
Family Support During Incarceration & Reentry: A Compendium of Resources

Studies suggest that maintaining family ties and family support can be key factors in the successful transition of those returning from jail or prison. The resources listed below share information, research and strategies to support individuals, families and children of justice-involved parents. Resources specific to *jail* populations and partners have been included.

May 2020

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Research on Incarceration and the Impacts on Children, Couples and Families

This information provides foundational research and guidance for program design, program evaluation, and proposal development.

[*Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*](#) (2019). Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press. J. M. Eddy & J. Poehlmann. Pulling together rigorous scholarship from criminology, sociology, law, psychiatry, social work, nursing, psychology, human development, and family studies, this book outlines new directions for research and policies. This handbook is available for free to UW-System students, faculty, and staff through UW Libraries.

[*A Shared Sentence: The Devastating Toll of Parental Incarceration on Kids, Families and Communities*](#) (2016). This 16-page policy report offers proposals to address the increased poverty and stress that children of incarcerated parents experience.

[*Healthy Relationships, Employment, and Reentry*](#) (2013). National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families. This research brief provides an overview of the evidence supporting the interrelatedness of employment, healthy relationships, family well-being, and recidivism.

[*Strategies for Building Healthy Relationship Skills Among Couples Affected by Incarceration*](#) (2012). Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This brief describes findings from federal grantees' work to teach relationship skills among incarcerated and reentering fathers and their families.

[*Families and Reentry: Unpacking How Social Support Matters*](#) (2012). This study evaluated the family-inclusive case management component of the Chicago-based Safer Return program, which engages family members in service provision to former prisoners.

[*Piloting a Tool for Reentry: A Promising Approach to Engaging Family Members*](#) (2011). A 16-page report that describes the Vera Institute of Justice Family Justice Program's *Reentry Is Relational* project, which implemented the Relational Inquiry Tool (RIT)—a series of questions designed to prompt conversations with incarcerated men and women about the supportive people in their lives.

[*Why Ask About Family? A Guide for Corrections*](#) (2011). This guide from the Vera Institute of Justice Family Justice Program describes the principles of a strength-based, family-focused approach in corrections practices, policy, and reentry planning that can make a difference. It was developed for correctional administrators, case managers, reentry and discharge planners, treatment-team members, institutional parole officers, and other personnel working in and around jails, prisons, and other corrections institutions.

[*The Impact of Marital and Relationship Status on Social Outcomes for Returning Prisoners*](#) (2009). A 9-page report from the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center that analyzes prisoner data for the short-term impact of marital and intimate partner status on recidivism, substance use, and employment.

[*Strengthening Families Impacted By Incarceration: A Review of Current Research and Practice*](#) (2009). This 28-page literature review prepared by Wilder Research offers an overview of many concrete programming options and broad practices that are applicable to supporting families affected by incarceration. A [4-page brief](#) summarizes the full report.

[*Incarceration and the Family: A Review of Research and Promising Approaches for Serving Fathers and Families*](#) (2008). This publication was prepared for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and provides chapters on the effects of incarceration and reentry on family members including partners and children. Family strengthening programs and the challenges implementing them are described.

[*Parental Incarceration: How to Avoid a "Death Sentence" for Families*](#) (2007). Published by the Clearinghouse Review Journal of Poverty Law and Policy, this paper highlights several promising services and supports for incarcerated parents and recommends what attorneys representing or working with incarcerated parents and their children can do to minimize harm to children.

[*Families Left Behind: The Hidden Costs of Incarceration and Reentry*](#) (October 2003, updated June 2005). A 12-page policy brief from the Urban Institute focuses on how communities, social service agencies, health care providers, and the criminal justice system can work collaboratively to better meet the needs of the families left behind.

[*Supporting Families with Incarcerated Parents*](#) (2005). Family Strengthening Policy Center Policy Brief No. 8, National Human Services Assembly – Brief examines the risks and protective factors of children with incarcerated parents, intervention models, and state and federal initiatives.

[*Every Door Closed: Barriers Facing Parents with Criminal Records*](#) (2002). A report from the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Community Legal Services, Inc. that examines some of the barriers that, singly and in combination, create unemployment and homelessness, and increase failure among parents with criminal records. A [fact sheet series](#) summarizes the report.

[Urban Institute’s Transition from Jail to Community \(TJC\) Initiative](#). A partnership between NIC and the Urban Institute to develop a model for jail-to-community transition. An [online toolkit](#) guides users through each component of the TJC model. Modules incorporate examples from across the country, tools developed to facilitate implementation, and links to additional resources.

[Jail Reentry Roundtable Initiative](#). Urban Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Bureau of Justice Assistance. This partnership aims to fill the gap in knowledge via reports, commissioned papers (e.g., Reentry Programs and Rural Jails), presentations (e.g., Does it Pay to Invest in Reentry Programming for Jail Inmates?) and more.

Publications about TJC initiative and jail reentry include:

- [Evaluation of the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative Reentry Programs](#) (2014)
- [The Role of Screening and Assessment in Jail Reentry](#) (2012)
- [Life After Lockup: Improving Reentry from Jail to the Community](#) (2008)

Related Websites

[MN Strengthening Families Affected by Incarceration Collaborative](#). This website is reflective of a collaborative effort that shares a range of resources to address the strengths and needs of families affected by incarceration.

[The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated](#). Rutgers University-Camden. This is a website of a national organization offering a variety of resources focused on families of those incarcerated.

[National Reentry Resource Center](#). Provides information, training and technical assistance in the area of inmate and prisoner reentry. Specific resources pertain to [family engagement](#).

Improving Child and Family Outcomes

The resources below are a blend of best practices, toolkits and guides for supporting families with a loved one experiencing incarceration. Resources are divided by purpose: resources to help practitioners develop programming and best practices, and resources to help practitioners directly support families.

Resources to Help Practitioners Develop Family Connections Programming and Best Practices

[Model Practices for Parents in Prisons and Jails: Reducing Barriers for Families while Maximizing Safety and Security](#) (2019). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). This comprehensive guide provides correctional administrators and community partners with practices, resources and tips to reduce barriers in contact and communication between incarcerated parents and their children. The model practices within this document were compiled by a subject matter expert committee and are applicable to both prisons and jails with varying capacities, budgets, and population size.

[Children of Incarcerated Parents Framework Document: Promising Practices, Challenges, and Recommendations for the Field](#) (2015). Urban Institute. This report shares background rationale on the importance of this issue, practices that can make a difference in the lives of children with justice-involved parents, and challenges and

recommendations associated with these practices. Urban Institute also developed three toolkits that each address one specific practice outlined in the Framework Document:

- [Toolkit for Developing Family-Focused Jail Programs: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project](#) (2015). This toolkit details the key considerations for jail administrators and community-based organizations interested in developing a family-focused jail program.
- [Toolkit for Developing Family Impact Statements: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project](#) (2015). Family impact statements help judges and probation officers develop tailored approaches to sentencing or to supervising parents by identifying how parental justice involvement can affect children. This toolkit is a guide to the design and implementation of family impact statements.
- [Toolkit for Developing Parental Arrest Policies: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project](#) (2015). Parental arrest policies prioritize the well-being of children by helping officers approach situations they face when arresting a parent. This is a guide to developing parental arrest programs that minimize the negative effects on children who witness a parent's arrest or are left without care after a parent's arrest.

[Supporting Infants, Toddlers, and Families Impacted by Caregiver Mental Health Problems, Substance Abuse, and Trauma: A Community Action Guide](#) (2012). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, DHHS. This guide uses a case study approach to present resources that service providers and practitioners can use to better understand and engage the community in responding to children impacted by caregiver mental illness, substance use, or trauma.

Resources to Help Practitioners with Direct Family Support

[Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration](#) (2014). A *Sesame Street in Communities* toolkit on the topic of parental incarceration with resources for children, caregivers and family service providers.

- [Tip Sheets for Parents and Caregivers + Incarcerated Parents](#) (on page 11 & 12)

[Guide for Incarcerated Parents Who Have Children in the Child Welfare System](#) (2015). This 34-page handbook is designed to help parents involved in the criminal justice system work with the child welfare system to stay in touch with their children and stay involved in decisions about their children's well-being. The guide also includes information on steps required by the child welfare system for reunification, or having children return home to their family after foster care.

[A Behavioral Health Toolkit for Providers working with Children of the Incarcerated and their Families](#) (2009). A Washington State Publication with links to helpful hints and resources for practitioners, handouts for professionals, families and caregivers, reading lists and videos.

[Children with Incarcerated Parents: A List of Select Resources](#) (2008). Annie Casey Foundation publication of 36 resources to help parents, workers, policymakers and the kids themselves. Books, journals, websites, classes, programs and policies are included.

[Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights](#) (2005). A 20-page publication outlining the 8 rights children of incarcerated parents have as defined by the San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents.

[Fact Sheets for Caregivers of Young Children in Non-Parental Care](#) (2003). A series of nine fact sheets designed to help grandparents raising grandchildren learn more about what to expect and where to turn for support.

[How to Explain Jails and Prisons to Children: A Caregiver's Guide](#). A 31-page workbook from the Initiative Foundation designed to help moms, dads and caregivers answer children's questions about jail and prison.

Related Websites

[Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Reentry Unit](#). This website contains a number of documents designed to support community-partners, spouses and children of incarcerated parents both during incarceration and during the reentry process. Highlights include: re-entry information for offenders in English and Spanish, and a simple guide to health insurance upon reentry (also in both English and Spanish).

[Youth.gov](#). This website provides tools, guides, and resources for multiple audiences, including parents, caregivers, and families; law enforcement and corrections personnel; school administration, teachers, and staff; child welfare, social work, and clinical professionals; and youth.

Supporting Policy and System Change

The following resources support work that engages community partners in systems-level change that will impact child and family wellbeing.

[Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents Model Policy](#) (2014). The International Association of Chiefs of Police and Bureau of Justice Assistance developed this document to provide model policy and procedure for law enforcement to help address the needs of and mitigate the trauma to children during and after their parent's arrest.

[A Call to Action: Safeguarding New York's Children of Incarcerated Parents. A Report of the New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents](#) (2011). This report highlights recommendations for how the systems that touch the lives of children of incarcerated parents can minimize trauma and harm and support their resiliency and success.

[Bringing Families In: Recommendations of the Incarceration, Reentry and the Family Roundtables](#) (December 2006). A 20-page report from Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice & the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice offers central findings and recommendations specific to agencies, organizations and incarcerated individuals.

Urban Institute - Toolkits on Jail Reentry for Specific Audiences:

- [The Elected Official's Toolkit for Jail Reentry](#) (2011). A 34-page guide that includes background information, tools and resources designed for elected officials and other policymakers looking to implement or build on a local jail reentry initiative.
- [Partnering with Jails to Improve Reentry: A Guidebook for Community-Based Organizations](#) (2010). This guidebook provides community-based organizations with an overview of jail reentry and concrete steps to develop and sustain a reentry partnership with their local jail. It also addresses difficulties that might arise and provides examples of strong partnerships between CBOs and jails that serve as models.
- [Life After Lockup: Improving Reentry from Jail to the Community](#) (2008). Urban Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Bureau of Justice Assistance. Life After Lockup synthesizes key findings from the Jail Reentry Roundtable and examines opportunities on the jail-to-community continuum where reentry-focused interventions can make a difference. See page 50 for recommendations for systems-level strategic planning.

- [*The Jail Administrator's Toolkit for Reentry*](#) (2008). Geared toward jail practitioners who are working to improve reentry in their jurisdictions, this toolkit provides key elements of the reentry process from jail staff issues and assessment screens to identifying community resources and coordinating stakeholders.

[Developing Effective Collaborations to Support Prisoner Reentry Coaching Packet](#) (includes Engaging Offenders' Families in Reentry). As part of the Presidential Prisoner Reentry Initiative Program, this coaching packet explores the establishment of meaningful collaborative partnerships in order to achieve successful citizen reentry. A definition of collaboration and a tool for determining the effectiveness of case management teams are provided.

Related Websites

[National Institute of Corrections](#). The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Justice. NIC provides training, technical assistance, information services, and policy/program development assistance to federal, state, and local corrections agencies. One page of the website is dedicated to Children of Incarcerated Parents with resources related to this topic.

[Collaborative Justice Resource Center](#). This website is designed to provide the information, tools, and resources needed to establish, enhance, and sustain effective long-term collaborative partnerships among policymakers and other key stakeholders in your community. Given the importance of collaboration to the success of community corrections agencies, this website also offers a special section designed specifically for those community corrections professionals who are interested in building more effective partnerships.

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Compiled: June 2011

Updated: August 2015, April 2016, May 2020



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