

*Policy debates about incarceration rarely focus on the burden borne by children and families. Theirs are stories of things lost: connections, jobs, income, homes—and hope. And communities, in turn, suffer from losing so many parents, whose absence leaves the economic and social fabric of their neighborhoods in tatters. While momentum for criminal justice reform continues to build, we know progress will take time. But we also know children can't wait—nor can we as a nation afford to let them and their parents flounder, perpetuating poverty from one generation to the next.*

—Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016

- Children in U.S. who have ever had an incarcerated parent: more than 5 million (7%)  
[ ChildTrends, 2015 – based on HHS 2011-12 Survey of Children's Health ]
- Children in U.S. with a parent currently incarcerated: roughly 2 million  
[ estimates based on the last large-scale survey (2007) of state and federal jails and prisons range from 1.7 million (Bureau of Justice Statistics) to 2.7 million in a study by the Pew Charitable Trusts ]
- More than half of all prisoners in federal and state prisons are parents of minor children  
[ U.S. Bureau of Justice, 2010 ]
- Parental incarceration increases a child's risk of living in poverty because of caregiver's financial distress, unemployment, and homelessness.
- Parental incarceration is ranked among the ten most serious "adverse childhood events" (ACEs) which are statistically linked to health and social problems in adult life. [ CDC ]
- Children with an incarcerated parent experience ACEs at a much higher rate than other kids: 3.7 ACEs, versus 0.7 for children whose parents were never in prison. [ ChildTrends, 2015 ]
- Children of incarcerated parents are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, cognitive delay, school failure, delinquency, and substance abuse. [ Shafler, 2013; Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010 ]
- The strong associations that exist between parental incarceration and poor outcomes for kids don't always indicate direct causal links; in all instances however, parental incarceration can be seen as a "red flag" signaling a need for institutional and community support.
- There is a need for better data. *There is no Department, Agency or collaboration in Vermont collecting data on the impact or the needs of children with incarcerated parents. In fact, there is no systemic way to identify who these children and caregivers are. Whether a child has a parent in prison is not entered into any database within AHS.* [ Jill Evans, 2015, VT DOC report to the Legislature ]
- In Vermont, 1 in 17 children have a parent who has been incarcerated. While this is marginally better than the U.S. average (1 in 14) it is sobering to note how poorly we compare with states like NY, NJ, CA, MA, and NH—where rates of parental incarceration are *less* than Vermont's.
- Today, we have more children with an incarcerated parent in the U.S. than are diagnosed with autism or juvenile diabetes [ Shafler 2013 ]



### Children of Incarcerated Parents have the Right...

- 1) TO BE KEPT SAFE AND INFORMED AT THE TIME OF MY PARENT'S ARREST.
- 2) TO BE HEARD WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT ME.
- 3) TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT MY PARENT.
- 4) TO BE WELL CARED FOR IN MY PARENT'S ABSENCE.
- 5) TO SPEAK WITH, SEE AND TOUCH MY PARENT.
- 6) TO SUPPORT AS I FACE MY PARENT'S INCARCERATION.
- 7) NOT TO BE JUDGED, BLAMED OR LABELED BECAUSE MY PARENT IS INCARCERATED.
- 8) TO A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH MY PARENT.

San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership

#### Reports and Research Articles

- Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016. *A Shared Sentence: the devastating toll of parental incarceration*
- U.S. Council of Economic Advisors, 2016. *Economic Perspectives on Incarceration*
- Murphey and Cooper, ChildTrends, 2015. *Parents Behind Bars: what happens to their children?*
- Glaze, DOJ, 2010. *Parents in Prison and their Minor Children*
- Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010. *The Collateral Costs of Incarceration*
- Dyszlewski, 2016. *Mass Incarceration: an annotated bibliography*
- Rutgers, 2014. *Factsheet: children and families of the incarcerated*
- Shlafer, Children's Mental Health Review, 2013. *Children with Incarcerated Parents: considering children's outcomes in the context of family experience*
- Murray et al. Psychological Bulletin, 2012. *Children's Antisocial Behavior, Mental Health, Drug Use, and Educational Performance after Parental Incarceration: systematic review & meta-analysis*

#### Books

- National Academy of Sciences, 2014. Travis, Western, et al., eds. *Growth of Incarceration in the US: causes and consequences* (see Ch. 9: "Consequences for Families and Children")
- Wakefield and Wildeman, Oxford U. Press, 2014. *Children of the Prison Boom: mass incarceration and the future of American inequality.*

#### Organizations

- The Osborne Association ([www.osborneny.org](http://www.osborneny.org))
- The Sentencing Project ([www.sentencingproject.org](http://www.sentencingproject.org))