits from their children. For children who are able to visit a parent who is serving time, there may also be stress associated with the often long distances they have to travel for the visit. Further, some children have experienced trauma as a result of witnessing the arrest of a parent. For many children, the incarceration of a parent, particularly a mother, will mean they have to move to live with a relative. In some cases, a parent’s prison sentence will mean a child has to be placed in foster care. Notably, most of the nation’s schools and social service agencies do not have resources specifically designed to address the concerns of children with a parent behind bars.

This resource guide shines light on the national problem of parental incarceration—an invisible, collateral consequence of mass incarceration. We highlight national and Florida trends and identify available resources for academics, caregivers, and concerned citizens. We hope you will agree that addressing the needs of children with incarcerated parents is an important socio-legal issue—one that deserves our attention and absolute best efforts. Please join us in our work.

Katheryn Russell-Brown,
Director, Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations



Research Overview

The many and complex ways that parental incarceration may affect children has been an increasing area of interest among researchers. Research has consistently found that children with incarcerated parents experience great adversity. Specifically, children with incarcerated parents face a wide variety of problems, including difficulty forming healthy relationships, financial hardship, stigma, behavioral concerns, and trauma. Notably, children with an incarcerated parent often face overlapping forms of disadvantage, including poverty, neglect, and substance abuse. This section will provide an overview of the empirical literature on children of the incarcerated, a demographic description of this population, the consequences of parental incarceration, and will conclude with recommendations for future research on children with incarcerated parents.

Rising incarceration rates impact not only the men and women behind bars, but also the families and children of these prisoners. Recent statistics help to demonstrate the magnitude of the problem. The 1.7 million children with incarcerated parents is steadily approaching the 2.3 million incarcerated adults. Research shows that on any given day more than 7 million children have a parent under correctional supervision. This is an 80 percent increase over the past twenty-five years. Parental incarceration is especially prevalent for Blacks and Hispanics, racial groups that are often otherwise disadvantaged in the criminal justice system. To illustrate, over 70 percent of children with incarcerated parents are children of color. In 2007, the population of minor children with incarcerated parents consisted of approximately one in 15 Black children, one in 41 Hispanic children, and one in 110 White children. This means that Black children are seven times more likely and Hispanic children are two and a half times more likely than White children to have an incarcerated parent. Further, between 1980 and 1990, the rate of Black children with an incarcerated parent quadrupled, with one in four Black children experiencing a parent behind bars before the age of 14 (Wildeman, 2009). Approximately 54 percent of Black men and 57 percent of Hispanic men in state prisons are fathers; however, the percentage of women who were mothers in state prison did not change according to race or ethnicity. Mass incarceration impacts all racial groups. However, as the above statistics highlight, parental incarceration has a racially disparate impact on Black and Hispanic children.

Aside from the racial considerations of parental incarceration, parental imprisonment has a ripple effect in many other areas. Research shows that children with incarcerated parents often struggle with issues related to behavior, family and financial stability. However, much of the research on the *specific* effects of parental incarceration on children is inconclusive because it is difficult to disentangle the effects of parental incarceration from the effects of other factors that pre-date or co-exist with a parent’s incarceration. For example, the impact

Did you know...

In 1980, 1 in 120 children had a parent behind bars; in 2007, 1 in 28 children had a parent behind bars.

of substance abuse, child abuse, poverty, and parental or juvenile mental illness may be difficult to distinguish from the effects of parental incarceration alone.

One of the most common claims about the impact of parental incarceration on children is not supported by the empirical research. According to conventional wisdom, children with incarcerated parents are more likely than other children to be incarcerated in adulthood. This claim has limited empirical support once other factors are taken into account. Most studies have not been able to demonstrate a causal relationship between parental incarceration and later criminality. The fallacy of this conventional wisdom may stem from a confusion of correlation and causation.

Although the effect of parental incarceration on future criminality is inconclusive, the research on other effects of parental incarceration is clearer. Studies show that a parent's imprisonment can affect a child's mental health and academic outcomes. There is research consensus as to the risk factors that make children more susceptible to the negative effects of parental incarceration. These include the quality of the parent-child attachment; pre-incarceration living conditions, socio-economic status, community support, child's gender, caregiver options post-incarceration, the child's age, the child's coping skills, the length of separation from the incarcerated parent, and the extent to which the child feels stigmatized by the parent's crime.



Although the effects of incarceration can be felt through either parent, the incarceration of mothers appears to have a more negative impact on children than the incarceration of fathers. Because mothers are more likely than fathers to live with the child at the time of an arrest, incarcerated mothers are more likely to need to place children with family members or in foster care. All in all, research has been integral to understanding both the pre-existing and concomitant factors that interact with parental incarceration to impact children. Research has been equally important in detailing the complicated ways that having a parent behind bars can affect children.

Still, there remains much we do not know about the effects of parental imprisonment on children. Future

research should compare children with incarcerated parents to children who do not have an incarcerated parent. This will help to determine behavioral and developmental outcomes of parental incarceration on children. Additionally, researchers should consider whether visitation procedures and quality of parent-child contact in prison or jail affect children differently than the frequency of contact. Intervention programs should be studied longitudinally and for both process and evaluation outcomes. Similarly, intervention programs need to evaluate and observe all individuals involved: incarcerated parents, children, caregivers, and professionals.

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Did you know...

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) signed by President Bill Clinton in 1997, authorizes the termination of parental rights when a child has been living in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months. Because the average prison sentence exceeds 22 months, incarcerated parents whose children are in foster care have a high risk of losing custody.

Best Practices *A Look at What Works*

Over the past 20 years there have been increasing efforts to implement programs and policies to support children with incarcerated parents. The specifics of these programs differ based on the needs of the particular population. For example, a program that focuses on preparing incarcerated parents for a return to society may emphasize the importance of re-building the parent-child relationship and fostering a healthy home environment. In contrast, a program designed for newly incarcerated parents might focus on developing effective visitation procedures and enhancing the parent-caregiver relationship.

These program interventions are intended to support incarcerated parents and their children. Research has identified three elements that are essential for an effective program. First, it addresses the need to develop a healthy parent-child relationship. Second, the program seeks to educate incarcerated parents about their rights and responsibilities. Third, the program assists parents with re-entry by identifying community support and resources. Below is a brief description of each of the three elements of an effective intervention program.

Parent-Child Relationships

A secure attachment between the incarcerated parent and child forms the core of a healthy relationship. Effective parenting interventions for incarcerated populations aim to foster strong emotional bonds between the child and parent. This includes the development of communication skills for parents and children designed to facilitate dialogue. Parents are also taught how empathy can enhance their relationship with their child. Specifically, parents learn that viewing the world through their child's eyes will create a stronger parent-child bond. Parents who are able to effectively communicate with caregivers will also likely improve their relationship with their children. Creating a solid parent-child bond also requires that the incarcerated parent address his or her own mental health concerns.

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

Along with facilitating a healthy attachment between parent and child, intervention programs should educate incarcerated parents about their rights and responsibilities as inmate parents. Federal laws, such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA), were enacted to protect children from volatile home environments. In fact, the ASFA law has resulted in an increased number of parental termination cases. However, the law does not allow parental rights to be terminated solely due to parental incarceration. Intervention programs that seek to enhance incarcerated parents' awareness of their rights will ideally provide inmates with written information that explains state custody laws, foster and family care, and re-unification procedures. As well, parents should have access to a resource counselor who can provide information and answer specific questions. Similarly, incarcerated parents need to be informed about child sup-

port responsibilities, which continue during incarceration, and how to acquire a child's medical and educational records.

Support for Incarcerated Parents

Incarcerated parents come from a wide range of backgrounds. Many have had experience with substance abuse and mental illness. Incarcerated mothers in particular are likely to have been victims of domestic violence. These problems are best addressed with interventions that begin at the start of their prison terms and continue upon their release. Both within and outside of prison walls, parents should have access to substance abuse treatment, employment training, and academic and vocational programs. Parent support groups seek to provide parents with emotional support whereas parent education groups typically focus on skills training. The success of these efforts is also tied to facilitating opportunities for children to visit their incarcerated parents, increasing opportunities for children to have physical contact with their parents during visits, and instituting programs that allow children to take part in parent-child activities (e.g., playing board games) with their parents during visits.

Selected Sources

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Programs in Florida

for Children with Incarcerated Parents

In 2013, the Florida Department of Corrections reported that there were approximately 65,000 children under the age of eighteen with an incarcerated parent. What follows is a list of Florida organizations that offer programmatic support to children of the incarcerated.

Abe Brown Ministries—Tampa

This organization provides transportation to families to visit correctional facilities. The group also facilitates weekly video visitation for incarcerated women and their children. It also funds programs for incarcerated mothers, including counseling and parenting skills.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Mid-Florida—Gainesville

The organization has a mentoring program that provides children with incarcerated parents or siblings with one-to-one mentoring. The program matches adult mentors with children who have a parent or caregiver in state or federal prison.

Collaborative for Children in Hillsborough of Incarcerated Parents—Hillsborough County

This collaborative of individuals, agencies and neighborhood groups works on behalf of children and families of the incarcerated. The group works to pass children's rights legislation, to develop reading programs for children and their incarcerated mothers, and to promote public awareness about incarceration.

The group supports teacher training, provides materials designed to aid families and parents who are transitioning back into the community, and is developing arrest protocols when children are present.

Florida Family Network—Tallahassee

This organization has provided support to over 35,000 incarcerated women and mothers. The agency aims to restore the family structure through networking, partnerships and collaborations with other public and private agencies. It has also provided parenting courses for over 15 years to more than 1,000 incarcerated mothers.

Mommy Reads—Gainesville

In 2009, Peggy Cole initiated the Mommy Reads Ministry. The Gainesville, Florida ministry provides incarcerated mothers with the opportunity to read and record books for their children. Several times a year, women from Trinity United Methodist Church, in Gainesville, travel to Lowell Correctional Institution for Women in Ocala, FL. Members of the group meet individually with the incarcerated mothers to record books for their children. The recordings are

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then transferred to an MP3 player, and the MP3 player along with the book and a note from the mother is shipped to the child. All items are kept by the child. Mommy Reads is supported by donations. They accept new paperback books and welcome multicultural books. Cash donations will help pay for books, MP3 players, postage, and travel expenses.

Service Network for Children of Inmates—Miami

This organization coordinates services for children in Miami who have a parent in prison or jail. It sponsors a number of events and programs including family bonding visits to different correctional institutions around the state. This initiative has helped more than 1,500 children in South Florida connect with an incarcerated parent.



Sister Hazel K. Williams

Photo by Claudia Katz
Photo originally appeared in the
UF Orange & Blue (Fall 2003)

Sister Hazel Williams

Sister Hazel Williams, a longtime resident of Gainesville, is an advocate, missionary, and supporter of the needy. For the last few years, she has been working to establish a center for children of the incarcerated in Gainesville. She envisions that the center, “The Rainbow House for the Children of the Incarcerated,” will serve children ages 1 to 18. If you wish to donate to the cause, please contact the Bank of America, 1116 W. University Avenue Gainesville, FL, 32601.



Sesame Street Bilingual, Multimedia Initiative “Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration” 2013 Initiative

“Little Children, Big Challenges” provides resources for families with young children faced with a transition arising from parental incarceration. The toolkit and resource materials are designed to provide support for young children and provide communication strategies and age-appropriate language for parents and caregivers. Florida is one of ten pilot states for this initiative.

Did you know...

The number of children with parents in prison increased 80% between 1991 and 2007.

In the National Spotlight

Fragile Families and Children Wellbeing Study:
Princeton University and Columbia University

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study follows a group of approximately 5,000 children who were born in large U.S. cities between 1998 and 2000 (roughly three-quarters of whom were born to unmarried parents). The title “fragile families” refers to families that are at greater risk of breaking up and living in poverty than more traditional families.

Professor Kristin Turney and colleagues are using the Fragile Families data to study the well-being of children with incarcerated parents. Their goal is to better understand the effects of incarceration on crucial aspects of child development, including parent-child relationships, school difficulties, and homelessness. Research findings based on data from the Fragile Families Study are available in the Fragile Families Working Paper series at <http://crcw.princeton.edu/publications/publications.asp>.

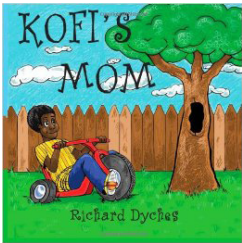
Camp Spaulding in New Hampshire

This two-week summer camp was created to serve children from low-income families and children with incarcerated fathers. Some campers visit their fathers in prison during a two-day field trip. To prepare for the visit, campers view and discuss documentaries created by other children of incarcerated parents. Camp Spaulding is one of the few camp-based visitation programs in the United States.



Books & Other Resources

Books for Children with Incarcerated Parents

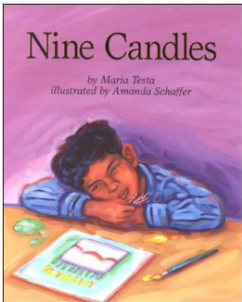


Kofi's Mom (2010)

Richard Dyches

Ages: 3-6

A story about Kofi whose mother was sent to prison. The book explores his feelings of loss and confusion. With the help of friends at school, Kofi begins to talk about his mom and look forward to her return.

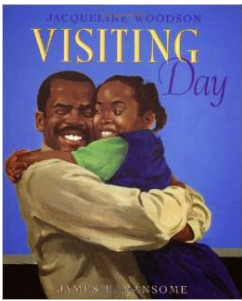


Nine Candles (1996)

Maria Testa

Ages: 4+

After visiting his mother in prison on his seventh birthday, Raymond looks forward to his ninth birthday when Mama has promised she will be home to celebrate.

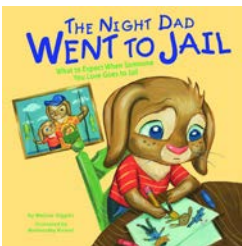


Visiting Day (2002)

Jacqueline Woodson

Ages: 5-7

A young girl and her grandmother prepare for a very special day—the one day a month they go visit the girl's father in prison.



The Night Dad Went to Jail:

What to Expect When Someone You Love Goes to Jail (2013)

Melissa Higgins & Wednesday Kirwan

Ages: 5-8

This story recounts the emotions a child experiences, including fear and anger, when a parent goes to jail.

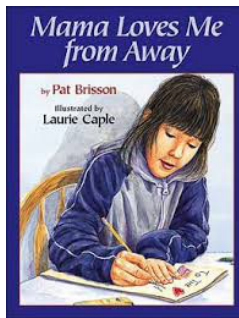


When Dad Was Away (2013)

Liz Weir & Karin Littlewood

Ages: 5-8

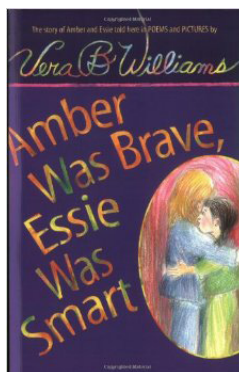
Milly is upset when she learns that her dad has been sent to prison. After a visit to the prison, she receives a special package in the mail from her dad.



Mama Loves Me From Away (2004)

Ages: 7+

The relationship between a mother and daughter becomes strained after the mother is sentenced to prison.



Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart (2004)

Vera Williams

Ages: 8-12

Times are hard for the family; their mother works long hours and their father is in jail. The shadow of their father's mistake is always there.



My Daddy Is in Jail:

Story, Discussion, and Small Group Activities (2003)

Janet Bender

Grades: K-5

A resource for helping children cope with the incarceration of a loved one. It includes a read-aloud story, discussion guide, caregiver suggestions, and optional small group counseling activities.



Jakeman (2007)

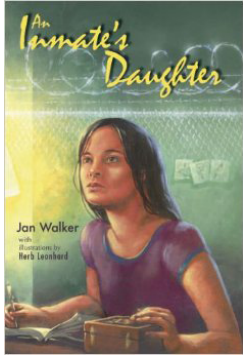
Deborah Ellis

Ages: 8-12 years old

Jake and his sister have been in foster care for three years, since their mother was arrested for drug possession and trafficking. Jake, who wants to become comic book artist, copes by creating an alter ego named Jakeman.

Did you know...

Approximately 11 percent of women in prison and 2 percent of men in prison report having a child in a foster home or similar facility.



An Inmate's Daughter (2010)

Jan Walker

Grades: 5-8

Jenna has a secret. Her dad is in prison. She wants to keep this secret so she can join the in-group at school.

What Will Happen to Me? (2010)

Howard Zehr & Lorraine Stutsman Amstutz

Grades: 7 and up

This book brings together photographs of thirty children whose parents are incarcerated, along with their thoughts and reflections, in their own words.

Wish You Were Here: Teens Write About Parents in Prison (2010)

Autumn Spanne, Nora McCarthy & Laura Longhine, Eds.

Stories written by teens coping with the complicated feelings of guilt, shame, fear, anger, sadness, and longing that come with having a parent behind bars.

Books, Reports and Guides

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2011). *When a parent is incarcerated: A primer for social workers*. Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/when-a-parent-is-incarcerated>.

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Did you know...

Approximately one-half of all children with an incarcerated parent are under the age of ten.

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Did you know...

Black children are 7 times more likely and Hispanic children are more than two and a half times more likely than White children to have an incarcerated parent.

Across the Nation

Family to Family California

This initiative is a public-private partnership between national and state foundations and the California Department of Social Services. Foundation partners in the California Initiative include the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and the Center for Social Services Research at U. C. Berkeley. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Family to Family initiative was an 18-year, nationwide effort to improve child welfare systems. The initiative sought to expand family and community involvement in child protection. Resources are available for youths, parents, caregivers and Child Welfare Agencies on the Family to Family California website.

FindYouthInfo.Gov

FindYouthInfo.gov was created by the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP), which is composed of representatives from 18 federal agencies that support programs and services focusing on youth. This website includes a webpage on information and resources for children of incarcerated parents in the United States. <http://findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents>

National Institute of Corrections Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents

This resource is helpful for law enforcement agencies that seek to enhance their policies and procedures and gain understanding about the trauma children may experience when law enforcement carries out its investigative and arrest responsibilities. <http://nicic.gov/library/028327>

The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, Rutgers University Camden

The NRCCFI is an organization in the U.S. focused on children and families of the incarcerated and programs that serve them. Their website includes a directory of national, state and local programs; a library of helpful materials for service providers and families, fact sheets, and other research resources. <http://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/resources/library/children-of-prisoners-library/>

Videos & Documentaries

Robins, J. (2009). *Echoes of Incarceration: A documentary initiative produced by youth with incarcerated parents.* Ibis Productions, Inc. Available from www.echoesofincarceration.org/Home.html.

Sussberg, J. & Rigby, T. (2014). *A Sentence Apart.* A twelve minute film which highlights three families who have a family member in prison. Available from <http://asentenceapart.com/>.



Percentage of incarcerated parents who have not had an in-person visit with their children

59% State Prisoners



45% Federal Prisoners



Source: 2010 Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Parents in prison and their minor children.

Percentage of prisoners who live more than 100 miles from their last residence

62% State Prisoners



84% Federal Prisoners



Source: *The Sentencing Project 2009 Report: Incarcerated Parents and Their Children*

Children of Incarcerated Parents' Bill of Rights



1. I have the right TO BE KEPT SAFE AND INFORMED AT THE TIME OF MY PARENT'S 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 PARENT'S ABSENCE.
5. I have the right TO SPEAK WITH, SEE AND TOUCH MY PARENT.
6. I have the right TO SUPPORT AS I FACE MY PARENT'S INCARCERATION.
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.

San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership
www.sfcipp.org/right1.html