



RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS (CIP)

Why is This Important?

- 1 in 14 U.S. youth has experienced parental incarceration.
- Youth with incarcerated parents face 3x more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
 - The CDC defines ACEs as potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood.

Impact of Parental Incarceration

- Caregivers of CIP face struggles like moving, financial strain, job maintenance, emotional challenges, and balancing new childcare duties.
- Children may experience guilt, anger, and separation anxiety.
- A study from Arizona State University found 58% of caregivers were negatively impacted by parental incarceration.
- Caregivers' response to parental absence depends on the incarcerated parent's prior involvement.
- Gender-specific challenges arise when navigating the absence of incarcerated mothers versus fathers.



C.A.R.E.S. Approach for Resilience:

Create a safe space for conversation.

Acknowledge and validate concerns.

Reassure children they are not alone.

Encourage play and skill-building

Share age-appropriate information.

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Tips for Supporting Children with Incarcerated Parents

Communication

- Talk openly with the child and listen to their comfort level. Make a plan on how to address questions and what to share with others.
- Seek information and ask questions during the justice process.
- Tailor communication and visitation based on the child's maturity and understanding.
 - Use books for communication (e.g., Knock Knock by Daniel Beaty for ages 3-8, Harbor Me by Jacqueline Woodson for ages 9-12, The Opposite of Everyone by Joshilyn Jackson for ages 13+).

Relationships

- Support the child in maintaining relationships between family, the incarcerated parent, and facility staff.
- Set appropriate visitation and communication levels based on the child's maturity and facility-specific factors. Discuss visitation preferences with both the child and incarcerated parent.
- Provide emotional regulation tools for the child before, during, and after visits.
- Caregivers should prioritize self-care and seek support, including professional counseling for themselves and their children.
 - Contact family support programs or community organizations (e.g., Tomorrow's Children Program in Connecticut).
- Apply age-specific strategies to address children's different experiences of parental incarceration.



Helping Kids Cope with Trauma

Provide Reassurance:

- Use touch, words, and quality time to build trust and ease anxiety.
- Validate their feelings, encourage open expression without judgment, and create safe spaces at home.

Create Routines and Habits:

- Maintain regular meals and a consistent bedtime routine.
- Provide healthy food and hydration. Prepare them for schedule changes and use a visual schedule for structure.

Practice Coping Skills:

- Take breaks for exercise/active play.
- Participate in calming activities together.
- Discuss potential scenarios that might occur, and role play how best to navigate them.

