



College of Human Ecology



Criminal Justice and New York Families: Policy Perspectives

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Presentations:

Paternal Incarceration and Child Wellbeing

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The Multigenerational Possibilities of Prison Education

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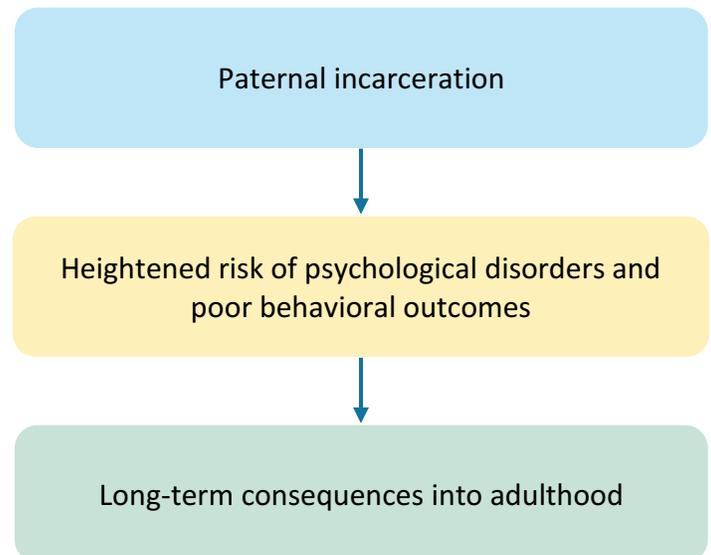
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Mental Health of Adolescents with Incarcerated Parents

By **Claudia Ro**, Cornell University

Background

- About 2.7 million children in the U.S. had a parent in state or federal prison in 2010.ⁱ
- Children of currently incarcerated parents were two and a half to four times as likely to experience various mental health problems compared to those without an incarcerated parent.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Children of formerly incarcerated parents were nearly twice as likely to experience mental health disorders compared to those without incarcerated parents.ⁱⁱⁱ



Child Psychological Impacts of Parental Incarceration

Consequences are likely to persist throughout the life course and may contribute to teens' problematic behavior and intergenerational patterns of low achievement, criminality, and poverty.^{i,iii}

1. **Mental health risks and associated behavioral risks** including internalizing behavior, suicide attempts, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
2. **Emotional trauma and social difficulties** due to exposure to parents' criminal activity, witnessing the parent's arrest and court proceedings, separation from parents, loss of family income, housing instability, changes in caregiving, stressful visits with the incarcerated parent, and shame or stigmaⁱ
 - Stress, sadness, and fear leading to long-term reactive behaviors, coping patterns, and possible criminal activity^{iv}

Policy Implications

- Providing adequate and viable mental health care options for the children at the point of their parent's incarceration
 - Develop psychosocial aid programs and encourage children with incarcerated parents to attend sessions regularly
 - Have community volunteers spend time with the children
- Understanding the importance of parent-child relationships in terms of mental health
 - Promote regular parent-child visitations in an environment other than prison, to the degree possible

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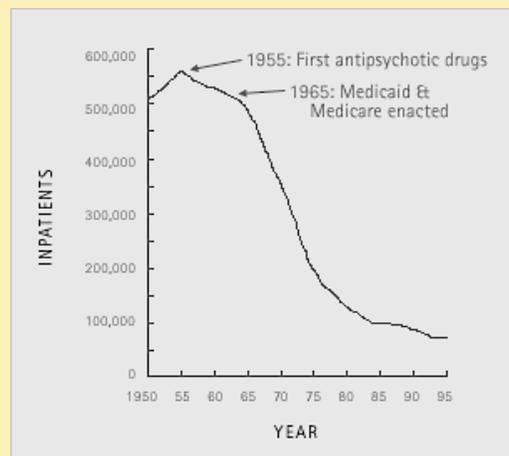
Familial Impact of Mental Health Criminalization

By Jonathan Link, Cornell University

Unintended Consequences of Deinstitutionalizing Mental Health Facilities

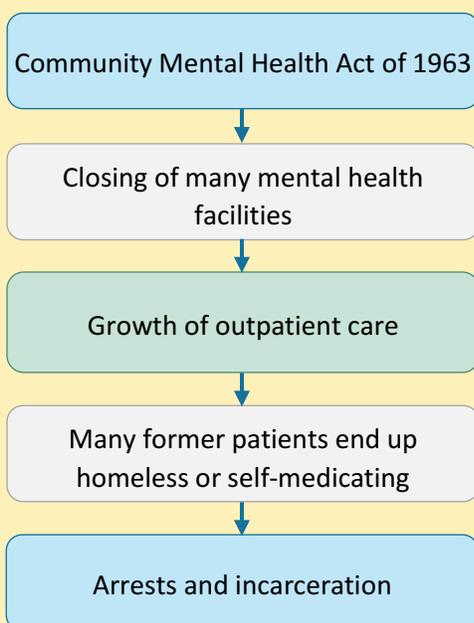
- In 1963 President Kennedy signed the Community Mental Health Act, which pushed for outpatient care for individuals with mental health conditions.ⁱ
- Outpatient care originally emerged to better integrate people with mental health conditions into society and to halt inhumane practices within facilities.ⁱ
- In practice, a failure to provide community support resulted in a mass release of people into a society that was not prepared to support mentally disabled individuals in meaningful ways.ⁱ

Total Number of Inpatients over Time



Source: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/front-line/shows/asylums/special/excerpt.html>

Deinstitutionalization Timeline



Key Findings in the Literature

- The mass release of former inpatients led to a re-institutionalization of those with mental health conditions, this time in prisons.^v
 - Many former inpatients have been forced to a life of homelessness and self-medication, which culminated in arrests and incarceration.
- More than half of all people in prison report having a mental health condition.^{iv}
- Parolees with mental health conditions are twice as likely as parolees without a condition to return to prison within the first year of release.^{vii}

Incarceration of Mental Health through a 2Gen Lens

- Since the closing of mental health facilities, family members have frequently become overburdened, exhausted, or insensitive to former patients, creating familial tension and an uptick in homelessness.^v
 - Following incarceration, many familial ties are broken
 - Families become even less inclined to support a person, exacerbating the risk of homelessness and recidivism
- Children of individuals with mental illnesses are often impacted because the love, attention, and stability that a child needs from a parent is lacking.ⁱⁱ
 - Children are frequently plagued with feelings of anger and guilt concerning their parent's condition. These feelings lead to an increased risk of drug use and poor social relationships for children.ⁱⁱ
 - Children's risk of future incarceration is also worsened upon parental incarceration.^{vi}

Policy Implications

- Mental health courts, which provide redirection for individuals with mental health conditions away from incarceration, may have benefits in comparison to traditional criminal courts.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - Mental health courts may be even more effective if families are included in the redirection and future planning. Family involvement may rebuild familial bonds and create realistic expectations.
 - Increased awareness of mental health courts can help to keep individuals with mental health conditions out of prison. Forty-six percent of current mental health court participants didn't know they had the option to participate beforehand.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Individuals should be held in prisons that are accessible to their families.
 - Proximity to family members may protect children from the heightened risks of separation from a parent, as well as provide benefits to individuals in prison with mental health conditions.

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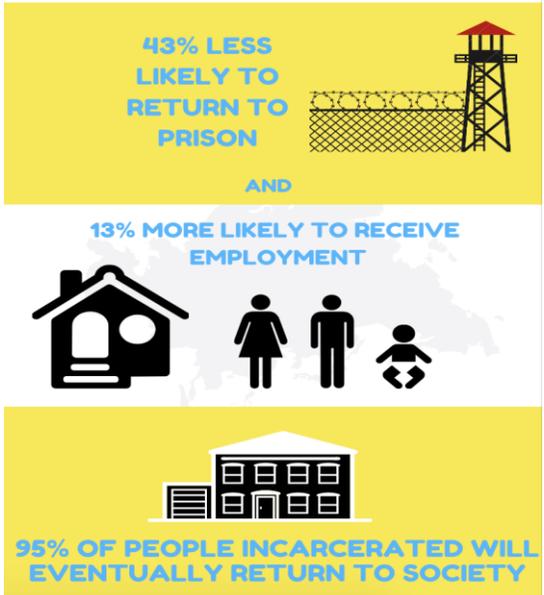
Post-Secondary Education in Prisons

By Anna Lifsec, Cornell University

Background

- The annual cost for incarceration in the United States is \$182 billion.^{viii} Reducing recidivism could lower this cost.
- In 2003, more than half of Americans had some postsecondary education while only 14% of prisoners had the same level.^{vii}
- Educational disparities may hinder prisoners' ability to reintegrate into society.
- In 1994 the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act ended Pell Grants, a key federal funding source, for students in federal prisons.ⁱ
- In 2016, the Second Chance Pell Experiment made Pell Grants eligible to some incarcerated individuals.ⁱ
- More than 28 states currently operate college programs in prison.ⁱ

THOSE WHO RECEIVE EDUCATION IN PRISON ARE:



Benefits of Prison Education Programs

- Incarcerated individuals who participate in prison education programs are 43% less likely to recidivate, or return to prison, than those who do not.^{iv}
 - Lower recidivism is linked to fewer victims in communities, stronger neighborhoods, better local economy, increased tax base, and reduction in incarceration costs.^{iv}
- Formerly incarcerated individuals who receive prison education are **13% more likely to obtain employment** after leaving prison.^{ix}
 - After the increase in employment, combined wages earned by all formerly incarcerated people would grow by \$45.3 million in their first year after release.^{ix}
- Prisons with higher education programs **have less violence** which allows for safer conditions for staff and safer environments for those incarcerated.ⁱ
- When parents attain a higher education, **their children are more likely to also attend college**, which disrupts typical cycles of poverty and incarceration.ⁱ
- **95% of incarcerated individuals return to society. Therefore, when spent productively, their time in prison is an investment in communities, public safety, and the humanity of the individual incarcerated.**^{iv}

Prison Education Programs Yield Strong Return on Investment

- A one-dollar investment in prison education reduces incarceration costs by four to five dollars during the initial three years after release.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Post-secondary education offers a 400% return on investment after 3 years for taxpayers.ⁱⁱ
- Lower recidivism rates will save states a combined \$365.8 million in decreased prison costs per year.^{ix}

Policy Implications

- **Repeal Pell ban nationwide:** Many universities and colleges are eager to start programs in prisons but simply lack funding. Given that Pell grants are awarded based on income to anyone who qualifies, making Pell grants available for incarcerated populations will not take away opportunities for other non-incarcerated students. By repealing the Pell Ban on incarcerated individuals, colleges around the country will have the funding to open programs in prison.
- **Pass state-level legislation:** Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) would give prisoners access to state financial aid for college programs. This legislation, currently being passed in New Jersey, should also be implemented in NYS.
- **Establish a commission on post-secondary correctional education:** Establish a commission to examine, evaluate, and make recommendations concerning the availability, effectiveness and need for expansion of post-secondary education in the NYS prison system.

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Educational Disparities for Children with Incarcerated Parents

By **Cameron Jessop**, Cornell University

Background

- In 2016, the incarceration rate in the United States was approximately 860 per 100,000 people.ⁱ
- More than half of inmates have at least one child under 18, resulting in 2.7 million children who currently have a parent in prison or jail.^{i,ii}
- As of 2010, 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration.ⁱⁱⁱ

The 2Gen Lens

- The 2gen framework emphasizes taking a whole-family approach to programs to maximize benefits for parents and their children.
- Parental incarceration has economic and mental-health implications for all members of the family, including long-term impacts for children.ⁱⁱ
- Programs serving both parents and children will promote better educational outcomes for kids.

Impacts of Parental Incarceration for Kids

Having an incarcerated parent

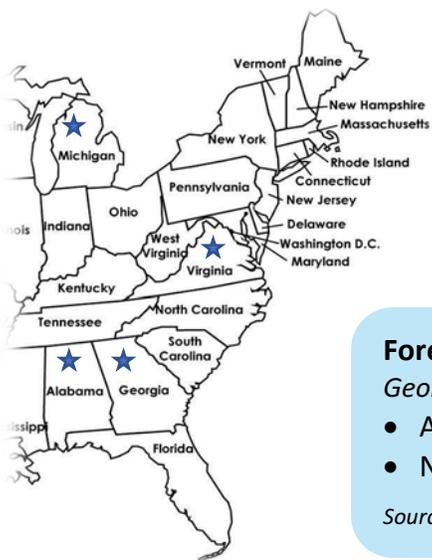
Negative social stigma, less parental support, increased financial, and social stress

More behavioral issues, lower grades, and higher dropout rates

Effects of Parental Incarceration on Children's Educational Performance

- Overall, there is mixed evidence on the educational outcomes of children with incarcerated parents across school settings.ⁱⁱ
- Children in public schools who currently have or have ever had an incarcerated parent perform worse in school relative to other children who have never had an incarcerated parent.ⁱⁱⁱ
- These children are more likely to have behavioral issues and face disciplinary action.^{ii,iii}
- Controlling for race, IQ, poverty status, and mother's education, children with incarcerated parents are more likely to drop out and/or become incarcerated.^v
- Individuals with a high school degree or less have a greater chance of entering the criminal justice system.^{vi}

Interventions in Other States



SKIP, INC.

Alabama, Georgia, and Michigan

- Creates positive social circles for children with incarcerated parents
- Social circles help children engage with their communities, develop confidence, and form healthy relationships.

Source: <https://afoi.org/>

Foreverfamily

Georgia

- Assists children in coping with the stresses of having a parent in prison
- Nurtures children emotionally, educationally, and socially

Source: <https://www.foreverfam.org/>

Assisting Families of Inmates

Virginia

- Helps keep contact between incarcerated parents and children
- Caters to unique needs of children with incarcerated parents through group building, school intervention, and household resource assistance

Source: <https://afoi.org/>

Policy Suggestions

- Most programs are small and local; scaling up programs is important for sustained improvement across communities.
- Programs designed to help children deal with the stresses of having incarcerated parents do not address larger societal factors such as the sources of mass incarceration and the negative stigma towards individuals with an incarcerated family member.

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Visitation and Recidivism Rates

By Halle Mahoney, Cornell University

Background

- The annual cost for incarceration in the United States is \$182 billion. ^{viii} Reducing recidivism could lower this cost.
- Over 60% of inmates nationally will be rearrested within three years following release. ⁱ
- For 70% of prisoners, phone calls are the primary method of contact with loved ones during incarceration. ^{vii}

Visitation & 2Gen Implications

- Provides face-to-face opportunities that support family relationships ⁱⁱ
- Mitigates emotional or financial loss faced by family when individual is incarcerated ⁱ
- Creates support systems that can help individuals find housing, gain employment, and access prescriptions upon release ⁱⁱⁱ

Less than

33%

of inmates in state prisons receive a visit from a loved one in a typical month

Barriers to Visitation

1. **Location of Facilities:** Over 50% of prisoners with children live more than 100 miles away from where they lived before prison, and 10% live more than 500 miles away. ^v
2. **Administrative Policies:** Prison policies can discourage visitation, create financial burdens from costs of travel or background checks, and establish inflexible visitation hours. ^v
3. **Uncomfortable Settings:** Visitation rooms are not user-friendly, they generally do not have restrooms or vending machines, and are generally not well-maintained. ^{ii,v}
4. **Emotional Issues:** Families and friends may be uncomfortable due to broken trust. ^{iv,vi}

What are the Benefits of Visitation?



Mental Health



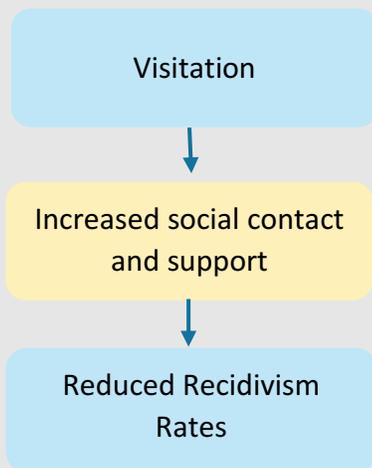
Family Relationships



Self Esteem



Social Adjustment



Research Findings

- A study in Florida found that the **odds of recidivism for individuals who received visitors were 30.7% lower** than those who didn't receive visits.ⁱⁱ
- Visits that **occur closer to an inmate's release date** result in a 3.6% decrease in rate of reconviction.^{ii,v}
- **Community volunteer visits (clergy & mentors)** reduced risk of recidivism by 25% for re-arrest, 20% for reconviction, and 31% for new offense reincarceration.^{vi}
- Research Limitations: Can't control for the quality of relationships between inmates and their family^{i,v}

Policy Implications

- **Reduce barriers to visitation**
 - Placement in correctional facilities close to where their family lives when appropriate
 - Eliminate costs for family background checks
 - Create clear and consistent visitation policies and visitation schedules
 - Could incorporate technology (such as Skype) to reduce costs and increase visitation options
- Policymakers should **collaborate with community volunteer organizations**^{vi}
 - Volunteers (e.g., clergy, mentors) reduce costs of visitation programming
 - Provide support before release for individuals who don't receive visits from family
 - Provide support after release to prevent recidivism

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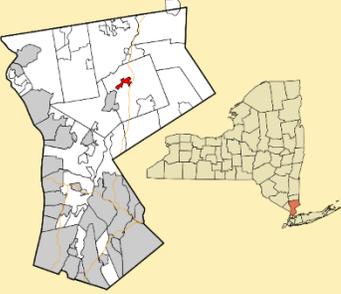
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Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women: The First Prison Nursery Program in the U.S.

By Ashelyn Raven Pindell, Cornell University

Overview

- **Located in Bedford Hills, NY**, the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women is a maximum-security state-run prison.^{vi} It can support up to 44 mothers and babies.ⁱ Secure attachment between mothers and their children offer protection from the stressors of incarceration.^{iii,iv}
- **Founded in 1901**, this is the oldest prison nursery program in the country. Since its inception, at least 8 other states have adopted a prison nursery program.^v



Program Components

Eligibility

- Women with non-violent criminal offenses with no history of child abuse or neglect who are the intended primary caregiver of the child after sentence completionⁱⁱⁱ
- Undergo a mental health and physical health screening to be approvedⁱⁱ

Services Provided

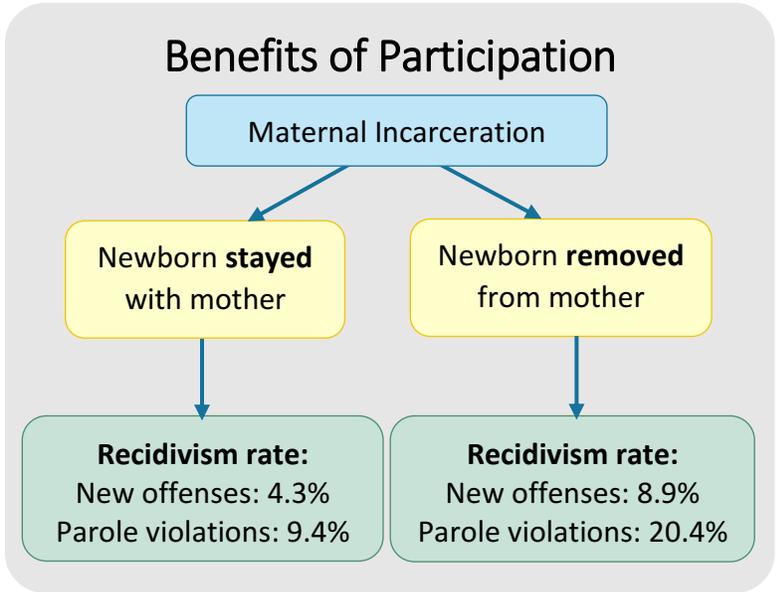
- Prenatal care, child advocacy office, a parenting center, infant daycare centerⁱⁱⁱ

Length of Program

- Allows newborns to stay with their mothers for up to 18 months
- If the mother is not set to be released within 18 months of giving birth, the child may stay with the mother for up to 12 monthsⁱⁱ

Program Effectiveness

- Better child behavior: 30% of preschoolers who stayed with their mothers reported negative behavioral outcomes, compared to 42% of preschoolers who were separated from their mothers at birth.^v
- Children who stayed with their mothers showed significantly lower anxiety and depression levels than children who were separated from their mothers.^v
- Mothers who participated in the program were less likely to return to prison compared to women who had not participated.^{iv}



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Advice from the Field: An Interview with the Alliance of Families for Justice’s Executive Director, Soffiyah Elijah

By **Cindy Rodriguez**, Cornell University

Since 2016, the Alliance of Families for Justice has been serving families involved in the criminal justice system. Read on for additional information about their program and insights from Executive Director Soffiyah Elijah.

Who is Soffiyah Elijah?



Soffiyah Elijah is the executive director of the Alliance of Families for Justice (AFJ), an organization based in New York City that supports families of incarcerated individuals, empowers them to become advocates, and mobilizes them to

marshal their voting power to achieve systemic change.

A former criminal defense attorney, Elijah’s extensive courtroom experience is coupled with classroom experience, as she served as deputy director and clinical instructor at the Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School and as a member of the faculty and director and supervising attorney of the Defender Clinic at the City University of New York School of Law.

The Alliance of Families for Justice (AFJ)

AFJ was established in 2016 to provide re-entry, advocacy and legal support services, while also advocating for the restoration of full citizenship rights.

The AFJ Model



Background

- 2.3 million individuals are currently incarcerated in the United States.ⁱ
- 69,000 people are currently behind bars in New Yorkⁱⁱ; 69,000 families are doing that time with them.
- New York imprisonment rates have been decreasing over the last 15 years. In the last 5 years, appx. 50 prisoners died in NY prisons from lack of simple medical treatments.ⁱⁱⁱ

Q&A with Soffiyah Elijah

What makes the AFJ model successful?

Incarceration generates mental, emotional, and spiritual trauma to both the individual and their families. Families endure this suffering without anywhere to turn or resources to help them through these traumas. The support system and resources provided by the AFJ fill this gap.

*Oftentimes families feel stigma and shame associated with having a loved one incarcerated. The AFJ has been created by folks that understand, who can relate, and can fill the gap in support that others cannot. **AFJ is an oasis and a safe haven for families impacted by incarceration, as well as those who were previously incarcerated.***

What are your biggest challenges in terms of politics and policy?

*For so long families had to function under the radar due to the stigma our society associates with incarceration. **Most do not understand the significant changes in the daily life of those impacted by incarceration.** Our goal is to shed the cloak of shame and encourage individuals to become advocates for their own needs and then needs of loved ones, and—when comfort levels permit—provide training to become advocates within their communities.*

As an organization that intentionally seeks to help this community, we constantly deal with the stigma of incarceration as it pertains to fundraising and funding. In policy, we encounter new forms of marginalization.

What advice would you give to policymakers?

In every turn, and especially when voting and sponsoring legislation, consider the impact on families and people who are or were previously incarcerated. There is much to be done in terms of policy work. Take a deep look at the abuses in prisons; deaths occur routinely at the hands of the Department of Corrections without any explanation or sanction. These problems and deaths persist because it has been ignored by legislators.

Policy Implications

Consider:

- Prioritizing rehabilitation and calling for transparency in correctional systems
- Acknowledging there is a systematic problem where racism is rampant and that having one's liberties taken away is a punishment in itself
- Increasing access to education and using tablets and online resources to provide educational programming
- Understanding that incarceration is a lucrative business at the expense of families impacted by incarceration

Abolish:

- Putting humans in cages and solitary confinement
- Jail time for serious mental health issues
- Perpetual incarceration
- Labor in prisons for pennies a day
- Clause from the 13th Amendment in the U.S. Constitution that allows slavery and involuntary servitude as a punishment for a crime

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2GO: SafeCare Program Engagement among Temporarily Unavailable Parents

By Elgin Ford, Jr., Cornell University

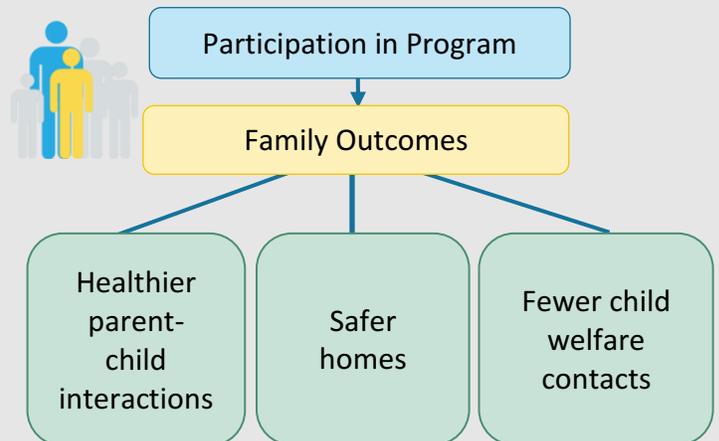
Overview

- In 2018, Colorado's Department of Human Services (DHS) 2Generation Opportunities (2GO) program awarded \$100,000 to the Routt County Department of Human Services (DHS) to support families with a temporarily unavailable parent, including parents in the county jail.
- Routt County DHS partnered with the Early Childhood Council and First Impressions to grow their SafeCare program, which improves access to quality support services for young children and families.ⁱⁱ
- The program was free and voluntary, targeting families with income 85% or less than the state median.

Program Components

- For families with children ages 5 and under
- Lasts for 18 to 20 sessions over 4 to 6 months
- Sessions are 1-1.5 hours long
- Topics include:
 - Managing challenging child behaviors
 - Understanding children's physical and mental health needs
 - Identifying and removing household hazards
- After completion of the program, families receive monthly to tri-monthly check-ins

How does SafeCare help families?



Key Takeaways

- **Serves vulnerable populations:** A total of 1,752 unique families were enrolled in the SafeCare Colorado program from January 2014 through June 2016. 68% reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000, and 62% had a high school education or less. As for the children served, 43% of those enrolled were younger than age 2.ⁱⁱ
- **Promotes adherence to treatment:** In 2017, 40.3 percent of clients were engaged in treatment services as recommended in their transition plan 1 month after release.ⁱⁱ
- **Generates healthier home environments:** Assessments completed by families at the beginning and end of each topic showed improvement in skill acquisition on safety, health, and parent-child and parent-infant interactions.ⁱ
- **Reduces child welfare involvement:** SafeCare participants had **zero open child welfare cases** during the six months following program completion.^{ii,iii,iv}

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Parenting Inside Out: An Evidence-Based Program for Incarcerated Parents

By Rose Ippolito, Cornell University

Background

- Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to experience antisocial and problem behaviors.ⁱⁱ
- **Parenting Inside Out (PIO)** is designed to help incarcerated parents improve their parenting skills and prevent negative outcomes.ⁱⁱ
- PIO is based on Parent Management Training (PMT) and the curriculum is tailored to the unique circumstances of families impacted by incarceration.ⁱ

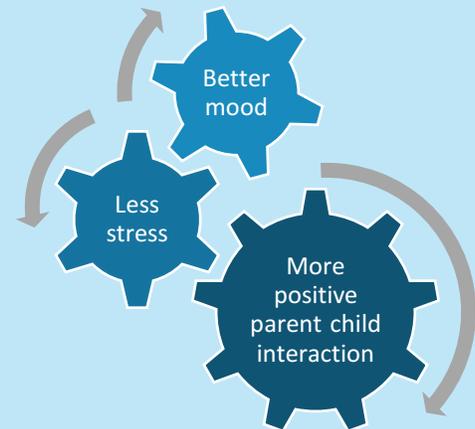
Key Mechanisms

- **Protective factors** including positive parenting can help lessen the consequences of parental incarceration.ⁱⁱ
- **Cognitive behavioral intervention**, which allows parents to both learn and practice parenting skills through multiple formats including videos and role plays.ⁱⁱ
- Parents that develop these skills and conceptualize their parenting role during incarceration can **engage in positive parenting after release**.ⁱⁱ

Program Components

- Serves parents with children ages 3-11 years oldⁱⁱ
- Developed by Pathfinders of Oregon in the early 2000sⁱⁱ
- The curriculum and training are now publicly available and are being used in jails, prisons, and communities in other states.ⁱⁱⁱ

Benefits of Participation

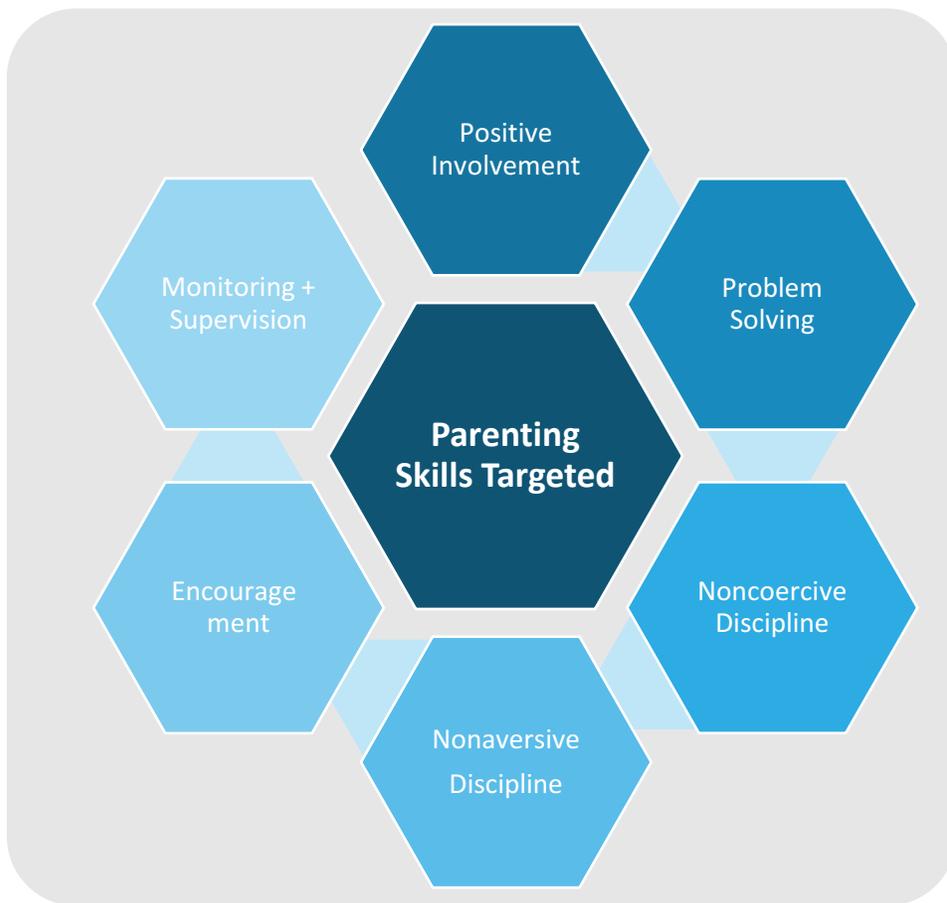


2-Generation Perspective

- Incorporates a 2Gen perspective, which emphasizes using a whole-family approach to maximize benefits for families.
- In PIO, parents meet individually with the class instructor to discuss their family circumstances and to connect with services.ⁱⁱ
- PIO focuses on both the adult's parenting skills and their individual well-being to benefit the family as a whole.

Funding Sources

- \$2.1 million grant to the Oregon Social Learning Center from the National Institute of Mental Health^{iv}
- Additional funding from: the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the state of Oregon, and the Oregon Department of Corrections^{iv}



Parents who participated had reduced recidivism and reduced substance use after 1 year.

Program Impact

- **Randomized Controlled Trial:** 359 parents in 4 prisons in Oregon were randomized to participate in the PIO program or services-as-usual.ⁱⁱ All study participants were interviewed pre-intervention and post-intervention and were followed after release from prison.ⁱⁱ
- **Results:** Parents who participated in **PIO were more likely to report better mood, less parent stress, and more positive parent-child interaction** (including visitation during incarceration) compared to parents who received services-as-usual.ⁱⁱ
- **Post-Release:** Parents who participated in PIO had **reduced recidivism** (less likely to be rearrested or report being involved in criminal behavior) after 1 year and **reduced substance abuse**.^{iv}

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