



# CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS INITIATIVE

***“The growing number of children with an incarcerated parent represents one of the most significant collateral consequences of the record prison population in the U.S.”<sup>i</sup>***

## CT CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS INITIATIVE

The *CT Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative* (CTCIP) strategically works to improve the quality of supports for children with incarcerated parents through independent research, public policy and practice development, community engagement, and education. CTCIP serves as Connecticut’s primary resource center for and on children affected by parental incarceration. CTCIP operates out of the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) located at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, CT.

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

#### National

- 1 in 14 children have had a parent who has lived with them go to jail or prison<sup>ii</sup>.
- 80% of incarcerated women are mothers and are the primary caretaker for their children.<sup>iii</sup>
- 77% of mothers in state prisons lived with their children just prior to incarceration and provided most of the children’s daily care and needs.<sup>iv</sup>
- Approximately half of children with an incarcerated parent are under ten years old<sup>v</sup>.

#### Connecticut

- It is estimated that a child experiences a parental arrest more than 62,000 times annually in Connecticut alone<sup>vi</sup>.
- More than half of the state prison population are parents.<sup>vii</sup>

### CHILD & FAMILIAL DISTRESS

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies having had an incarcerated parent as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) but is distinguished from other ACEs because of the unique combination of trauma, stigma, and shame<sup>viii</sup>.
- Parental incarceration is independently associated with higher rates of learning disabilities, ADHD, behavioral problems, emotional dysregulation, and developmental delays in the child.<sup>ix</sup>
- A CTCIP study showed that the child loses many important supports when a parent becomes incarcerated, including but not limited to: basic financial support, help with personal problems, assistance with completing school work, talking with teachers, coaches, etc., transportation, child care, government assistance, and care for medical or special needs<sup>x</sup>.
- Studies have shown that the absence, or unavailability of a parent is emotionally equivalent to life-threatening for children.<sup>xi</sup>
- When a parent becomes incarcerated, the reduction of parental involvement exposes children to prolonged absence of important people in their lives.<sup>xii</sup>

CT CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS INITIATIVE  
Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy  
Central Connecticut State University, Downtown Campus  
185 Main Street, Suites 212 & 215  
New Britain, CT 06050

Phone: 860-832-1878

Email: [CTCIP@ccsu.edu](mailto:CTCIP@ccsu.edu)

Web: [www.CTCIP.org](http://www.CTCIP.org)



# CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS INITIATIVE

## ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

- Parental incarceration creates a significant financial hardship that often contributes to the family's reliance on state-funded social services, programs and financial assistance.
- On average, a family's income declines by 22% when a father becomes incarcerated. Even in the year after the father is returns home, the family income remains 15% lower than the year before incarceration.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Both education and parental income are strong indicators of children's future economic mobility.<sup>xiv</sup>
- Nationally, formerly incarcerated people are unemployed at a rate of over 27% — higher than the total U.S. unemployment rate during any historical period, including the Great Depression.<sup>xv</sup>
- Parents left to care for CIP report difficulties in meeting basic household needs such as food, housing, utilities, transportation, and clothing.<sup>xvi</sup>
- According to a 2015 survey, 2 in 3 families had difficulty meeting basic needs due to a family member's incarceration and 70% of these families were caring for at least one child under 18 years old.<sup>xvii</sup>

## SYSTEMIC BARRIERS, RECIDIVISM REDUCTION & PUBLIC SAFETY

- Collaborations among state correctional, child welfare, education, labor, and human services agencies, as well as community-based organizations, improves the efficacy of services provided to both the child and the incarcerated parent<sup>xviii</sup>.
- Case management techniques that include the family and child of an incarcerated individual have demonstrated reduction in likelihood that the parent will return to criminal activity after release.<sup>xix</sup>
- Family contact through prison visits, phone calls and financial support have been shown to help an individual transition back into the community.<sup>xx</sup>
- The first month after release from incarceration is the time during which the risk of becoming homeless and/or recidivism is highest. A supportive family with a strong connection to the previously incarcerated individual can assist in alleviating some of these immediate concerns.<sup>xxi</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Bernstein, N. (2007). *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated*. New York, New York: The New Press.

<sup>ii</sup> Murphey, D., & Cooper, P.M. (2015). *Parents Behind Bars: What Happens to Their Children?* Bethesda, MD: Child Trends.

<sup>iii</sup> *Women's Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2019*. Prison Policy Initiative, 2019

<sup>iv</sup> *Children of Incarcerated Parents*, National Conference of State Legislatures, 2009.

<sup>v</sup> Mauer, M., Nellis, A., Schirmer, S.; *Incarcerated Parents and Their Children - Trends 1991 - 2007*, The Sentencing Project, Feb. 2009

<sup>vi</sup> Lang, J.M., & Bory, C.T. (2012). *A Collaborative Model to Support Children Following a Caregiver's Arrest: Responding to Children of Arrested Caregivers Together (REACT)*.

Farmington, CT: Child Health and Development Institute

<sup>vii</sup> Connecticut Department of Correction data, June 2016.

<sup>viii</sup> Hairston, C.F. (2007). *Focus on the children with incarcerated parents: A overview of the research literature*. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>ix</sup> *Stress Proliferation Across Generations: Examining the Relationship Between Parental Incarceration and Childhood Health*. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 2014.

<sup>x</sup> Conway, J. M., Provencher, A. J., & Keays, A. (2016). *Needs created in children's daily lives by the arrest of a caregiver: Findings from the CCSU-IMRP New Britain Superior Court family survey*. New Britain, CT: The Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy.

<sup>xi</sup> Carrion, V.G., Weems, C.F. & Bradley, T.: *Natural Disasters and the Neurodevelopmental Response to Trauma in Childhood: A Brief Overview and Call to Action*. *Future Neurology*. 5:5 (2010).

<sup>xii</sup> *Redefining Relationships: Explaining the Countervailing Consequences of Parental Incarceration for Parenting*, *American Sociological Review* 78, 2013.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility*, PEW Charitable Trusts, 2010.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>xv</sup> *Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment Among Formerly Incarcerated People*, Prison Policy Initiative, 2018.

<sup>xvi</sup> Correa, N., Bhalakia, A., Van Horne, B., et al. (2019). *The Forgotten Families: A needs assessment on children with incarcerated parents in Harris County, Texas*.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Action Plan for Federal Policymakers*, 2009.

<sup>xix</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>xx</sup> *Family and Reentry: Unpacking How Social Support Matters*, The Urban Institute, 2012.

<sup>xxi</sup> *From Prisons to Communities: Confronting re-entry challenges and social inequality*, American Psychological Association, 2018.

**CT CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS INITIATIVE**  
Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy  
Central Connecticut State University, Downtown Campus  
185 Main Street, Suites 212 & 215  
New Britain, CT 06050

Phone: 860-832-1878

Email: [CTCIP@ccsu.edu](mailto:CTCIP@ccsu.edu)

Web: [www.CTCIP.org](http://www.CTCIP.org)