



Children of Incarcerated Parents Framework Document

Promising Practices, Challenges, and Recommendations for the Field

Bryce Peterson
June 2015

Jocelyn Fontaine

Emma Kurs

Lindsey Cramer



ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy. For nearly five decades, Urban scholars have conducted research and offered evidence-based solutions that improve lives and strengthen communities across a rapidly urbanizing world. Their objective research helps expand opportunities for all, reduce hardship among the most vulnerable, and strengthen the effectiveness of the public sector.

Contents

Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction	v
Children of Incarcerated Parents Framework Document	1
Why Is This Issue Important?	1
Many Children Are Affected by Parental Involvement in the Criminal Justice System	1
Parental Incarceration Can Be Detrimental to Children	2
We do Not Know Much about the Effects of Earlier Stages of Parental Criminal Justice Involvement	3
There Are Many Gaps in the Field’s Current Understanding of the Issue	4
What Can Be Done about It?	4
Parental Arrest Policies	5
Family Impact Statements	5
Case Management for Parents	6
Parenting Classes in Jails	6
Child and Family Contact Visits in Jails	6
Mentoring Programs for Children	7
Advocacy Programs	7
How Can These Practices Make a Difference?	8
What Are the Challenges and Recommendations?	9
Challenge 1: It Is Difficult to Generate Buy-in	9
Challenge 2: Implementation Can Take a Long Time	15
Challenge 3: The Justice-Involved Population Faces Unique Challenges	17
Challenge 4: It Is Difficult to Find Enough Funding	19
Challenge 5: It Is Unclear Which Practices Are Having Meaningful Results	21
Conclusion	22
Appendix A. Organizations and Stakeholders Providing Information to This Report	24
New York	24
Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Pennsylvania	25
San Francisco Bay Area, California	26
Notes	29
References	30
About the Authors	32
Statement of Independence	34

Acknowledgments

This report was funded through Cooperative Agreement 13CS22GKP1 with the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). We are grateful to the NIC and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission. Funders do not, however, determine our research findings or the insights and recommendations of our experts. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

In particular, we want to thank Greg Crawford from the NIC for the feedback and help he provided on the various components of this project. We also thank Eugene Schneeberg, Madeleine Solan, and Jessica Neptune for providing feedback on materials for this study. Finally, we are indebted to the many stakeholders in the San Francisco Bay Area, California; Allegheny County and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and New York City and New York State who met with us to share knowledge and experience about providing services to improve the lives of children and their justice-involved parents.

Introduction

Nearly 3 million US children under the age of 18 currently have a parent in jail or prison, and an estimated 10 million or more children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lifetimes. Those children often experience trauma when they witness their parents being arrested, see them in court, and visit them in jail. The Urban Institute partnered with the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) on a project to identify promising and innovative practices that have the potential to mitigate that trauma and to improve parent–child relationships.

This project yielded a framework document and three toolkits. The toolkits provide detailed information on how to develop and implement [parental arrest policies](#), [family-focused jail programs](#), and [family impact statements](#), while this framework document synthesizes what we learned about promising practices, and it provides information about the context surrounding children and their justice-involved parents. This document aims to help people interested in developing practices in their own jurisdictions to understand how important these issues are, to learn how to talk about these issues with their constituencies, and to appreciate how changes in practice can make meaningful differences for children and parents. To accomplish the goals, we engaged in several processes to determine which practices to highlight.

- First, we *conducted a scan of practices* by leveraging our various professional networks,¹ sifting through publicly available information online, and conducting telephone interviews with program staff members in 40 organizations and agencies.
- From this scan, the Urban staff, in partnership with NIC, *selected three locations* that were most suitable for site visits. Those locations—New York City, New York; Allegheny County and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and the San Francisco Bay Area, California—had a concentration of efforts focused on children of justice-involved parents that seemed to be promising and worth disseminating to a larger audience through this project. The three locations were selected because they each had stakeholders from nonprofit organizations and government agencies working together on practices for the children of justice-involved individuals. Selecting those sites offered the opportunity to gain a diversity of perspectives, to learn about their public–private partnerships, and to gather information about how a single location can target parental involvement across several stages of the criminal justice continuum, including arrest, pretrial detention, and sentencing. Appendix A (p. 24) provides a more thorough description of each location, including the organizations and stakeholders with whom we met during our site visits.

- Finally, we *conducted site visits* to meet with relevant stakeholders in government agencies and community-based organizations across the three locations. During those visits, we spoke to stakeholders in multiple positions—from agency heads and executives involved in designing collaborative efforts and initiatives, to supervisors managing programs and to the staff members directly serving children or justice-involved parents. We interviewed actors representing multiple roles and heard about a range of issues that surfaced, both during policy development *and* execution, in the interviewees’ efforts to meet the needs of children with parents in the justice system. From those discussions, as well as observations of field operations, we learned about several promising and innovative practices geared toward the children. We were also able to gather and synthesize lessons for the field, thereby identifying the challenges that stakeholders encountered in developing and implementing the programs, as well as their recommendations for overcoming the challenges.

This document aims to help people interested in developing practices in their own jurisdictions to understand how important these issues are, to learn how to talk about these issues with their constituencies, and to appreciate how changes in practice can make meaningful differences for children and parents.

In the remaining sections of this document, we answer the following questions pertaining to children and their justice-involved parents:

- **Why is this issue important?** We draw from the extant literature to discuss the scope of the problem and the ways that children are negatively affected by parental justice involvement.
- **What can be done about it?** We describe seven promising and innovative practices for children with parents who have been arrested, are awaiting adjudication, or are in pretrial detention.
- **How can these practices make a difference?** The practices hold potential for mitigating the effects of parental justice involvement and improving the lives of children and parents.
- **What are the challenges and recommendations?** We discuss the challenges of engaging in the practices and provide recommendations for overcoming these challenges.

Children of Incarcerated Parents Framework Document

Why Is This Issue Important?

As a first step in providing context to the scope and effect of parental involvement in the justice system, we reviewed the available literature. The review enabled us to better understand the current landscape of the field, including what is known about children of justice-involved parents and the practices that aim to improve their lives. Four key findings arose from our review:

- Many children are affected by parental involvement in the criminal justice system.
- Parental incarceration can be detrimental to children.
- We do not know much about the effects of the earlier stages of parental criminal justice involvement.
- There are many gaps in the field's current understanding of the issue.

Many Children Are Affected by Parental Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

Although the true scope of parental involvement in the criminal justice system is difficult to measure, we know that it has affected millions of children in the United States. Recent estimates suggest that *as many as 2.7 million children under the age of 18 have a parent in jail or prison.*² When accounting for children who have *ever* had parents in jail or prison, an estimated 10 million or more US children have experienced parental incarceration.³ In addition to the millions of children experiencing parental incarceration, millions more experience parental arrest, though there are no reliable national estimates on the number of parents arrested annually⁴ or on the number of parents who had a child present during their arrest. Surveys of incarcerated parents in a single prison or jurisdiction suggest that between one-fifth and one-third of parent inmates have reported that a child was present during their arrest.⁵

... as many as 2.7 million children under the age of 18 have a parent in jail or prison ... between one-fifth and one-third of parent inmates have reported that a child was present during their arrest.

Parental Incarceration Can Be Detrimental to Children

Not only is parental criminal justice involvement experienced by millions of children, but also it can lead to negative outcomes. A growing body of research indicates that *children often experience trauma, family disruption, and loss of their primary caregiver* as a result of parental incarceration.

Approximately 40 percent of children of an incarcerated parent lose a resident parent, and 20 percent of children lose their primary caregiver.⁶ As a result, they are at a heightened risk for foster care placement and permanent separation from family members.⁷ In addition, they are more likely to live in a household facing economic strain, to experience financial hardship, and to be at risk of homelessness.⁸

Losing a parent to incarceration can be particularly traumatic to a child.⁹ The children are at risk of a variety of emotional and behavioral problems,¹⁰ such as mental health problems, major depression, and attention disorders.¹¹ Children of incarcerated parents may also have below-average academic performance and are more likely to fail or drop out of school.¹² They may also face stigma and shame in school. Further, parental incarceration has been shown to be a risk factor for antisocial and delinquent behavior, poor mental health, drug use, school failure, unemployment, and criminal activity.¹³

However, not everyone agrees that parental involvement in the justice system is bad for children. In fact, some observers believe that removing a parent engaged in criminal behavior can have positive effects on a child. In some cases, a child's situation may improve, for example in cases of domestic violence or severe child abuse or neglect. Even in those cases, however, parental involvement in the justice system can be traumatic or can lead to other traumatic experiences, such as being questioned by police officers or prosecutors, being asked to testify in court, or being placed into foster care.

We do Not Know Much about the Effects of Earlier Stages of Parental Criminal Justice Involvement

The majority of the literature about the effects of parental justice involvement has focused on children with parents in prison. There is *limited information about the effects of other forms of justice involvement on children*, such as the arrest or pretrial detention of a parent. It is unclear whether short-term separation in the form of parental arrest or jail detainment leads to outcomes similar to those of parental incarceration. From what literature is available, we know that parental arrest poses a risk to the children's immediate physical safety and their long-term well-being. Parental arrest can also be traumatizing for a child, especially for one who witnesses the arrest. During the course of an arrest, officers are concerned primarily with apprehending the suspect, and the process can sometimes escalate into a violent situation. Further, the presence of a child may not be anticipated; therefore, it complicates an already difficult situation.¹⁴ Finally, officers may not always realize that a child is a minor or that a child is at the scene, a situation that poses the risk that children are left alone without a guardian after their caregiver is apprehended.

Parental pretrial detention is also associated with multifaceted effects on children. Similar to situations in which a parent is incarcerated in prison, children with parents detained in jail may suffer from anxiety as a result of being separated from their parent. Although the average jail stay is shorter than the average stay in prison—suggesting a less severe impact on children—studies indicate that the period of initial incarceration and the period immediately following release are *particularly stressful times for children and families* and that stress is heightened when parents cycle in and out of jail repeatedly.¹⁵ Researchers also have suggested that the uncertainty and ambiguity in the relationships between justice-involved parents and their children are heightened during the process of adjudication, conviction, and sentencing.¹⁶

... studies indicate that the period of initial incarceration and the period immediately following release are particularly stressful times for children and families and that stress is heightened when parents cycle in and out of jail repeatedly.

There Are Many Gaps in the Field’s Current Understanding of the Issue

Despite the growing focus on the issue among policymakers and service providers, *little is known about what practices show promise* in reducing the trauma, in mitigating the potentially harmful outcomes associated with parental criminal justice involvement, and in building resiliency in the children. In particular, little is known about how effective interventions are throughout each stage of the justice continuum. For example, the effectiveness of an intervention, such as parent–child visitation policies, may be different for parents in prison than for parents in pretrial jail detention.¹⁷ Moreover, the effectiveness of a practice may be different depending on whether it is designed to serve the children or their parents. Studies of parenting classes often assess changes in parents’ behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge but they do not examine the effects those changes may have on the children.¹⁸

What Can Be Done about It?

Given the problems facing children of justice-involved parents, we used what we learned through our stakeholder interviews and field observations in New York City, Allegheny County, and the San Francisco Bay Area to understand what practices hold potential for mitigating those problems and improving the lives of children and their justice-involved parents. The interventions include

- Parental arrest policies
- Family impact statements
- Case management for parents
- Parenting classes in jails
- Child and family contact visits in jails
- Mentoring programs for children
- Advocacy programs

Those examples do not represent the entire body of practice available to children and families of justice-involved parents. Indeed, other places are engaged in practices that are similar to and different from the ones on which this framework document focuses.¹⁹

Parental Arrest Policies

Parental arrest policies are intended to help *minimize the trauma that children experience when they witness a parent's arrest* or lose a parent or caregiver after the arrest.²⁰ An arrest policy explains and clarifies the officer's duties while making an arrest with a child present, and it helps ensure the safety and security of the child while the parent is detained. As implemented in San Francisco and Allegheny County, a parental arrest policy provides guidance about what law enforcement officers should do before, during, and after an arrest with a child present. For instance, where feasible, officers should obtain information about the arrestee's family and children before making an arrest so officers can help determine the arrest's time and place. If officers do not have information before making an arrest, they should inquire about the presence of children during the arrest or ask if the parent has responsibility for children who may not be present.

If or when the scene is secure, the arrest policy may encourage officers to make the arrest in an area away from the children and to allow the parent to comfort the children when feasible and safe to do so. The arrest protocol also stipulates what the officer should do following the arrest, such as locating the child's other parent or working with the arrested parent arrestee to identify another suitable caregiver if the other parent cannot be reached.

Family Impact Statements

Family impact statements help ensure that the courts, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and probation officers are *making informed decisions on the basis of the needs of the defendant's children*.²¹ Probation departments in New York and San Francisco have developed and added family impact questions to presentence investigation reports that address the defendant's children and family members as well as his or her roles and responsibilities to the family. For example, questions include whether the defendant is a primary caregiver, what the relationship is of the other caregiver(s) to the children, if there is an active child support case, and if any children were at risk because of the circumstances of the offense. Those questions ensure that probation officers take into consideration the entire picture of a justice-involved individual's situation during the presentence investigation and make a sentencing recommendation that is the best scenario for the court, the community, and the family. Probation officers then share the information with judges and court administrators so they can make informed sentencing decisions and so they understand the potential effects of incarceration on the defendant's children and family.

Case Management for Parents

Case management and services provided to parents while they are being adjudicated will allow them to *continue to be involved with their children during the judicial process*. One such program implemented in the San Francisco Public Defender's office, called the Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) program, employs a reentry social worker to provide parents and their families with services, case management, access to parent-child visits, and linkages to other services while parents are detained in jail. The program seeks to prioritize the parent's role in the family, to identify and meet the parent's and family's needs, and to increase and improve the interactions between the parent and his or her children. The case management and services provided through the program aim to help parents develop better relationships with family members and improve their case outcomes, as well as to help the parents find employment and secure financial stability once they are released from jail.

Parenting Classes in Jails

Parenting classes in jails help *improve the relationships that parents have with their children*. The classes are designed to provide parents with the skills to understand child development and to identify and prevent problematic child behaviors, such as acting out and fighting. Parenting classes often draw on curriculum such as Parenting Inside Out or Inside Out Dads. Although the curriculum provides guidance for the content of the class, facilitators may also adapt the curriculum and discuss topics of relevance to the participants. Parenting classes may be used as a standalone practice or combined with other jail practices. For example, the One Family program in San Francisco and the Family Support Program in Allegheny County use those classes as part of a comprehensive family-focused program to prepare parents to interact with their children before they receive contact visits.²²

Child and Family Contact Visits in Jails

Child and family contact visits with parents in jail help to *minimize some of the trauma children face* when their parents are detained in jail by increasing contact between children and their parents. The frequency and structure of contact visits may be influenced by the amount of space available in the jail, the organization's staffing resources, and the needs of the parents. For example, the contact visits in the San Francisco jail system occur once per week for 90 minutes, and in the Allegheny County Jail they happen once per month for 60 minutes. In both locations, program staff members from community-based organizations remained in the room during the visits to support parents, offer them advice about

how to interact with their children, and encourage them to focus on their children during the visit. The visits may also differ by who is permitted to attend. In San Francisco, the visits are between the parent and child only; in Allegheny County, the visits can be with multiple family members at the same time. The rooms used for the contact visits should be welcoming to children. For example, in Allegheny County and San Francisco, the rooms had brightly colored rugs, toys, activities, books, and snacks.²³

Mentoring Programs for Children

Mentoring programs help children who are affected by a family member's incarceration. We visited the Hour Friends Indeed Mentoring Program, implemented by Hour Children in New York City, which serves children who have a parent or family member currently or formerly incarcerated. Once matched, the mentor and adult mentee spend a minimum of four hours per month together for at least one year. The mentors and mentees do activities together such as going to museums, attending sporting events, and playing games. The purpose of the mentor-mentee relationship is *to spend quality one-on-one time with the mentee, to expose him or her to new experiences, and to cultivate a relationship with a positive adult role model.*

Advocacy Programs

Advocacy programs enable children affected by parental justice involvement to speak and advocate for themselves. Project WHAT! (We're Here And Talking) implemented by Community Works in the Bay Area is a youth-led program designed to raise awareness about the effects of having an incarcerated parent. After completing an eight-week leadership training program in the summer, students work on a new campaign each year, such as hosting a youth-led summit or writing policy recommendations for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The students in Project WHAT! also testify at hearings and present their stories to parents in jails. Project WHAT! youth helped develop the officer training video for San Francisco's parental arrest policy and made a presentation at a press conference when the new policy was being released. Thus, advocacy programs enable children *to talk about their experiences and to have a voice when it comes to decisions that affect their lives.*

How Can These Practices Make a Difference?

Although we did not conduct an independent assessment or evaluation of any of the practices, we have highlighted them because they appear to hold promise for improving the lives of children and their parents. Benefits include

- Shedding light on this “hidden” population
- Meeting the needs of parents and their children
- Reducing the trauma that children experience
- Repairing and strengthening the relationship between children and their parents

Because children are not always present at arrest, in court, or in detention, the challenges children face during their parent’s justice involvement may not be obvious to the agencies serving or detaining their parents. Therefore, the practices we described have the potential to *shed light on this “hidden” population*. For example, officers may be so focused on making an arrest in the safest manner possible that they do not think about how the arrest may affect children who witness their parents placed in handcuffs, or who are left at home after a parent is taken into custody. Parental arrest policies bring those issues to the forefront. Family impact statements have similar effects on probation officers and judges.

Children may also make themselves “hidden” because of the shame and stigma they feel as a result of their parents’ involvement in the justice system. Advocacy programs empower children to talk about how their parents’ involvement has affected them. Mentoring programs also provide children with an outlet for discussing the issues they are going through and help remove the stigma associated with parental incarceration.

The practices described may help *meet the needs of parents and their children*. For example, case managers work with parents in jail to identify their needs and link them and their families to services, while parenting classes help equip and train parents to identify and deal with the emotional and behavioral needs of their children. Family impact statements are another way for probation officers and judges to ensure that the needs of children and families are considered when the officials make sentencing decisions about parents.

The aforementioned practices also have the potential to *reduce the trauma that children experience* as a result of parental involvement in the justice system. Parental arrest policies, for

example, suggest that officers not arrest parents in front of their children and direct officers to ensure that children have someone to look after them if their parent is taken to jail. Furthermore, practices targeting parents detained in jail, such as parent–child visits, help mitigate the trauma and feelings of separation that children feel when they see their parent locked behind bars. Mentoring and advocacy programs provide children with ways to cope with their trauma by offering a supportive relationship with an adult mentor and opportunities to share their stories and advocate for system change.

Finally, we believe those practices hold potential for *repairing and strengthening the relationship between children and their parents*. In particular, contact visits provide an opportunity for parents to meet with their children in a supportive environment. Parents benefit from the freedom they are provided to interact with their children while they draw from the advice and support of the program’s staff. Similarly, parenting classes provide incarcerated parents with information about child development and the tools to identify and prevent problematic behaviors, thus improving their ability to be involved in the decisions that affect their children.

What Are the Challenges and Recommendations?

Keeping in mind the potential benefits of the practices, one also needs to be aware of several challenges that might be encountered when designing and implementing practices. In this section, we discuss the challenges and provide recommendations for overcoming them. Challenges include

- It is difficult to generate buy-in
- Implementation can take a long time
- The justice-involved population faces unique challenges
- It is difficult to find enough funding.
- It is unclear which practices are having meaningful results

Challenge 1: It Is Difficult to Generate Buy-in

Employees of agencies such as probation and police departments, district attorney and public defenders offices, and the courts often do not think about how their decisions or policies affect children. For example, children often struggle to understand the rules and policies for visiting their parents in jail.

Such misunderstandings may lead children to disobey the rules and be prohibited from visiting with their parents, a situation which in turn may discourage them from trying to visit in the future. Jail administrators may not be aware of the barriers their jail's policies pose to children. More important, administrators may not recognize that solutions exist that can maintain the security of the facility while facilitating children's contact with their parents. For example, administrators could post the rules in more prominent places and update visitors with revisions as frequently as possible.

Organizations serving children also may not fully understand the specific needs of youth with justice-involved parents. Individuals often hold preconceived ideas about children with parents in the justice system. For example, there is a widespread belief that those children are more likely to become involved in the justice system themselves.²⁴ Such attitudes may create impediments for policy development, such as when a policy contradicts one's "understanding" of what is best for the children. Another example is that many people, including policymakers and caregivers, assume it is harmful for children to visit a jail and or to see their parents in detention, so stakeholders may be hesitant to support a program that provides transportation and assistance for children to visit their parents in detention facilities.²⁵

In addition, many organizations and individuals working with children may not systematically track which children have parents in the justice system. Without a sense of the size of the population affected, decisionmakers are unlikely to create policies specifically for children of justice-involved parents. Decisionmakers may not feel the population is big enough to warrant targeted practices, especially because policies for that population may require significant investments of time and energy to change practices and to foster a culture supportive of the change.

All of those gaps in the understanding and attitudes of decisionmakers about justice-involved families can get in the way of fostering the buy-in needed to develop new, promising practices. We offer several recommendations to address that challenge:

- **Recommendation 1.1:** Create a voice for kids in the development process.
- **Recommendation 1.2:** Identify allies.
- **Recommendation 1.3:** Create collaborative bodies.
- **Recommendation 1.4:** Invite a diverse group of stakeholders to the table.
- **Recommendation 1.5:** Identify strong champions.
- **Recommendation 1.6:** Learn from experts.

- **Recommendation 1.7:** Think about the different ways to develop a practice.

Recommendation 1.1: Given the lack of data about the topic, as well as the disconnect between children and the systems that serve them, individuals interested in this work could *create a voice for kids in the development process* to attest to their experiences and articulate their needs. For example, through focus groups with youth, the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation concluded that waiting areas and areas used for visiting detainees at the Allegheny County Jail can seem intimidating or hostile to young children. With children’s direct experiences in hand, the foundation helped create more kid-friendly waiting areas in the jail.

Lending children’s voices to the process can be a powerful means for fostering buy-in for this work among executive-level leaders. For example, the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (SFCIPP) drew from young people’s experiences with parental incarceration to find out how kids are affected. SFCIPP then developed a bill of rights (box 1) to articulate their needs and used the bill to set the partnership’s policy agenda. Agency leaders in San Francisco described how influential the kids’ perspective was—both through the Bill of Rights and other public testimony—and said the perspective was pivotal in shaping their understanding of the issue and in fueling their interest in SFCIPP’s work. The San Francisco public defender, for instance, remarked that the testimonies from Project What! youth helped inspire his agency’s decision to embed a social worker in the office to address the needs of clients’ children.

BOX 1

Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights

1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent’s arrest.
2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.
3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.
4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent’s absence.
5. I have the right to speak with, see, and touch my parent.
6. I have the right to support as I face my parent’s incarceration.
7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated.
8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.

Source: San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (2003).

Recommendation 1.2: To secure stakeholder commitment, jurisdictions may also want to *identify allies*. Local community-based organizations have spearheaded many promising practices for children. However, they needed to collaborate with a range of public and private agencies and organizations from the outset of their efforts. Potential allies include (but are not limited to) staff members at schools, juvenile and family courts, foster care and child welfare systems, human services offices, law enforcement agencies, public defender and district attorney offices, and probation and parole offices, as well as jail administrators, child experts, medical professionals, advocates, and those directly affected by these issues and practices (i.e., justice-involved parents and their family members). Each of the agencies and organizations listed holds unique expertise about children, families, justice-involved individuals, and the systems that serve them. The individuals have access to authority and resources that ultimately dictate the success of the initiatives—assets that make their participation as partners invaluable.

Moreover, allies can help leverage preexisting relationships and can bring other agencies on board. Seeing active participation from others may demonstrate to officials the strength of the initiative and build sufficient confidence to convince them to participate in the process. Although culture change is difficult in this work, stakeholders are more likely to want to participate once they understand the issues faced by children with parents in the justice system and recognize what it takes to serve the children.

Although culture change is difficult in this work, stakeholders are more likely to want to participate once they understand the issues faced by children with parents in the justice system and recognize what it takes to serve the children.

Recommendation 1.3: In the case of all three jurisdictions we visited, stakeholders *established collaborative bodies* centered on the needs of children with parents in the justice system. In San Francisco and New York, the bodies took shape as a comprehensive collaborative aimed at identifying the needs of and designing a range of policies to serve children of incarcerated parents: the SFCIPP and the New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents. Both of those bodies involve many agencies and community-based organizations that meet regularly. Such bodies create a space for partners to convene and discuss the current state of affairs for the children, to identify policy priorities,

and to develop strategies for achieving those ends. Meanwhile, in Allegheny County, collaborative bodies were built around specific issues and were tasked with addressing only one or a few policy changes, such as jail visitation through the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative and parental arrest through the Allegheny Arrest Protocol Committee. The taskforces share the same underlying principles of serving the population of justice-involved families by using the expertise of a range of stakeholders.

Recommendation 1.4: It is crucial to *invite a diverse group of stakeholders to the table*. Offering agency leaders the chance to take part in decisionmaking lends them a voice in the process and lets them take ownership. Their active involvement can prevent them from perceiving proposed changes as externally imposed demands on their agency. It is also important to involve the agencies that ultimately execute the new family-centric policies and practices—such as law enforcement, jail administrators, probation departments, family courts, and human services—because their support can foster or hinder successful implementation. When one encourages partners to come to the table, it can be helpful to demonstrate how the new policy would serve the interests of all parties. For example, parental arrest protocols drew support in Allegheny County and San Francisco because of the potential to mitigate trauma to children and to foster trust between officers and the community. Police officers saw that they could protect children *and* improve children’s perceptions of them.

Including a wide range of stakeholders also can help to avoid inadvertent consequences that threaten to hinder the success of the practice. For instance, when developing a set of family-related questions for probation officers to ask during presentence investigations, generally called the family impact statement, members of the New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents learned that their partners in the probation office perceived the family impact statement as minimizing the importance of the “victim impact statement.” The stakeholders worked together and reframed the policy as a family responsibility statement—one that does not replace the needs of the victim but instead helps the court to understand the client’s other responsibilities to society.

Collaboration with a diverse set of stakeholders also helps build a strong network of partners to better serve children’s needs. Too often, efforts centered on the needs of children with parents in the justice system are broken into siloes, yet children encounter the decisions resulting from multiple agencies’ policies and practices as one experience. Collaboration can help break down those siloes and build stronger networks. Involving multiple stakeholders can lead to more innovative, promising policies because it brings together the experience and expertise of several agencies and organizations that too often work independently to serve a common population.

Recommendation 1.5: Because culture change can be difficult, jurisdictions should consider *identifying strong champions* for serving children of justice-involved individuals. The champions are not meant to replace but instead to help bolster collaborative efforts. In all three jurisdictions, an individual or organization spearheaded the work—stoking interest in children’s needs, bringing partners together, and generating momentum around policy change. In addition to rallying other policymakers, strong champions have an important influence on whether their own agency embraces culture change. By outlining priorities as they relate to children and communities, leaders can set expectations for employees, thereby improving implementation. For example, both executive- and line-level staff members at the San Francisco and Allegheny County police departments remarked that their chief’s emphasis on serving children influences how strictly and uniformly they and their peers carry out the department’s parental arrest protocol. However, it is also important to create a system that can last if a champion leaves or a new champion comes in—a solid system will improve the sustainability of the practice.

Recommendation 1.6: Jurisdictions should also *learn from experts* when developing a new practice. Policymakers should take stock of their local resources, thereby tapping into local expertise about children’s issues to inform the work. In addition, stakeholders benefit the work when they learn about and replicate the models of other jurisdictions. For example, champions across the United States have used the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents’ Bill of Rights to frame the issues that children face and to develop appropriate practices. The stakeholders we interviewed have invested significant time and resources to lay the groundwork, and they hope others can benefit from their experience by replicating their models rather than creating new practices. In fact, many of them have already received calls from interested parties in other locations—both near and far—hoping to replicate and extend their work.

Recommendation 1.7: Despite the growing interest and support for the children and their justice-involved parents, it is important to *think about the different ways to develop a practice*. Adopting formal measures and legislation may provide many benefits, including helping sustain a policy in the absence or loss of strong champions and in the face of staff turnover. However, legislation and formal channels may not always be immediately available or desirable; in some cases, the initiatives worked to change practice on the ground through training and other awareness-building campaigns. In New York probation departments, stakeholders successfully introduced questions relating to an individual’s responsibilities to the family by incorporating the changes into curriculum for new recruits and for in-service trainings. That type of approach can serve children more immediately while stakeholders work

toward the formal adoption of policies. A less formal approach also may give agencies the opportunity to identify implementation barriers and solicit staff feedback before making an official policy change.

Challenge 2: Implementation Can Take a Long Time

People interested in developing practices in their own jurisdictions should understand that implementation might take a long time. In some cases, staff members tasked with executing or accommodating new practices resist change because they do not understand children's needs or the reasons for deviating from business as usual. In addition, ingrained attitudes and beliefs about a justice-involved individual's ability to parent or about what's best for children may disrupt the flow of implementation. For example, parents may not want their children to know about their detention, caregivers may hesitate to bring children to jails, and line staff members may believe that parents involved in the justice system should not make decisions for their children.

Finally, implementation may be difficult or slow because of the slow uptake of new resources. Staff members are often accustomed to traditional methods of doing business, and an agency leader's comfort with the status quo may reduce efforts to encourage staff members to use new resources available to them. Recommendations to address the challenge include the following:

- **Recommendation 2.1:** Raise awareness about the importance of the issue.
- **Recommendation 2.2:** Incorporate new policies into training.
- **Recommendation 2.3:** Solicit staff input and feedback.
- **Recommendation 2.4:** Test new policies.
- **Recommendation 2.5:** Communicate with staff members.
- **Recommendation 2.6:** Remain flexible and understand the unpredictability of the setting.

Recommendation 2.1: Jurisdictions implementing new policies might disseminate youths' perspectives and *raise awareness about the importance of the issue* to help the staff, family, and justice-involved individuals to overcome resistance to change. Sharing what we have learned from youth about their needs is important. Police officers, for instance, found it powerful to hear children's testimonies about witnessing their parents' arrest. The testimony helped them better understand the purpose of their department's parental arrest protocol. Similarly, staff members from the youth advocacy program Project What! discussed the power of taking youth advocates to jails in the San Francisco Bay Area to

share their accounts of parental incarceration with inmates. The presentations helped parents understand their own children's needs and the purpose of family reunification. Such efforts raise awareness and help promote culture change.

Recommendation 2.2: Moreover, we recommend *incorporating new policies into training* and connecting the practices to their purpose. Infusing policies into an agency training curriculum helps organizations systematically expose all staff members to new practices. Training gives staff members an opportunity to better understand the agency's decisions and to appreciate that the practices matter. Organizations can use training to help employees understand the goals behind new practices; understanding encourages line staff members to follow the practices as intended. Again, vocal support from leaders is also instrumental in generating staff support. Executives can share their support for and endorsement of policies through memos to staff and other channels to ensure the agency community understands their priorities.

Recommendation 2.3: Jurisdictions also can address resistance to new policies by *soliciting staff input and feedback*. It is critical to let staff members share their concerns during the implementation of a practice because they are ultimately responsible for carrying it out. Similarly, use staff members to test new policies and provide their insight on what is working or not working. Collecting the feedback helps generate staff support and strengthens the effort by creating opportunities to identify necessary course corrections.

It is critical to let staff members share their concerns during the implementation of a practice because they are ultimately responsible for carrying it out.

Recommendation 2.4: Given the issues inherent in implementing new practices, stakeholders should plan ahead and should consider first *testing new policies* within a specific region or department before bringing them to scale. In particular, look for opportunities to test out a new practice in a controlled environment. Stakeholders in Allegheny County, for instance, believed it would be beneficial to pilot parental arrest protocols with officers carrying out arrests for probation violations because officers have more notice before executing probation arrests than for other types of arrests. The experience gave stakeholders an opportunity to figure out unexpected issues with their protocols before exposing

them to more dynamic scenarios. Testing ahead of time also helps expose staff members to new policies before pursuing full-scale implementation.

Recommendation 2.5: Because employees are used to business as usual, leaders should constantly *communicate with staff members* that they should use the resources available to them. For example, attorneys may not fully use a social worker for a parent in jail awaiting trial because they are not aware of (1) how the position functions, (2) what services are available, and (3) how they can best delegate tasks to the social worker so they can focus on the client’s legal, rather than service, needs. Although you may need extra time to familiarize staff members with important resources, it is essential to keep communicating to employees what resources they have at their disposal.

Recommendation 2.6: We learned that it is particularly difficult to introduce new practices in jail and detention facilities. Therefore, it is important to *remain flexible and understand the unpredictability* of working in a secure setting. Safety and security are top priorities in detention facilities; that circumstance means that special programming in jails is subject to the limitations on inmates’ time, schedules, and space in the facility. Classes may be canceled because of an unexpected security threat that arises, enrolled parents may be unable to attend a class or visit because of behavioral issues, or program staff members may face last-minute changes because of space and time constraints in the facility. In the locations we visited, many programs are operated by employees of community-based organizations, and so they are carrying out their work as guests to the facility. Thus, we recommend remaining flexible and expecting to experience unpredictable situations when working in a secure setting.

Challenge 3: The Justice-Involved Population Faces Unique Challenges

Implementation is difficult because children and families of justice-involved individuals face unique issues in their day-to-day lives. The needs of that population can create obstacles for organizations that provide direct services to them on a day-to-day basis. Some of the obstacles are functional. For example, lack of access to transportation often creates logistical issues for jail visitation. Family members often simply do not have the resources or time to take kids to visit their parents.

Many of the practices we discuss in this document, such as jail visiting and advocacy efforts, can be very emotional for children. Programming may stir strong emotions and past or present trauma for children, and yet staff members noted that the capacity to help kids manage those feelings often falls

outside of the parameters of a particular program. Program staff members may feel they lack the time, expertise, or resources to provide the amount of support that children need.

In addition, the stakeholders we spoke with repeatedly described their desire to offer more resources to coparents and caregivers on the outside, an extension they thought could enhance the effectiveness of programming offered to parents in the facility. For example, parents taking parenting classes in jail might benefit if their partners on the outside learned the same curricula and became familiar with the language and concepts taught in the facility. The parallel instruction could bolster partner communication, contribute to family reunification, and help the well-being of the children involved.

... the stakeholders we spoke with repeatedly described their desire to offer more resources to coparents and caregivers on the outside, an extension they thought could enhance the effectiveness of programming offered to parents in the facility.

The staff members serving children and their families may face individual difficulties during implementation. Staff members trying to serve children directly may face resistance from their colleagues or others who do not understand the issues. Service providers may struggle to deal with their clients' traumas. Moreover, operating in tight budget environments can be stressful and overwhelming—and may result in staff turnover. We recommend the following to address this challenge:

- **Recommendation 3.1:** Provide infrastructure and hire qualified staff members.
- **Recommendation 3.2:** Allow for flexibility and innovation.
- **Recommendation 3.3:** Give the staff resources and emotional support.

Recommendation 3.1: The challenges inherent in serving children amplify the requirement to *provide infrastructure and hire qualified staff members* to serve the needs of children and their parents. Because children may face instability at home and with their families, organizations and agencies should set guidelines for working with children; provide consistent, stable programming; and hire qualified staff members who can help children deal with their parents' justice involvement. Where possible,

anyone replicating this work should hire individuals who have personal experience or connections to the issues involved. Odds for the success of a practice increase when staff members are qualified and can understand the population's needs.

Recommendation 3.2: In addition, programs need to *allow for flexibility and innovation* in programming structure to accommodate children's specific needs and schedules. Organizations should try to implement practices in central locations and, where possible, at times that do not conflict with school. For example, arrange contact visits on weekends or in the evenings. Attempt to provide spaces where kids can feel comfortable and can be themselves. For instance, we observed jail visiting areas that were colorful and full of toys, and staff members discussed the need to find spaces where children could hang out before visits begin.

Recommendation 3.3: Of course, providing structure to and being flexible for kids can also place additional burdens on the staff. Leaders should remain cognizant of staff time and abilities when trying to design programs best suited for children. Working with children and their justice-involved parents often exposes staff members to some intense and difficult situations. Thus, jurisdictions replicating the models we have discussed should make every effort possible to *give staff resources and emotional support*, both of which may improve programs and help limit staff turnover.

Challenge 4: It Is Difficult to Find Enough Funding

Almost universally, stakeholders lamented the lack of funding necessary to implement and sustain practices for children and families with parents in the justice system. We heard a few reasons that funding is difficult to obtain. Some of the organizations serve a range of age groups and populations, so it may be difficult to carve out funding specifically intended to serve children with parents in the justice system.

Moreover, individuals who allocate funding may hesitate to provide resources for many of the same reasons that impede buy-in and culture change among agency decisionmakers: (1) the field lacks data about the population, (2) funders are not sufficiently aware of the challenges the kids face, and (3) we do not necessarily know what is effective in mitigating harm and improving child outcomes. Those gaps in our understanding mean funders likely do not recognize the extent of the issue or are discouraged from allocating resources until more information is available about where to devote resources. Until we solidify our understanding about what works, funders may hesitate to devote scarce funds to programs not yet linked to positive results for children.

Almost universally, stakeholders lamented the lack of funding necessary to implement and sustain practices for children and families with parents in the justice system.

Yet, we also learned that funding is crucial to implement effective programs and provide general support to kids and their families. Resources needed to implement promising practices for children include funding (1) to transport kids to and from programs, (2) to develop infrastructure in an organization to carry out the program, (3) to hire qualified staff members who are capable of serving the population, and (4) to provide staff members with sufficient support to work in challenging circumstances. Moreover, fundamental resources are needed for the caregivers and families of the children, including basics such as food, shelter, transportation, and case management. To improve funding streams, we recommend the following:

- **Recommendation 4.1:** Look for multiple sources.
- **Recommendation 4.2:** Be innovative.

Recommendation 4.1: Despite limited resources, stakeholders we spoke with found creative ways to secure funding and sustain their programs. Jurisdictions hoping to replicate this work should *look for multiple sources* of funding to pay for their programs. Local philanthropic foundations were major champions of the initiatives in Allegheny County and San Francisco, not only in helping the county or city to identify needs and goals, but also in providing funds for programs and coordinators tasked with developing children-centric policies. Consider combining multiple funding streams, including dollars from municipal government budgets, community-based organizations, and federal grants to conduct the work.

Using multiple funding streams can have benefits and drawbacks, so it is important to understand the requirements and limitations of each source. For instance, funding streams place different eligibility criteria on the population that a program serves. Examples of eligibility criteria sometimes tied to funding include the status of the parent within the justice system (currently versus formerly incarcerated or the point at which the parent resides in the justice continuum) and clients' ages. Additionally, even where a federal grant or agency cannot provide certain resources, community-based organizations or foundations may be able to supplement a program with donations to benefit kids. Noncash donations can include toys and snacks for jail visits and long wait times, car seats for transporting kids, and photos to provide kids and their detained parents with keepsakes.

Recommendation 4.2: It is critical to *be innovative* when looking for mechanisms to fund the programs. Because some funders may initially hesitate to fund a program, securing seed funding first can help to demonstrate the program’s success. Some funders are more willing to fund a program after it has proved successful and sustainable. When the San Francisco Public Defender’s Office was unable to secure funding from the city to hire a social worker to focus on the needs of their clients’ children, the office obtained start-up funds from the Zellerbach Family Foundation. After an additional infusion of funding from Zellerbach and several years of successful program operation, the office developed a sustainability plan and partnered with a university to do an evaluation. The work prompted the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to incorporate the program into the Public Defender’s Office general funds.

Challenge 5: It Is Unclear Which Practices Are Having Meaningful Results

As repeatedly noted throughout this framework document, we lack information about how many children have justice-involved parents, and we know even less about children with parents in the early stages of the system. Without more information on the scope of the problem, such as the number of children who witness their parent’s arrest or who face barriers to visiting their parents in jail, it is difficult to raise awareness about the issue, to collect information on the collateral impacts associated with their parent’s involvement, and in turn to determine what works to help them. The gaps in our understanding also affect funding for new programs and for supplemental resources to serve children.

Decisionmakers want more data and information to understand the scope of the issue and the degree to which their funds can help ameliorate the effects of parental justice involvement. That task can be achieved by doing the following:

- **Recommendation 5.1:** Collect data.
- **Recommendation 5.2:** Evaluate your practices.

Recommendation 5.1: Because we do not have enough information about the population, it is critical to *collect data* about the numbers of children with parents in the justice system, their encounters with public agencies and systems, and their needs. Jurisdictions can collect data either from children, while asking whether they have a parent in the criminal justice system, or from individuals in the justice system, while asking whether they have children. The data can be collected by adding questions or fields to preexisting instruments, such as school enrollment forms, police department reports, or jail

admission records. Although data collection can be costly and time consuming, tracking the population of justice-involved families is necessary to better inform our understanding of the issue.

Recommendation 5.2: Similarly, it is useful to *evaluate your practices* to find out what works. Although we were able to identify innovative and promising practices designed for the children, very little evidence is available about the practices' effectiveness. We strongly urge organizations to evaluate their practices to figure out what works to benefit children and to avoid policies and practices that may pose further harm to youth. Evaluation may be supported by local partners, such as universities. Evaluations are helpful for making course corrections and for resolving implementation challenges. Moreover, evaluations may help programs secure or sustain funding—funders want to know that a practice holds promise, and they can see that promise demonstrated through evaluation.

Conclusion

Many of the millions of children with parents involved in the criminal justice system experience trauma and anxiety. The importance of their issues has been gaining traction among stakeholders across the United States. For example, a growing number of studies being conducted in academic and research institutions focus on how parental involvement in the criminal justice system negatively affects children, and an increasing amount of research documents the practices available to children or parents and evaluates the degree to which the practices are effective.

A focus on those children and their parents also is growing among practitioners in community-based organizations and government agencies. Practitioners across the United States have created, improved, and implemented policies and programs that are for both children and parents and that aim to mitigate the trauma that children experience and to improve parent-child relationships. We met with and interviewed individuals from several of those organizations and agencies during our site visits to the San Francisco Bay Area, Allegheny County, and New York. However, we know that there are many organizations and individuals in other parts of the country that also are engaged in work that aims to improve the lives of the children and their families.

Finally, interest in those issues among policymakers is growing as well. As indicated elsewhere in this document, new practices have gained commendable buy-in from leaders of many key government agencies, including police departments, probation departments, public defenders' offices, and jail administrations. The level of interest is also evinced by the Federal Interagency Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents, which brings together agencies across the government to provide

training and technical assistance to service providers, to clarify and improve public policy, and to raise public awareness of the challenges facing the children of incarcerated parents. The White House also held an event honoring 12 “Champions of Change” who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of children with incarcerated parents and their caregivers.

Despite the growing interest in the issues, significant knowledge gaps persist about the available practices that hold promise for effectively reducing the trauma and improving the lives of children and parents. In particular, even though many organizations provide services for the population, very little research has been initiated to demonstrate how effective the services are. More empirical research about the practices would be beneficial, then, to academics, practitioners, and policymakers alike. Research would help stakeholders in their role of elevating the issues and thinking of possible solutions and would enable the field to begin developing a base of evidence about which practices are best able to address needs, mitigate trauma, and strengthen parent–child bonding.

With that in mind, practitioners need to be willing (1) to continue to champion the causes, perhaps considering some of the innovative practices we have identified in this framework document or our toolkits, and (2) to work with researchers or other partners to systematically collect, track, and assess program performance measures and outcomes. We also need policymakers to be willing to change or implement practices to help practitioners to do their work more easily. Finally, we need researchers not only to evaluate the practices, but also to disseminate that knowledge to the field.

In particular, it is critical to understand how the practices affect children directly. Much of the extant research about the practices focuses on how they lead to changes in parents (e.g., whether parents demonstrate a better understanding of child development after completing a parenting class or whether parents are better able to comply with jail rules or are less likely to return to jail if they receive a contact visit with their child). However, we also must understand whether the practices lead to changes in children’s behavior and well-being. Thus, organizations that are working with that population—or that are thinking about working with them—should endeavor to collect adequate data about both the parents and the children.

This framework document provided a discussion of the challenges people are likely to face if they are interested in developing similar practices in their own jurisdictions, as well as recommendations for addressing those challenges. Our hope was to provide context for the issues that children of justice-involved parents face every day and to help people understand how changes in practice can make meaningful differences for those children and their parents.

Appendix A. Organizations and Stakeholders Providing Information to This Report

New York

In New York, stakeholders are actively engaged with several initiatives for children of justice-involved parents. One agency spearheading that work is the Osborne Association, a community-based organization that specializes in services for justice-involved individuals. One of the Osborne Association's main programs is the New York Initiative for Children with Incarcerated Parents, a collaboration of several nonprofits and government agencies in New York that share the goal of improving the lives of children with justice-involved parents. Through that initiative, the Osborne Association advances cross-system support and helps develop policies for the children. The Osborne Association also played an instrumental role in enhancing New York's presentence sentencing investigations with the addition of a family responsibility statement that captures questions regarding the defendant's family background, relationships, parenting responsibilities, and the effect of incarceration on his or her family and children. The statement ensures that families are taken into account throughout the presentence investigation and the sentencing recommendations. The Osborne Association also worked closely with the New York State Probation Department and the New York State Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives to update training curricula and materials as well as to train new probation officers on the family responsibility statement.

The New York City Administration of Children's Services (ACS) also is involved with child-focused work. ACS administers the Children of Incarcerated Parents program, which coordinates and facilitates contact visits with parents on Riker's Island (as well as other state prison facilities) who have an open ACS case. Also on Riker's Island, Hour Children, a community-based organization focused on helping justice-involved mothers and their children, operates a nursery program in the Rose M. Singer facility. The nursery is for babies born while mothers are incarcerated on Riker's Island. Babies can live with their mothers for up to one year after birth. Hour Children also offers a mentoring program called Indeed Mentoring for children affected by parental involvement in the criminal justice system. The

majority of mentees are children with a parent in or returning from state prison, but they also have been children with a parent in jail.

Additionally, the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, in partnership with Housing Plus Solutions, spearheaded a diversion program for mothers who were facing serious criminal charges. Called Drew's House, the program provides supportive housing to mothers and their children. The mothers living in Drew's House receive case management and therapy for up to two years. Drew's House is an alternative to incarceration for mothers who face long prison sentences but who are ineligible for any other diversion or alternative sentencing programs in New York City.

Specifically, we met with individuals from

- Hour Children
- Riker's Island (City of New York Department of Correction)
- Osborne Association
- Brooklyn District Attorney's Office
- New York State Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives

Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Stakeholders in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County also are engaging in innovative practices for children with justice-involved parents. Two collaboratives formed in Allegheny County: the Allegheny County Arrest Protocol Committee and the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative. The arrest protocol committee was led by the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation and the Allegheny County Department of Human Services to research and design the parental arrest policy. The committee presented the protocol in a report to the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police in 2008. The protocol explains officers' duties at the scene of an arrest when a child is present and helps ensure the safety and security of the child while the parent is detained. Since 2008, the Pittsburgh police department has been working to update its procedures and protocols. The department also developed a video that is shown during police officer training and explains how to properly conduct a parental arrest when a child is present.

The Allegheny County Jail Collaborative is a partnership among several local agencies and organizations, including the departments of probation, human services and health services, as well as

service providers and jail administrators. Because the agencies were serving several of the same individuals, they developed the Family Support Program as part of Allegheny County Jail's improved reentry services. The jail partners with Family Services of Western Pennsylvania to provide the Family Support Program to parents who are in the jail's Reentry Pod, who are at a medium or high risk of reoffending, and who are sentenced to serve 90 days or more in the jail. The Family Support Program offers five core components: (1) parenting classes; (2) free, coached phone calls; (3) structured family contact visits once per month; (4) relationship classes; and (5) a check-in call with the program participant within one month of his or her reentry into the community.

Specifically, we met with individuals from

- Allegheny County Department of Human Services
- City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Police
- Allegheny County Jail

San Francisco Bay Area, California

Efforts for the children of justice-involved parents in San Francisco are largely led by the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (SFCIPP), a citywide coalition focused on improving the lives of children with justice-involved parents and on helping develop children-friendly programs and policies with the criminal justice community. SFCIPP includes stakeholders from government agencies such as the San Francisco Police Department; the San Francisco Sheriff's Department; and the city's departments of Child Support Services, Family and Children Services, and Adult Probation, as well as from community organizations such as Centerforce, Community Works West, and others. Through the collaboration among those partners, SFCIPP developed the Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights, which stipulates how children with justice-involved parents are to be treated. The Bill of Rights includes items that help ensure that children remain safe and supported and that they sustain positive relationships with their parents while their parents are involved with the justice system.

On the basis of the work of the SFCIPP, several government agencies are implementing practices that take into consideration the effect of parents' justice involvement on their children. First, the Office of Citizen Complaints led the development of a parental arrest protocol being used by the San Francisco Police Department. The protocol is a department general order and ensures that police officers ask arrestees if they have children, if they are the primary caretaker of the child, if someone is available to

care for the child while the officers make the arrest, and so on. With the help of the police department, the Office of Citizen Complaints also developed a training video shown to every police officer at roll call.

Second, in 2009, the San Francisco Adult Probation Department developed and implemented a family impact statement in its presentence investigation reports. The family impact statement includes questions about the defendants' children, about defendants' relationship with their children, about any open child support cases, and about whether any children were at risk because of the circumstances of the current offense. On the basis of responses to those questions, the probation officer submits a recommendation to the court that demonstrates the effect of sentencing or incarceration on the individual's children.

Finally, the San Francisco Public Defender's Office—through its Children of Incarcerated Parents program—provides case management to parents who are clients of the office. The program seeks to prioritize the parent's role in the family and to provide parents with extralegal services while they are being adjudicated. Those services include advocating for the parent with his or her attorney or other entity (e.g., probation officer or child support case worker), connecting the parent to services, and ensuring that the parent receives parent-child visits in the jail.

In addition to government agencies, community-based organizations are heavily involved with SFCIPP and provide programs and services to justice-involved parents and their families. Centerforce, an organization focused on delivering services and programs to families of incarcerated individuals, provides the MOMS (Maximizing Opportunities for Mothers to Succeed) and Back to Family (BTF) parenting programs in Santa Rita Jail to mothers and fathers, respectively. Centerforce also provides program participants with wraparound case management services prerelease and postrelease. For MOMS participants, Centerforce partners with the Oakland Housing Authority and Project Pride to provide, or refer, mothers to housing upon their release from jail. MOMS participants and their children are also referred to a clinic at the local children's hospital to work on issues such as incarceration, drug abuse, and separation anxiety. For BTF participants, Centerforce case managers help fathers to identify job opportunities and to fulfill their child support obligations, among other case management services.

Another community-based organization, Community Works, offers several programs for children with justice-involved parents. The One Family program provides family strengthening services to parents incarcerated in the San Francisco county jail system. One Family staff members facilitate parenting classes, provide therapy and case management, and facilitate full contact parent-child visits in the jails. The ROOTS program is a school-based, social justice, theater elective class. The students are children of incarcerated parents and receive credit for writing, rehearsing, and performing a play at the

end of the school year. Project WHAT! (We're Here And Talking) is a youth-led, youth-focused program for children with justice-involved parents. The youth who participate in Project WHAT! go through extensive training during the summer on how to present their testimonials, provide technical assistance to organizations or agencies about the effects of parental justice involvement, and develop policy. For example, Project WHAT! Youth spoke at the city hall discussions about the parental arrest protocol and participated in the police department training video.

Specifically, we met with individuals from

- San Francisco Adult Probation Department
- San Francisco Office of Citizen Complaints
- San Francisco Police Department
- San Francisco Public Defender's Office
- Centerforce
- Oakland Housing Authority
- Project Pride
- Children's Hospital, Oakland
- Community Works

Notes

1. Networks included those of the Urban Institute as well as NIC, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. HHS and the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships are critical stakeholders in this effort and played an advisory role on the project.
2. Pew Charitable Trusts (2010).
3. Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (2011)
4. Phillips et al. (2004).
5. Johnston (1991); Mumola (2000).
6. Glaze and Maruschak (2008); Walker (2003).
7. Bendheim-Thoman Center (2008); Brazzell (2008); Ehrensaft et al. (2003); Moses (2006).
8. Foster and Hagan (2007); Geller et al. (2009); Phillips et al. (2006); Wildeman (2011).
9. Adalist-Estrin (2006).
10. Kampfner (1995).
11. Phillips et al. (2002); Phillips and Gleeson (2007); Wright and Seymour (2000).
12. Trice and Brewster (2004); Wright and Seymour (2000).
13. Murray and Farrington (2005); Murray and Farrington (2008); Murray, Janson, and Farrington (2007); Murray, Farrington, and Sekol (2012).
14. Nickel, Garland, and Kane (2009); Nolan (2003); Wright and Seymour (2000).
15. Davies et al. (2008); Wildeman and Western (2010).
16. Arditti, Lambert-Shute, and Joest (2003).
17. Schlafer et al. (2013).
18. Bushfield (2004); Eddy, Martinez, and Burraston (2013); Moore and Clement (1998); Sandifer (2008).
19. For example, though we highlight the parental arrest policies in San Francisco and Pittsburgh, many police departments across the country are implementing similar policies to guide the way officers interact with and arrest parents and caregivers of minor children. In fact, the International Association of Chiefs of Police recently developed a model policy for Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents (see <http://www.theiacp.org/>). Many other organizations not highlighted here are engaged in exciting and promising work. The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated provides a directory of many programs that are across the country and that are aimed at helping the population of justice-involved families (see <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/>).
20. Kurs et al. (2015).
21. Cramer et al. (2015).
22. Peterson et al. (2015).
23. Ibid.
24. Conway and Jones (2015).
25. Tasca (2015).

References

- Adalist-Estrin, Ann. 2006. "Providing Support to Adolescent Children with Incarcerated Parents." *Prevention Researcher* 13 (2): 7–10.
- Arditti, Joyce A., Jennifer Lambert-Shute, and Karen Joest. 2003. "Saturday Morning at the Jail: Implications of Incarceration for Families and Children." *Family Relations* 52 (3): 195–204.
- Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing. 2008. "Parental Incarceration and Child Well-Being in Fragile Families." Fragile Families Research Brief 42. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.
- Brazzell, Diana. 2008. "Using Local Data to Explore the Experiences and Needs of Children of Incarcerated Parents." Urban Institute Research Report. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Bushfield, Suzanne. 2004. "Fathers in Prison: Impact of Parenting Education." *Journal of Correctional Education* 55 (2): 104–16.
- Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents. 2011. "Data Sheet 3A: How Many Are There?" Eagle Rock, CA: Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents.
- Conway, James M., and Edward T. Jones. 2015. "Seven out of Ten? Not Even Close: A Review of Research on the Likelihood of Children of Incarcerated Parents Becoming Justice-Involved." New Britain, CT: Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, the Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative.
- Cramer, Lindsey, Bryce Peterson, Emma Kurs, and Jocelyn Fontaine. 2015. "Toolkit for Developing Family Impact Statements: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project." Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Davies, Elizabeth, Diana Brazzell, Nancy G. La Vigne, and Tracey Shollenberger. 2008. "Understanding the Needs and Experiences of Children of Incarcerated Parents: Views From Mentors." Urban Institute Research Report. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Eddy, J. Mark, Charles R. Martinez Jr., and Bert Burraston. 2013. "A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Parent Management Training Program for Incarcerated Parents: Proximal Impacts." *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 78 (3): 75–93.
- Ehrensaft, Miriam, Ajay Khashu, Timothy Ross, and Mark Wamsley. 2003. "Patterns of Criminal Conviction and Incarceration among Mothers of Children in Foster Care in New York City." New York: Vera Institute of Justice and NYC Administration for Children's Services.
- Foster, Holly, and John Hagan. 2007. "Incarceration and Intergenerational Social Exclusion." *Social Problems* 54 (4): 399–433.
- Geller, Amanda, Irwin Garfinkel, Carey E. Cooper, and Ronald Mincy. 2009. "Parental Incarceration and Child Well-Being: Implications for Urban Families." *Social Science Quarterly*, 90 (5): 1186–202.
- Glaze, Lauren E., and Laura M. Maruschak. 2008. "Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children." Special report of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 222984. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Johnston, Denise. 1991. *Jailed Mothers*. Pasadena, CA: Pacific Oaks Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents.
- Kampfner, Christina. 1995. "Post-Traumatic Stress Reactions of Children of Imprisoned Mothers." In *Children of Incarcerated Parents*, edited by Katherine Gabel and Denise Johnston (89–100). New York: Lexington Books.
- Kurs, Emma, Bryce Peterson, Lindsey Cramer, and Jocelyn Fontaine. 2015. "Toolkit for Developing Parental Arrest Policies: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project." Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Moore, Alvin R., and Mary J. Clement. 1998. "Effects of Parenting Training for Incarcerated Mothers." *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 27 (1–2): 57–72.
- Moses, Marilyn C. 2006. "Does Parental Incarceration Increase a Child's Risk for Foster Care Placement?" *National Institute of Justice Journal* 255: 12–14.
- Mumola, Christopher J. 2000. "Incarcerated Parents and Their Children." Special report of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- Murray, Joseph, and David P. Farrington. 2005. "Parental Imprisonment: Effects on Boys' Antisocial Behaviour and Delinquency through the Life-Course." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 46 (12): 1269–78.
- . 2008. "The Effects of Parental Imprisonment on Children." *Crime and Justice* 37 (1): 133–206.
- Murray, Joseph, David P. Farrington, and Ivana Sekol. 2012. "Children's Antisocial Behavior, Mental Health, Drug Use, and Educational Performance after Parental Incarceration: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." *Psychological Bulletin* 138 (2): 175–210.
- Murray, Joseph, Carl-Gunnar Janson, and David P. Farrington. 2007. "Crime in Adult Offspring of Prisoners: A Cross National Comparison of Two Longitudinal Samples." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 34 (1): 133–49.
- Nickel, Jessica, Crystal Garland, and Leah Kane. 2009. *Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Action Plan for Federal Policymakers*. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center.
- Nolan, Clare M. 2003. *Children of Arrested Parents: Strategies to Improve Their Safety and Well-Being*. Sacramento, CA: California Research Bureau.
- Peterson, Bryce, Lindsey Cramer, Emma Kurs, and Jocelyn Fontaine. 2015. "Toolkit for Developing Family-Focused Jail Programs: Children of Incarcerated Parents Project." Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Pew Charitable Trusts. 2010. *Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility*. Washington, DC: Pew Charitable Trusts.
- Phillips, Susan D., Barbara J. Burns, H. Ryan Wagner, Teresa L. Kramer, and James M. Robbins. 2002. "Parental Incarceration among Adolescents Receiving Mental Health Services." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 11 (4): 385–99.
- Phillips, Susan D., Barbara J. Burns, H. Ryan Wagner, and Richard P. Barth. 2004. "Parental Arrest and Children Involved with Child Welfare Services Agencies." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 74 (2): 174–86.
- Phillips, Susan D., and James P. Gleeson. 2007. "What We Know Now That We Didn't Know Then about the Criminal Justice System's Involvement in Families with Whom Child Welfare Agencies Have Contact." Children, Families, and the Criminal Justice System Research Brief. Chicago: Center for Social Policy and Research, University of Illinois at Chicago.
- Phillips, Susan D., Alaattin Erkanli, Gordon P. Keeler, E. Jane Costello, and Adrian Angold. 2006. "Disentangling the Risks: Parent Criminal Justice Involvement and Children's Exposure to Family Risks." *Criminology and Public Policy* 5 (4): 677–702.
- Sandifer, Jacquelyn L. 2008. "Evaluating the Efficacy of a Parenting Program for Incarcerated Mothers." *The Prison Journal* 88 (3): 423–45.
- Shlafer, Rebecca J., Erica Gerrity, Ebony Ruhland, and Marc Wheeler. 2013. "Children with Incarcerated Parents—Considering Children's Outcomes in the Context of Complex Family Experiences." *Children's Mental Health eReview*. Accessed May 2015. <http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/cyfc/our-programs/ereview/docs/June2013ereview.pdf>.
- Tasca, Melinda. 2015. "It's Not All Cupcakes and Lollipops': An Investigation of the Predictors and Effects of Prison Visitation for Children during Maternal and Paternal Incarceration." Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, Tempe. Retrieved from NCJRS.
- Trice, Ashton D., and JoAnne Brewster. 2004. "The Effects of Maternal Incarceration on Adolescent Children." *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* 19 (1): 27–35.
- Walker, Claire A. 2003. "Parents Behind Bars Talk about Their Children: From a Survey of Allegheny County Jail Inmates, April 2003." Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation.
- Wildeman, Christopher. 2014. "Parental Incarceration, Child Homelessness, and the Invisible Consequences of Mass Imprisonment." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 651(1): 74–96.
- Wildeman, Christopher, and Bruce Western. 2010. "Incarceration in Fragile Families." *Future Child*, 20 (2): 157–77.
- Wright, Lois, and Cynthia B. Seymour. 2000. *Working with Children and Families Separated by Incarceration: A Handbook for Child Welfare Agencies*. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America Press.

About the Authors



Bryce Peterson is a research associate in the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center. His research focuses on correctional policy, prisoner reentry, children of justice-involved parents, federal and state justice statistics, and quantitative data analysis. He has received grants from federal agencies, such as the National Institute of Corrections, and has used his training in quantitative research methods and data analysis to write about and present on several criminal justice issues, such as prison and jail misconduct, criminological theory, cross-national comparative analysis of crime, and juvenile delinquency. He received his PhD in criminal justice from John Jay College/the Graduate Center, City University of New York.



Jocelyn Fontaine is a senior research associate in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Her research portfolio is focused mostly on evaluating community-based crime reduction and reentry initiatives targeted to vulnerable populations. Fontaine directs projects using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to explore the effect of community-based initiatives on a range of outcomes, including individual, family/social network, and community outcomes. Fontaine is committed to using rigorous social science methods to change policy and practice and contribute to the public discourse on crime and the justice system. She received her PhD in justice and public policy from the School of Public Affairs at American University.



Emma Kurs is a research assistant in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where her work focuses on children and families of justice-involved individuals, juvenile justice reform, and reentry initiatives. At the Justice Policy Center, Kurs primarily coordinates and conducts primary data collection for multi-site evaluations as well as supports technical assistance to corrections officials, public agencies, and community-based organizations to improve their reentry programs and services. She focuses on disseminating evidence-based and innovative practices to practitioners in the justice field. Kurs graduated from Skidmore College with a BA in government.



Lindsey Cramer is a research associate with the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where she works on the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), the Study of Community-Centered Responsible Fatherhood Ex-Prisoner Reentry Pilot Strategies,

and Mitigating the Impact of Parental Incarceration on Children: Promising Practices from Arrest through Pre-Adjudication. As it relates to the JRI project, Cramer coordinates technical assistance providers working with state and local jurisdictions implementing a justice reinvestment model aimed at reducing the costs of corrections services and reinvesting the savings in initiatives to improve public safety. She also supports the study of responsible fatherhood reentry pilot programs, which work with incarcerated parents to ensure they have a stable transition into the community. Additionally, she assists with identifying promising practices for providing services and programming to children whose parents are incarcerated. Cramer graduated from the College of Wooster with a BA in economics.

STATEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE

The Urban Institute strives to meet the highest standards of integrity and quality in its research and analyses and in the evidence-based policy recommendations offered by its researchers and experts. We believe that operating consistent with the values of independence, rigor, and transparency is essential to maintaining those standards. As an organization, the Urban Institute does not take positions on issues, but it does empower and support its experts in sharing their own evidence-based views and policy recommendations that have been shaped by scholarship. Funders do not determine our research findings or the insights and recommendations of our experts. Urban scholars and experts are expected to be objective and follow the evidence wherever it may lead.



2100 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20037

www.urban.org