

# Strengthening Supports for Families of People Who Are Incarcerated

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

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2022 The Council of State Governments Justice Center



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# The Council of State Governments Justice Center

We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.



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# Second Chance Month – April 2022

Help **individuals, communities, and agencies** across the country recognize the importance of reentry and their role in **building second chances**



# Track News and Updates on Social Media

**#ReentryMatters**

**#SecondChanceMonth**

**#SecondChanceMonth22**



# Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to youth delinquency and victimization. The Office helps states, localities, and tribes develop effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that create safer communities and empower youth to lead productive lives.

# **The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (NRCCFI)**

NRCCFI is the oldest and largest organization in the U.S. focused on children and families of the incarcerated and programs that serve them.

- Disseminating accurate and relevant information
- Guiding the development of family-strengthening policy and practice
- Training, preparing, and inspiring those working in the field
- Including the families in defining the issues and designing solutions

# Presentation Outline

- Welcome and Introductions
- Overview: What do we know from the research on caregivers?
- Engage families across a continuum of need
- Understand and acknowledge experiences and concerns
- Ask what they need
- Develop resources and supports
- Partner with community organizations
- Questions
- Closing



# **Welcome and Introductions**

# Presenters

**Ann Adalist-Estrin**, *Director, National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Rutgers University Camden New Jersey*

**Valerie Carpico**, *Senior Policy Analyst, Corrections and Reentry, CSG Justice Center*

# Overview: What do we know from the research on caregivers?

- Financial hardship
- Shame and stigma
- Elevated levels of emotional stress
- Additional strains placed on interpersonal relationships
- Increased difficulty in monitoring and supervising children
- This was true for all caregivers (mothers/grandparents, etc.)

# Overview: What do we know from the research on caregivers?

## Differences in perspective between incarcerated parents and caregivers:

- Differences in perceived needs of child: practical (school, friends, finances) vs. emotional (dealing with being upset and angry)  
mothers/fathers
- Support requests during incarceration: counseling vs. visits  
mothers wanted assistance with emotional support vs. fathers need for contact
- Frustration with unkept “promises” of services and systems vs. support people and family  
fathers/mothers
- Reentry as the hardest stage  
both

# Engage Families Across a Continuum of Need

**Who?** Recruiting and choosing caregivers as advisors and subject matter experts

**What?** Include caregivers in program design and case planning meetings

**When?** Inviting and including caregivers in advisory groups early in program design and implementation

**Where?** Going to them; “The bus to the outlet mall”

**How?** Guidelines for effective meetings

# Understand the Experiences and Concerns of Caregivers and Family Members

**Acknowledge** typical feelings of caregivers:

- Anger at the incarcerated parent
- Mistrust of the correctional system and staff
- Fear of unfounded allegations of child maltreatment

**Use tools** for hearing all perspectives and feelings such as active listening/reflective listening/referencing advocacy materials.

**Promote staff self-awareness** and highlight the various perspectives “in the best interest of the child.”

# Perspectives Matter: What Do You See?



# Perspectives Matter: Obstacles to Participation as Reported by Caregivers

- Shame and stigma
- Inconvenience
- Skepticism—“you just want a rubber stamp”
- Not being heard
- Choosing people who support one view
- Realities vs. research
- Difficulty including the voices of young children
- Competing agendas

From NRCCFI Technical Assistance Resources 2018. Used with permission.



# Examine All Perspectives

Motives for engaging families vary:

***“They are the experts” vs. “It is politically correct” vs. “Solutions come from mutual engagement”***

There is skepticism everywhere:

***“Families of the incarcerated are included as the warm-up act, the anecdotes, and the sad stories instead of as the experts.”***—Caregiver recruited for a community advisory group

***“Families and community program providers come in without any knowledge of a correctional system and we feel disrespected by them.”***  
—Correctional officer

From NRCCFI Technical Assistance Resources 2018. Used with permission.

# Ask What Families Need

## **Conduct needs assessments:**

Use survey tools such as Survey Monkey, Family Impact Survey, Family Assessment of Needs and Strengths, Family Advocacy and Support Tool.

**Engage** caregivers in problem-solving.

**Collaborate** to find creative approaches that address the heart of their ask within the parameters of the policies.

*Keep in mind: Assessment models designed for this population are slowly emerging in the field but are often not evaluated or published.*

# Needs Assessment Poll 1: Tools and Strategies



# Needs Assessment Poll 2: Perspectives on Caregiver/Family Needs



# Develop Practical and Relevant Resources and Supports: Advice and Quotes from Families

**Be sure that services are based on the actual needs of the caregivers rather than assumptions about needs or misinterpretations of needs assessments.**

- Clarify goals of providing resources. *“Not all caregivers need parenting classes.”*
- Be mindful of how logistically challenging programs and visits can be for families. *“You can’t visit if you can’t get there.”*
- Make protocols as easy and transparent as possible. *“What does modest shoes mean?”*
- Dedicate space on websites for caregiver resources. *“He never sent me the information.”*
- Ensure resources are family friendly. *“It took me an hour to find the tip sheet for families on the website.”*

# Partner with Organizations and Agencies in the Community

**Partnerships should be purposeful and accurately reflect the goals of the program.**

- Clarify the goals of the program: stated vs. unstated; support vs. intervention.
- Examine the reason for the partnerships: referrals vs. services.
- Include an array of services and avoid only looking to interventions for “at risk” families.
- Consider universal outreach to families in the community through everyday facilities such as hair salons, supermarkets, pediatric practices, and laundromats.

# Questions



# Closing Thought

**“Don’t let things you can’t do stop you from doing things you can.”**

—Former UCLA Basketball Head Coach John Wooden

<https://quotepark.com/quotes/2120529-john-wooden-dont-let-things-you-cant-do-stop-you-from-doing/>



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