CHILDREN OF INMATES: Children at Risk

Yvonne Sawyer, COO of Hope for Miami
Partner in the Service Network for Children of Inmates
WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

• Introduction
• Adverse Childhood Experiences & COI
• Florida & National Indicators of Incarcerated Parents
• Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Involvement of COI
• Effects of Parental Incarceration on Children
• Solutions – What COI Kids Need to Succeed
• Children of Inmates Network– Activities & Impact
• Adoption & Safe Families Act
• Call to Action
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES*

Negative experiences during childhood (0-18)
- Physical or psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect of basic needs
- Divorce or parental separation
- Violence against the mother
- Adult substance abuser in the household
- Adult in household with mental illness (or suicide attempt)
- Incarceration of a parent

http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html
IMPACT OF 4+ ACE’S

An individual with four or more ACEs in their childhood have greatly increased likelihood or risk of alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide, depression, smoking, obesity, overall poor health, sexually transmitted infections, heart disease, cancer, lung disease and early death.
FLORIDA children of inmates

- 15,000 children with an incarcerated parent live in Miami-Dade County.
- Another 8,000 kids in Broward
- Estimated Total Statewide: 300,000*

*Pew Charitable Trust
WHO is INCARCERATED?

- Female prisoners serve an average 49 months in state prison and 66 months in federal prison (4-6 years).

- Men serve an average of 80 months in state prison and 103 months in federal prison (6-9 years).
How many of the incarcerated are parents?

Over 53% of current U.S. prisoners are parents.

Incarceration of Women

- Between 1995 and 2005, the number of incarcerated women in the U.S. increased by 57% compared to 34% for men.
  

- 75 percent of incarcerated women are mothers.
  
Child Welfare Involvement of COI

Who are the caregivers of children with an incarcerated parent?

- Living with other parent: 37%
- Living with grandparent: 45%
- Other relatives: 23%
- Foster Care: 11%

*Glaze & Marushak, 2008 quote from “Child Welfare Practice With Families Affectved by Parental Incarceration,” Children’s Bureau, ACYF/ACF/HHS*
Juvenile Justice Involvement and COI
WHEN A PARENT IS INCARCERATED

The entire family “does time”

- Psychological (fear, trauma, anger, disappointment)
- Financial (losing family income)
- Social (isolation, shame)
Specific effects on material hardship*:

- 55% of COI families begin to receive public benefits (as compared to 25% of general population)
- 32% family incomes of COI families below poverty line (as compared to 18% of general population)
- 25% of COI families find it difficult to pay bills (as compared to 18% of general population)

*Harris analysis of 2009 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Data, Carolina Population Center
WHEN A PARENT IS ARRESTED

- 67% were handcuffed in front of their children.
- 27% reported weapons drawn in front of their children.

GENERAL IMPACT on Families

- More likely that family faces material poverty
- Instability (moving a lot)
- Reduced access to sources of support
- Caregiver and child anxiety
- Traumatic stress
- Embarrassment
- Shame
IMPACT on the CHILD

- Behavior changes
  a. *internalized behaviors* (anxiety withdraw, hypervigilance, depression, shame, and guilt)
  b. *externalized behaviors* (anger, aggression, and hostility to caregivers and siblings).

- Loss and Grieving
  a. Loss of a parent is never easy and may impact the extent of the trauma (no matter what kind of parent they were).
  b. Trauma pulls the child away from normal developmental paths.
IMPACT ON SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

- Difficulty maintaining an academic learning environment.
- Less likely to develop meaningful relationships with others thus forming social barriers.
- Adolescent children of incarcerated mothers are 3x more likely than their peers to drop out of high school.
- Incarcerated mothers report that their adolescent children had more trouble with the law as interest in school diminish.
Children with incarcerated parents are at increased risk for abuse of drugs and alcohol, engaging in antisocial behavior, dropping out of school or experiencing a decline in school work as well as having high levels of truancy, aggression, and disruptive behaviors, compared to other children.

SOLUTIONS
WHAT COI NEED TO SUCCEED

- Feeling of being connected to a family
- Structure
- Supportive caregivers/mentors
- Kind peers
- Stable family
- Group treatment/support groups for children of incarcerated parents
- Therapy
Introducing the Children of Inmates Service Network

SPECIFIC COI BEST PRACTICES

- Bonding visits (bus trips to the prison/jail)
- Structured and unstructured activities (arts, lunch)
- Parenting tips provided to inmates
- Family photo time
- Surveys and observations to document improvement
- Provide a fun outlet afterwards for the children
OUR SPECIAL COI Modules

- **Babies & Brains** – Infant Mental Health and Development Model
- **Difficult Conversations** – Tips for Parents & Caregivers on Sex, Drugs, Crime, Bullying for those with teenagers
- **Youth Leadership** – Mentoring and monthly events for our teen girls and boys
- **StoryCorps** – AmeriCorps literacy initiative
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Principle: INCLUDE THE CAREGIVER

- Provide what the caregiver initially asks for
- Build a relationship of trust
- Allow them to say “no” to services
- Invite them to new opportunities as they arise
- The whole family is invited to participate
HOW THE COI PROJECT IS FUNDED

● The Children’s Trust (Miami-Dade) since 2007
● Florida Legislature  (DOC and DCF in 2015-2016, DOC for 2016-2017)
The COI Network’s Impact

• Serves 15 Florida prisons (Statewide)
• 1,200 visited the prison during the 2015 holidays
• Ten years of program operation
• National recognition as a model, lots of media coverage
• Serving Miami, Broward, Tampa, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Orlando, West Palm Beach areas
• Growing number of partners
Adoption & Safe Families Act

Exceptions to the 22-months permanent placement AFSA rule

• Child cared for by a relative
• Termination of parental rights is not in the child’s best interest
• Incarcerated parent maintains a “meaningful role” in the life of a child (such as participation in the Children of Inmates program)
A Call to Action for YOU

• Volunteer on a bonding visit yourself
• Follow us on Facebook (Children of Inmates)
• View & share videos from our website www.childrenofinmates.org
• Advocate for our cause
• Ensure that children with DCF/DJJ system contact who have an incarcerated parent know about our program and that parental rights can be maintained.
Our Contact Information

Service Network for Children of Inmates – Lead Personnel

Shellie Solomon, PhD – Director – sesolomon@jssinc.org

Samuel Ludington – Deputy Director – ludington.samuel@gmail.com

Shareefah Brand, LCSW – Director of Client Services– shareefah1976@yahoo.com

Jada Hunter, MSW – Deputy Director of Client Services & Infant Mental Health Specialist – jadahunter.coi@gmail.com

Yvonne Sawyer (today’s presenter) COO of Hope for Miami – yvonne@hopeformiami.org (Partner in COI)
Resources and more reading on the issue of Children of Inmates

Youth.Gov resources for Children with Incarcerated Parents

The Impact of Incarceration on Children (Infographic)
http://youth.gov/sites/default/files/COIPInfographic_508.pdf

Tip Sheet for Incarcerated Parents: Planning for a Visit you’re your Child/Children

Tip Sheet for Prison/Jail Staff and Volunteers: Supporting Children who Have an Incarcerated Parent

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Annie E. Casey Foundation Resources and Publications

When a Parent Is Incarcerated: A Primer for Social Workers, by Yali Lincroft and Ken Borelli,
http://www.aecf.org/resources/when-a-parent-is-incarcerated/

Parental Incarceration and Child Well-being (from the Fragile Families Study)

Safeguarding New York’s Children of Incarcerated Parents

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National Re-Entry Resource Center: Promoting the Social and Emotional Well-being for Children of Incarcerated Parents


Behavioral Health Toolkit (for families involved with incarceration, published by Washington State but adapted by several other States)

http://www/dshs.wa.gov/incarcerated

Adolescent Children of Incarcerated Parents, M. Eddy and J. Reid


Resources and Models from other States & Cities for COI

New York City: Hour Children www.hourchildren.org

Arkansas: www.Arkansasvoices.org

New Mexico: www.nmcourts.com/courtimprovement

California: Resource Guide for Teens with an incarcerated parent

San Francisco: SF Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership http://www.sfcipp.org/