



The Cabinet-level Reentry Council is working to enhance community safety and well-being, assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive citizens, and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.

# Children of Incarcerated Parents

On any given day, close to 2.7 million children, or 1 in 28, have a parent in prison or jail—an increase of more than 80 percent since 1991. For African-American children, the rate is 1 in 9. The arrest and incarceration of a parent can have significant consequences for a child's well-being. Though each family's experience is unique,

many families struggle to cope with the sudden loss of the incarcerated parent's income and the costs related to incarceration. Children of incarcerated parents may also face increased risk of homelessness, household disruption, problems at school, and behavioral and emotional difficulties, including depression, fear for their incarcerated parent, confusion, and anger towards the criminal justice system. Despite the strength and resilience of many children, the shame and stigma associated with incarceration may cause these children to feel isolated and alone. Reentry Council agencies are putting strategies in place to ensure that children of incarcerated parents' chances for success are not negatively impacted by their parent's incarceration.

## Accomplishments to Date

- In June 2013, the White House held a Champions of Change event honoring 12 individuals who have devoted their careers to helping children of incarcerated parents and their families.
- Reentry Council agencies partnered with Sesame Street Workshop to disseminate materials for the [Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration](#) campaign, including a storybook for young children about having an incarcerated parent and tips for caregivers on how to talk about this sensitive issue.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) developed a [toolkit](#) to better prepare child welfare and federal prison staff to help incarcerated parents with children in the child welfare system.
- The Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs (OJP), in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), released [Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents](#), a model policy focused on protecting the physical and emotional well-being of children when their parents are arrested. This model policy and [accompanying training](#) provide sound, practical, and child-focused guidance on how police can join with their community partners to best meet the needs of children in difficult circumstances.
- The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) partnered with the Urban Institute to examine how children are affected during the initial phases of justice system involvement:
  - from parental arrest to jail incarceration through pre-adjudication. Released June 2015, this project resulted in three toolkits on [parental arrest policies](#), [family-focused jail programs](#), and [family impact statements](#), as well as a [framework document](#) that synthesizes what has been learned about promising practices. All materials are posted on the NIC Children of Incarcerated Parents (COIP) resource [webpage](#).
- DOJ and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have invested new resources in the [Children of Incarcerated Parents Web Portal](#). Initially launched in 2013, this federal webpage offers resources for service providers working with children of incarcerated parents and for youth themselves who have an incarcerated parent.
- In September 2013 DOJ's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) held a [listening session](#) to solicit input from mentoring organizations, service providers, mentors, and youth on what makes mentoring programs for children of incarcerated parents successful. Using this information as a guide, OJJDP funded a multi-year practitioner-researcher partnership to develop and evaluate new mentoring practices to serve the needs of youth whose parents are incarcerated.
- The American Bar Foundation and the National Science Foundation hosted a [Research Workshop](#) at the White House that brought together leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss the impacts of parental incarceration on children and build a research agenda for advancing understanding on this issue.

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development and DOJ partnered with the [National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated](#) to facilitate capacity-building trainings in Camden, NJ; Detroit, MI; and Memphis, TN to teach local service providers how they can tailor their programs to meet the unique needs of children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers.
- DOJ has two funding opportunities under the Second Chance Act to support children of incarcerated parents. The first, [Strengthening Relationships Between Young Fathers and Their Children](#), funds mentoring services for incarcerated fathers who are returning to their families. The second, [Strengthening Families and Children of Incarcerated Parents](#), supports pilot programs that will strengthen the relationships between children and incarcerated parents confined in a federal correctional facilities.
- In November 2013, BOP held its first ever [Universal Children's Day](#), a visiting event for incarcerated parents and their families. In FY2014, there were 189 Children's Day events, and approximately 8,700 children visited more than 6,000 federal inmates. Since then, BOP has held several child-focused events, including a Daddy-Daughter Dance, a Mommy and Me Tea, and a Mother/Child Sleepover, where families participated in structured and unstructured activities designed to strengthen relationships.
- NIC published [A Guide to Video Visiting in Corrections](#), to help correctional facilities think through how to offer video visitation as a way to enhance family communication. With the assistance of U.S. Probation and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), BOP launched a video visitation pilot program to enhance video visitation capacity in several federal correctional facilities.
- The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at HHS has supported [state and local partnerships](#) between child support agencies and federal and state prisons to help children maintain contact with their incarcerated parent, help prevent the accumulation of uncollectible debt, and connect individuals with targeted post-prison child support services.

## Agenda Moving Forward

### Provide Training and Technical Assistance

Reentry Council agencies will develop materials designed to improve services offered to children of incarcerated parents and their families and disseminate them to corrections officers, child welfare agencies, judges and court personnel, and other service providers.

### Strengthen Federal Policy and Programmatic Initiatives

Reentry Council agencies will continue strengthening programs that improve outcomes for children of incarcerated parents and connect these programs with research that documents, measures, and highlights improvements.

### Encourage Research and Improve Data

Reentry Council agencies will support information gathering, data collection, and analysis to better understand children of incarcerated parents and their needs. One priority will be to explore how states have collected data on these children and encourage best practices.

### Improve Outreach and Raise Awareness

Reentry Council agencies will work to raise awareness about the common challenges faced by children of incarcerated parents and provide information and resources to educate communities on how to create supportive environments.

## Key Resources (Children of Incarcerated Parents)

### Children of Incarcerated Parents Web Portal

<http://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents>

### Children of Incarcerated Parents Myth Busters

[http://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/COIP-Mythbusters\\_first-6.pdf](http://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/COIP-Mythbusters_first-6.pdf)

### Children in Out-of-Home Care with Incarcerated Parents

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/casework/children/incarcerated.cfm>

### National Institute of Corrections—Children of Incarcerated Parents

<http://nicic.gov/coip>

### Child Support Services for Incarcerated Parents

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/realistic-child-support-orders-for-incarcerated-parents>

### Promising and Innovative Practices for Children of Incarcerated Parents: Arrest through Pre-Adjudication

<http://www.urban.org/events/promising-and-innovative-practices-children-incarcerated-parents-arrest-through-pre-adjudication>