



# 2026

## Children of Incarcerated Parents Toolkit



**OKLAHOMA  
COMMISSION ON  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

# WHAT IS 988?

**988** is a direct, three-digit lifeline that connects you with trained behavioral health professionals that can get all Oklahomans the help they need.

**GETTING HELP CAN BE HARD.  
SO WE MADE IT EASIER.**

The mental health professionals on the other end of the line are here to help guide you.



## **CALL THE LIFELINE**

It all starts when you call 988. You'll be connected to a mental health professional to talk you through what's going on and get the resources you need for either yourself or your loved one. About 80% of the time, things can get sorted out with just a phone call. But if you need more help, we got you.



**IF NEEDED**

## **CONNECT WITH A MOBILE CRISIS TEAM**

If you or your loved one need more help after your initial phone call, the 988 call center will send a mobile crisis team to assess things and intervene if necessary. About 7 in 10 crises can be resolved at this touchpoint.



**IF EVEN MORE  
HELP IS NEEDED**

## **GET TRANSPORTATION**

Some people need more in-depth care. If this is the case, transportation will be provided to help Oklahomans in need safely arrive at an Urgent Care and Crisis Center.



## **CHECK IN AT AN URGENT CARE AND CRISIS CENTER**

For those of us that need higher touch help, an Urgent Care and Crisis Center has your back. These centers are staffed 24/7/365 with licensed local medical professionals, nurses, and peers who have been through it themselves. Every center accepts both drop-offs from first responders and walk-ins.

To learn more about how 988 works, visit

**[988oklahoma.com](https://988oklahoma.com)**

**@988OKLA**



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Click this button if you would like to return to the Table of Contents page.

*\* If any of the links or phone numbers in the digital version of this toolkit do not work, please let us know by contacting Danielle Dill at [danielle.dill@occy.ok.gov](mailto:danielle.dill@occy.ok.gov). Thank you.*





## Introduction

This toolkit is for you... IF

- You are a caregiver of a child whose parent is in jail or prison
- Law enforcement came to your home and arrested your husband, wife, boyfriend, or girlfriend in front of the children
- You are a teacher or a school counselor whose student has a parent in prison or jail
- You are a teacher, and a child is asking difficult questions related to the criminal justice system
- You are a social worker looking for resources to help a foster parent with a child whose mother or father was arrested
- You operate a childcare center, and your client had a run in with the legal system and needs some help to figure out options for their kids
- You are a caregiver, educator or service provider who has – or knows of – family members in the criminal justice system for a few days, months, a year, a decade or maybe for life
- You are incarcerated and are looking for resources for the children



## How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is designed for you, the caregiver, service provider or educator, to find answers to questions that may apply to you, a child, a client, or a student. The resource list provides a wealth of free information available on the Internet.

We have divided this toolkit into various sections from family support programs to tips for caregivers and educators, to finding answers to questions a child

or a student may ask about their parent's arrest or incarceration.

This toolkit was written and edited by the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee, with the help of stakeholders, ranging from caregivers, parents, faith-based community members, counselors, educators, social workers, community leaders, child specialists, etc.

## Families • Caregivers • Educators • Service Providers

When a child's parent goes to prison or jail, with rare exception, the child mourns. They may miss the parent who played with them, cooked for them, or watched TV with them, and doing these things may increase their sadness. If their incarcerated parent was not available before imprisonment, the child may mourn the loss of the hope of what might have been if only Mom or Dad had not gone away.

Either way, the time when a parent is imprisoned is a time when children wait and often hope. They wait for Mom or Dad to come back to take care of them, the way they did before, or they wait for the return of a parent who has been changed and "made better" by their time in prison. They also hope that this time Mom or Dad will stay.

The caregivers of children with incarcerated parents may have many things in common. They cope with the criminal justice system, deal with the impact on the children, must find ways to make ends meet, deal with their own feelings toward the child's parents, and struggle with how to answer children's questions. Each family and each caregiving circumstance are also unique.

Caregivers could be the incarcerated parent's parent, another grandparent, an aunt, or older sibling. A caregiver might be a family friend, foster parent, or group home staff member.

Some caregivers took on the responsibility by default because there was no one else, while others were already the guardians of the children before the parent became incarcerated.

Some caregivers are unrelated to the child by blood but are the friends, girlfriends, boyfriends, or partners of one of the child's parents. Some children are in foster care with adults they did not know before their parent went to prison. In some cases, children move far away from the homes they were living in prior to their parent's arrest and incarceration and find themselves in new and unfamiliar environments.

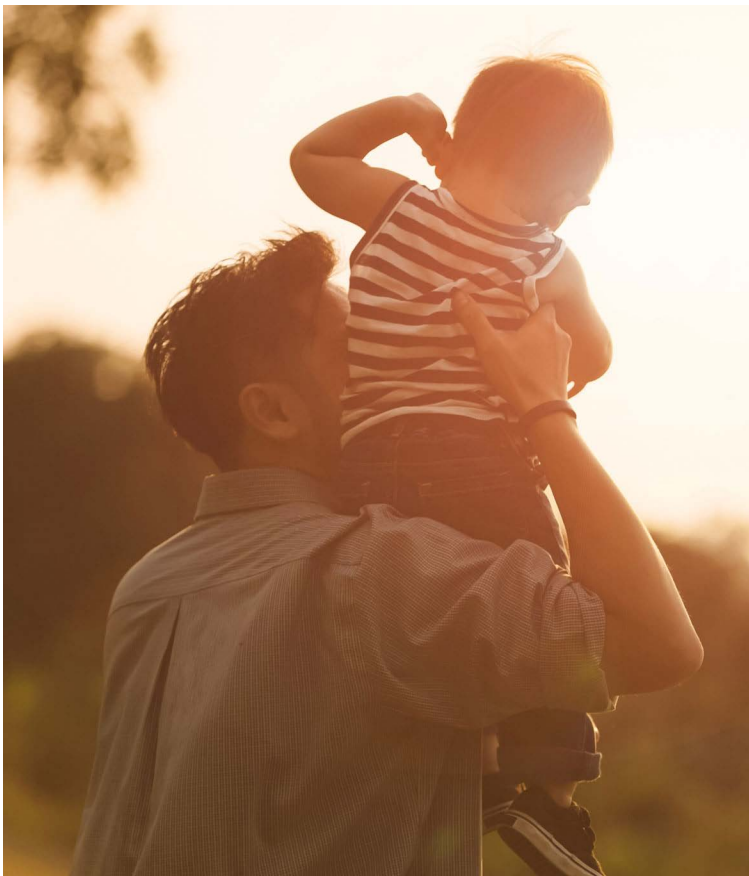
Meanwhile, most caregivers are expected to raise the children, keep them connected in some way to their imprisoned parent, earn a living, and care for other members of the family. It may be difficult for caregivers to respond consistently to the feelings and behaviors of the children.

Other caring adults in the child's life such as teachers, health care providers, social workers, clergy, coaches, or librarians may or may not be trained to help children or their caregivers cope with this crisis. It may be helpful to share this resource with them as well if they are a trusted family support.

## Influences on the caregiver's ability to cope:

- The degree of familiarity they have with the child
- The intensity of change and upheaval in the child's life
- Economic stress/instability, or the oppression of poverty
- Degree of isolation, whether in urban, suburban, or rural settings
- Caregiver's health and emotional well-being
- Quality of the child's school
- Caregiver's job satisfaction
- Community resources
- Support of family and friends
- Family spirituality and faith
- The impact of racial and ethnic prejudices
- Presence of knowledgeable professionals

## What do children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers need?



Every child, family and circumstance are different. Children will need different things from caregivers depending on their age, temperament and personality, the family circumstances, the facts and details of the crime, and the availability of outside resources.<sup>1</sup>

Some examples of circumstances faced by children of incarcerated parents are:

- Parents who were not around much before their incarceration
- Parents who were unpredictable because of mental health or substance abuse
- Parents who were actively involved before jail or prison
- Trauma from witnessing a violent arrest or a history of traumatizing experiences
- Moving to a new city or state
- Changing schools or childcare arrangements
- Difficulty staying in contact with an incarcerated parent

1. (From interviews with Caregivers - Adalist-Estrin, Family and Corrections Network-FCN).





## Most caregivers need:

- Support and understanding from friends, family, clergy, and the community
- Emotional support, such as counseling or group activities
- Information about children of incarcerated parents and services in the community
- Guidance on what is generally best for children and how to answer their questions
- Rules, boundaries, and space in the home for the children, the family, and the caregiver
- Opportunities for respite care and relief from the duties of caregiving
- Help with managing the needs and services that are all too often fragmented, unavailable, or costly

## Most children of incarcerated parents need:

- Consistent, caring adults who understand that, in general, children love their parents, even when they have committed a crime
- People who will not condemn the incarcerated parents as worthless
- People who will understand that children of prisoners feel angry, sad, confused, and worried
- A chance to express these feelings and learn to cope with them
- A chance to learn and practice skills and keep busy with activities
- Faith or affiliation with a community that can provide meaning for the child beyond their own crisis
- People who can help them to maintain contact with their incarcerated parent or parents or explain to them why they cannot maintain contact





## Feelings and emotions:

When a family member, such as a mom or dad, goes to prison, it can be very difficult for everyone involved. For some children, the experience could be emotionally devastating or even traumatic. For others, it may be less serious, and sometimes even a relief. The overall experience and impact of the child depends on the child's age, understanding of the situation, and reactions of others – particularly their family members.

Children may experience different feelings, multiple feelings at once, or one after the other in sequence. Sometimes these are feelings of sadness, guilt, fear, disbelief, anxiety, anger and/or powerlessness. It is important to help children understand and work through their feelings.

## School difficulties:

The stress of having a parent in jail or prison may affect a child's school performance. Strong emotions and the actions that go along with them can result in classroom challenges, social isolation, and other acting-out behaviors.

It is important to work closely with trusted adults at school to help the child have more success. Many times, teachers do not know about a difficult family situation.

Having information about the home life of a student can help teachers be more understanding about difficult behaviors and can help them plan for what a child needs to help them learn. It is important to be aware of risk factors and to know that these do not define the child.



"All children benefit from strong families and safe communities where their needs are met. Surrounding families with supportive neighborhoods, communities, businesses, schools, services and systems is a critical way to support the well-being of children and families." – *Children's Trust Fund Alliance*

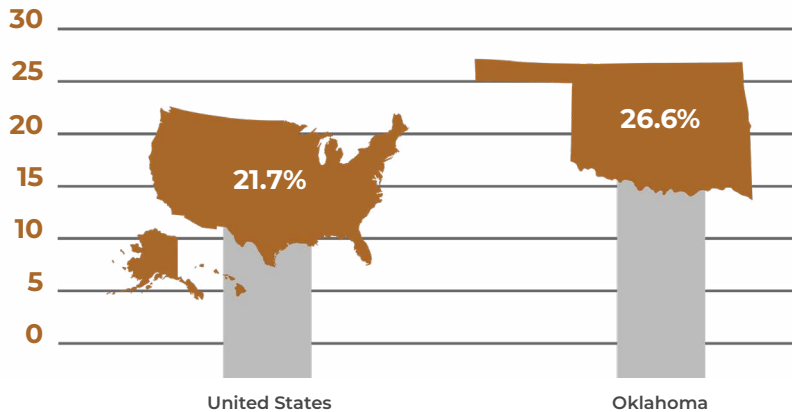
Learn more about the Alliance at: <https://ctfalliance.org/>





# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Protective Factors, and Positive Youth Development

**Prevalence of 2 or more ACEs Among Children**



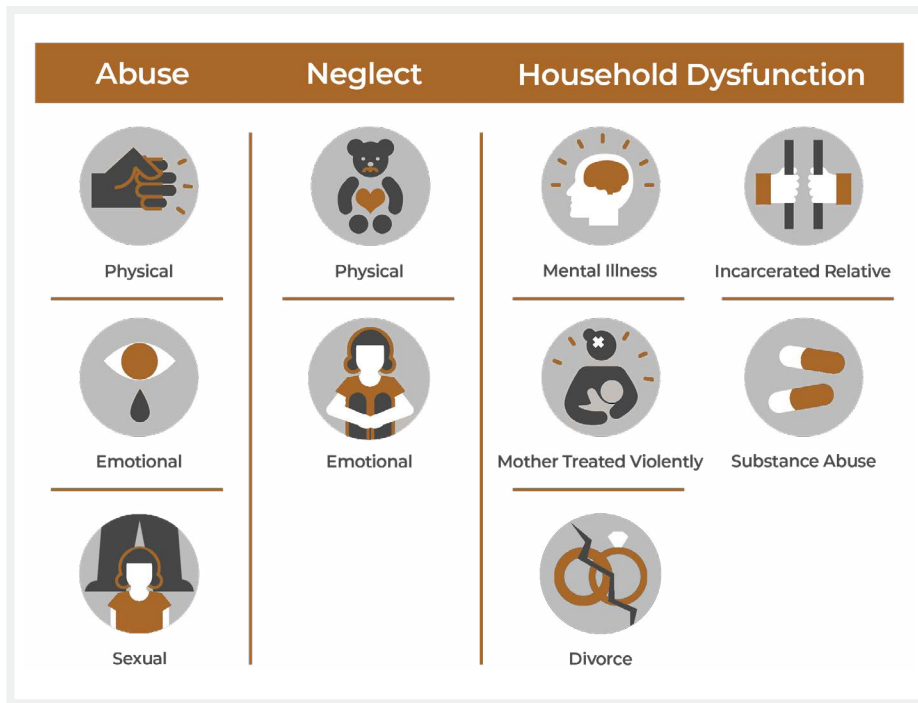
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that may have lasting negative impacts. ACEs affect people at all income and social levels, and can have serious, costly impact across the lifespan by contributing to high levels of toxic stress that derail healthy physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Forty-six percent of children in the United States have experienced at least one ACE (Sacks, 2014). The more ACEs a child experiences, the more likely they are to experience health problems, poor academic achievement, and substance abuse later in life. Oklahoma ranks number one (highest) in percentage of children with an ACE score of 2 or more. (Overall, 2020)

(Starcheski, 2015)



\* Adapted from the Center for the Study of Social Policy

ACEs are categorized into three groups and are further divided into subgroups as follows:



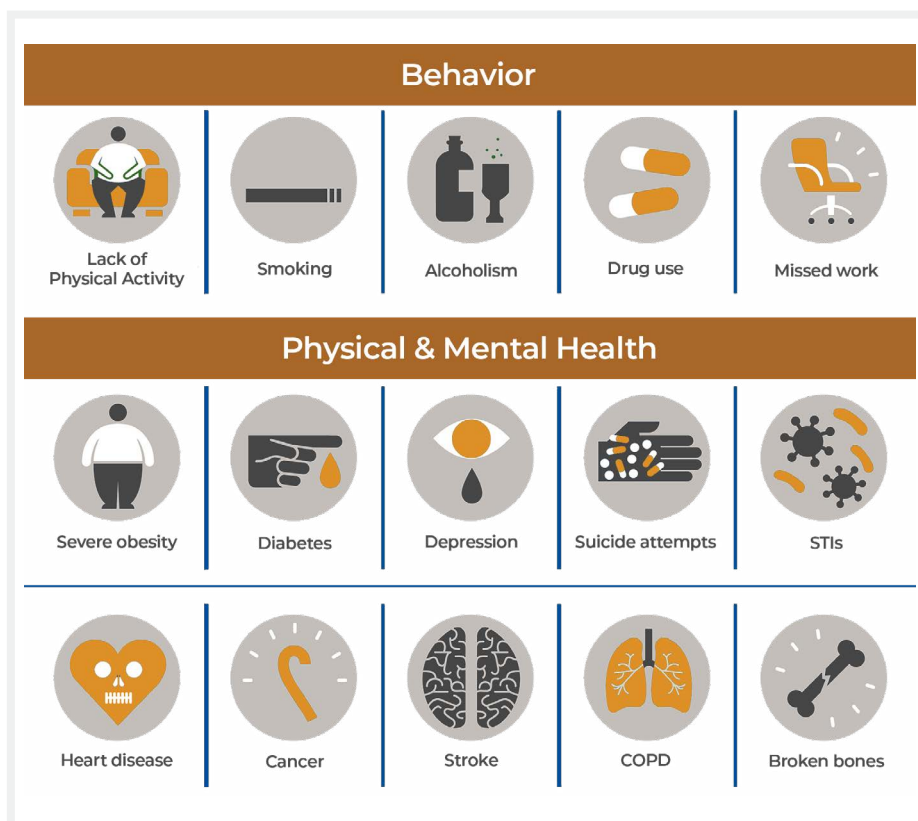
ACE's have been linked to risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, low potential for the future, and early death (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2016). Below-average teacher-reported academic and literacy skills along with behavior problems in kindergarten have been found in children under five years old with ACE exposure (Jimenez, 2016).

Children ages 3 to 5 who have had two or more ACEs are over four times more likely to have trouble calming themselves down, be easily distracted, and have a hard time making and keeping friends.

The good news is, individual, community, and familial strengths facilitate recovery and build resilience (APA, 2008). Despite their enduring influence, ACEs can be offset by the presence of PACEs, Protective and Compensatory Experiences (protective factors), which give children the opportunity to build resilience.

Existing protective factors can insulate children from traumatic experiences. Protective factors that are especially helpful in this demographic include, safety, stability, ability to regulate emotion, and a secure attachment to a caregiver (Buss, 2015). Families should know that maintaining at least one positive, healthy relationship with an encouraging adult is important for developing resilience.

By reducing families' sources of stress, providing children and adults with responsive relationships, and strengthening the core life skills we all need to adapt and thrive, we can prevent and counteract any lasting harm of adverse experiences.



(Starecheski, 2015)



## Positive Youth Development:

Positive Youth Development (PYD) allows for a variety of objectives that affect risk factors, protective factors, and youth trajectory toward positive adult outcomes. PYD objectives include:

### Bonding

- the emotional attachment between a child and various groups
- allows children to develop social connections

### Resilience

- a person's ability to face and overcome adverse situations
- promotes flexibility in times of change and stress

### Social/Emotional/Cognitive/Behavioral/Moral Competence

- promotes integration of feelings, thoughts, and actions to move toward goals
- provides skills in processing change

### Self Determination

- allows children to enhance confidence in thinking on their own
- promotes advocating for oneself and living according to internal standards (Catalano, 1998)

### Spirituality

- traditionally centered on moral and social behavior, now viewed more holistically
- an understanding between one's inward and outward journey (Positive Youth Development and Spirituality: From Theory to Research, 2008)

### Self-Efficacy

- youth belief they can achieve goals with learned skills such as goal setting and coping
- promotes a clear and positive identity (Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, 2015)

### Clear & Positive Identity

- may include ethnicity, gender, family, culture, and community
- fosters a positive identification with a sub-group or culture (Catalano, 1998)

### Belief in the Future

- having hope in long term goals (attending college, finding employment, having choices)
- provides protective factors for youth by seeing a future

### Recognition for Positive Behavior

- reacting to desired actions from youth
- rooted in reinforcement theory

### Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

- allowing children to participate in positive social interactions
- creating an environment for this behavior

### Prosocial Norms

- embracing healthy beliefs and clear standards
- identifying expectations

It is never too late to build the protective habits and environments that promote resilience and recovery. To learn more about ACE's and PYD please search for the following web pages:

Centers for  
Disease Control  
and Prevention CDC  
– Kaiser ACE Study



National Council  
of Juvenile and  
Family Court Judges  
Finding Your ACE Score



The National  
Child Traumatic Stress  
Network About Child  
Trauma



Youth.gov  
Positive Youth  
Development







## Tips for caregivers:

1. Talk about feelings with children.

*"You look sad. Are you missing Daddy?" Or, "When you get that angry at little things I wonder if you are also angry at your mom for going to jail?" or, "I wish your dad could have seen you play ball tonight, and I bet you do too."*

2. Using age-appropriate language, be as honest with children as possible.

*"Mommy won't be coming home for a very long time. It will be four more birthdays (or two more summer vacations)."*

3. Remember to keep your feelings separate from each child's.

*"We feel different things about this. I am angry at your dad and don't really want to see him, but I want you to go because he's your dad and you love him."*

4. Set up family discussion times.

*Tuesday night is the family "meeting." Or Wednesday night is "Let's wait for dad's call tonight and talk about how we are all doing with this." Or Saturday morning's breakfast, "Prison and jail talk is off limits." This can be a moment of relief to those who need a break from the subject.*

5. Talk about the family's choice to tell others or keep it a secret from certain people.

*Let children know why the choice is necessary. Provide plenty of opportunity to talk about it at home.*

6. Encourage children to write or talk to their parents whenever possible.

7. Help children start a picture or story that their parent adds to, and then the child adds on, and so on by mailing it back and forth.

8. Read with the children. Encourage your library to include books and pamphlets about children of incarcerated parents in its collection.

9. Get support and help for the children and yourself through friends, clergy or counselors.

*By Ann Adalist-Estrin, Children of Prisoners Library, Family and Connections Network. Copyright 2003.*



## Questions a child might ask when a family member goes to prison

There are no answers that fit all difficult questions that a child may ask. Each circumstance is unique. This toolkit is designed for you to go through the information and pick out what may apply to you.

In most cases, a prison sentence will be another immediate family crisis, the worst-case scenario. Until now, adults and children in the family could hope for a better outcome such as a suspended sentence, deferred imposition of sentence, or a prison alternative. At this point in the process, it is certain that the family member won't be coming home any time soon. On the other hand, if the family member committed crimes against the children or other adults in the family, a prison sentence guarantees a respite from the hurt, perhaps permanently, and might be a relief. Prisons and jails are similar in appearance, but they have different purposes.

Jails are temporary holding facilities operated by cities, counties, and tribal governments. Suspects go to jail after arrest and before a court hearing or trial if they are not granted bond (or bail). Offenders convicted of misdemeanors in Oklahoma may also serve their sentences in local jails, often in the community in which they committed their crimes. Offenders sometimes remain in county jails for months after sentencing.

Prisons in Oklahoma are large, secure facilities designed for felony offenders serving longer sentences. Prisons have more treatment, education, and exercise options than jails. Prisons and jails are a place where people who have been accused or convicted of crimes are confined or incarcerated. Generally, people stay in jail if they are sentenced for less than a year or if they are waiting for their trial. If they receive a sentence for more than a year, they go to prison. People who are incarcerated are often called inmates.

### What are jails?

**Jails are temporary holding facilities operated by cities, counties, and tribal governments.**

### What are prisons?

**Prisons in Oklahoma are large, secure facilities designed for felony offenders serving longer sentences.**

### Who goes to jails and prisons?

**Prisons and jails are a place where people who have been accused or convicted of crimes are confined or incarcerated.**

### How long will they stay?

**Generally, people stay in jail if they are sentenced for less than a year or if they are waiting for their trial. If they receive a sentence for more than a year, they go to prison.**

## 10 questions a young child might ask

1. When can I see or talk to my family member?



*"I will find out what the visiting rules are and help you see him." If you have a family member held in a jail, contact the jail for more information on how to arrange contact.*

*Each jail has different visitation procedures. Some information can be found on each local jail's website. For prison visiting rules, visit <https://oklahoma.gov/doc.html> and click on "Facilities" at the top of the web page.*

2. When is my family member coming home?

*"We believe (s)he might come home after two summers," or "after three birthdays," or "when you are 12 years old." Be careful not to give a child a firm date because prison release dates can change for many reasons, including parole (early release) or new criminal charges (extended stay). If you are reasonably certain when the sentence will end, try using a reference date that is important to the child.*

3. Will my family member be safe?

*"People who work at the prison are called correctional officers. They are much like police officers. They work very hard to make sure that your family member and the others who are incarcerated are safe. You will be safe when you visit."*

4. Where will my family member sleep?

*"Your family member will sleep in a bed sort of like a camp cot in a small room with a door, called a cell. (S)he will probably share a cell with at least one other person."*

5. What will (s)he wear?

*"People who are incarcerated wear identical uniforms that look like doctor or nurse 'scrubs.' They also have socks and shoes, provided by the prison."*

6. What will (s)he eat?

*"The prison serves three meals a day on trays in a cafeteria similar to the one you have at school. Some people in prison eat meals in their cells. They can also buy snacks from a prison shop called a commissary."*

7. How will my family member spend his/her time in prison?

*"People read books, write letters, and go outside or to a gym for exercise. They attend classes that help them learn how to obey rules, be better parents, stop drinking alcohol or taking drugs, and be less angry. Most prisons have classes for incarcerated parents who want to earn their high school diploma, GED or study for college."*

8. What will it be like to visit prison?

*Every prison is different. You will be informed about the rules in advance. This is a general answer to help children envision the visit and perhaps lessen their fear: "You will be with me (or other adult caregiver) the entire time. Before we go, the prison will tell us what we can wear and what we can and cannot bring into the prison. Going into the prison will be sort of like going through airport security (if the child has been to an airport). We will be checked to be sure we don't have cell phones or other things that are not allowed in prison. We will visit in a special room with tables and chairs. Most prison visiting areas have books and toys for children to enjoy. Your family member will meet us there."*

9. Will anyone hurt us?

*"The people who work at the prison will keep us safe. You will not be left alone at any time in the prison. It might be scary at first to be in a prison, but no one will hurt us." Public safety is the top priority at ODOC correctional facilities. Staff will take any action necessary to protect visitors, other staff and those who are incarcerated. Visits include some risks, which staff members will explain to visitors. Young children probably do not need to be told that a prison visit involves risk. However, it might be a good idea to explain that a stranger (security staff) will be touching them during the search.*

10. What if I do something wrong? Will I have to go to prison?

*"If you do something wrong, you will have a consequence like 'time out' or not riding your bike for three days. You will not go to prison."*





## Family / Caregivers: Should I apply for this?

*If you are taking care of a child whose parent is in jail or prison, you may need assistance. Getting answers to questions and finding services, programs and support can be confusing and overwhelming.*

*You may be eligible to receive help if you're dealing with the following situations: eviction, lack of food, homelessness, pregnancy, medical issues, utility shut-off, domestic violence, medical emergency, non-receipt of benefits, dental, mental health services, childcare needed due to work, or circumstances which present harm to the client or others.*



### Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP provides seasonal assistance to low-income households to assist with winter heating and summer cooling costs, and to provide emergency help for some families who have received utility cut-off notices. Apply at your local Oklahoma Human Services (OKDHS) office in December and July for heating and cooling assistance. Check with your local utility company and ask if there are other assistance programs. (<https://oklahoma.gov/okdhs/services/liheap/utilityservicesliheapmain.html>)



### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Children may be eligible for SNAP assistance even if their parents are not. If parents are ineligible for SNAP because they are incarcerated, their children may still be eligible for benefits. The child(ren)'s guardian(s) or caregiver(s) may apply on behalf of the child(ren) or may include them as a part of their own SNAP household if they are also participating in the program. Apply at your local OKDHS office (<https://oklahoma.gov/okdhs/services/snap.html>)

Or apply over the phone through Hunger Free Oklahoma's SNAP Hotline. Call toll-free at 1 (877) 760-0114. English and application assistance is available Monday-Friday 8 am to 8 pm and Saturday 9 am to 5 pm. Burmese and Zomi application assistance are available Wednesday-Friday 1:30 pm to 8 pm and Saturday 1 pm to 5 pm.



### Summer Meals for Kids

This program offers meals and learning activities for children over the summer months when children are not in school. To find a site near you, visit <https://meals4kidsok.org>



### Child Support Services

OKDHS Child Support Services helps to ensure that both parents are providing the financial support their children need. The parent who is not incarcerated may want to apply for TANF. If so, the state may proceed with a child support case when the application is reviewed. You may want to talk to the incarcerated parent about working with the child support office to request a review and adjustment that reflects actual income during the incarceration period. For more information contact your local OKDHS office or (<https://oklahoma.gov/okdhs/services/child-support-services.html>)



### Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF is a federally funded program for children deprived of support because of a parent's death, incapacity, absence or unemployment. Cash assistance is available to the family on a time-limited basis through TANF. The purpose of this federal program is to provide temporary support in meeting basic needs, training leading to employment, employment services and childcare assistance for qualified families with children. (<https://oklahoma.gov/okdhs/services/tanf/tanfhome.html>)





### Child Welfare Services

Child Welfare Services is required to engage parents, including absent and noncustodial parents, in case planning for their children in foster care whenever possible and appropriate even if the parents are incarcerated. For more information contact your local OKDHS office or (<https://oklahoma.gov/okdhs/services/child-welfare-services.html>)

To report child abuse or neglect, call the statewide Child Abuse Hotline at any time, at 1-800-522- 3511 or your local county OKDHS office during business hours. You will be asked to give the child's name, address and specifics about what happened – how they were harmed or neglected.



### Child Care Assistance

OKDHS helps to pay for the cost of childcare for children up to age 13 while the parent(s) work or go to school. Application for the program is made through the local county OKDHS office. For information call 1-844-834-8314 or (<https://oklahoma.gov/okdhs/services/adult/ccsubsidy/child-care-subsidy.html>)



### Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA)

Many children remain eligible or gain eligibility for Medicaid coverage (SoonerCare) while their parents are incarcerated. The Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) is responsible for administering the Oklahoma Medicaid Program and oversight of all state purchased health care. For information call the OHCA helpline at 1-800-987-7767 or (<http://www.okhca.org/>)



### Oklahoma County Health Departments

Oklahoma currently has county health departments and two independent city-county health departments serving all 77 counties. Each department offers a variety of services, such as immunizations, family planning, maternity education, well-baby clinics, adolescent health clinics, hearing and speech services, child developmental services, environmental health services, and the SoonerStart early intervention program. For information call the Oklahoma State Department of Health at 1-800-522-0203 or (<https://oklahoma.gov/health/locations/countymap.html>)



### Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

If you are caring for a child between the ages of 0 and 5 you may qualify for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. This program is provided throughout the state in county health departments, clinics, hospitals, and health centers. For more information (<https://oklahoma.gov/health/family-health/wic.html>)



### Child Guidance Program at the Oklahoma State Department of Health

The Child Guidance Program at the Oklahoma State Department of Health housed in the Family Support and Prevention Service, aims to build healthy family relationships, and enhance child development. The program provides behavioral health, child development, parent education, and speech-language services. These services are provided on a sliding fee scale based on income and size of family. No one will be turned away for inability to pay. For more information call 405-271-4477, visit your local health department, or go to the Child Guidance Program (<https://oklahoma.gov/health/services/children-family-health/child-guidance-program.html>)



### Social Security

Persons convicted of crime and incarcerated for more than 30 continuous days no longer receive social security retirement or disability payments while serving their sentences. But family members eligible to receive a portion of the incarcerated person's benefits should continue receiving payments. For more information call 1-800-772-1213 or (<https://www.ssa.gov/>)



### Social Security Cards

You do not have to be the child(ren)'s legal guardian to obtain Social Security cards for them. All U.S. citizens need a copy of their birth certificate or baptismal record. For more information contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213, (<https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/>) or go in person to your nearest Social Security Office.



### Birth Certificates

The Oklahoma State Department of Health Division of Vital Records is responsible for registering every birth. For general information call 405-426-8000 or to get a birth/death certificate go to Birth Certificates. (<https://oklahoma.gov/health/services/birth-and-death-certificates/birth-certificates.html>)



## Enrolling children in school

You don't have to be the legal guardian of a child to enroll the child in public school. Children of incarcerated parents may be considered homeless if they are living with a caregiver who is not their parent or court-ordered guardian. For school, children can get assistance for education under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.



If you have questions about a child's eligibility under McKinney-Vento or need help accessing services for a student, contact the local public school or Oklahoma State Department of Education. (<https://sde.ok.gov/homeless-resources>)



If you have a child with developmental disabilities or chronic medical conditions, you or the child may have special questions and need special assistance. Schools are required to assess children with learning disabilities and provide a free and appropriate education. For more information contact the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services at 405-521-3351 or (<https://sde.ok.gov/special-education>)



### Enrolling Children in Head Start and Early Head Start

These programs provide a comprehensive program of childcare, education, health, mental health, nutrition, parent involvement and services for children with disabilities. Early Head Start is for children from birth to age 3 and for pregnant women; Head Start is for children age 3-5. Eligibility is based on family income and other criteria. For more information (<https://okacaa.org/headstart/programs/>)



### Reduced-Price/Free Breakfast or Lunch

You can apply for this program at any time during the school year, but keep an eye out for the application, which may be sent home with the child during the first week of school. For more information contact your local school district or (<https://sde.ok.gov/child-nutrition-programs>)

## Homelessness resources

Pivot



The Homeless Alliance



Housing Solutions  
of Tulsa



Sisu Youth Services



If using the print version of this toolkit, please search for the names of the webpages provided in each box.





## Additional Oklahoma programs and agencies offering services and supports to families



### Oklahoma 2-1-1 Helpline

Resources for food, clothing, shelter, and financial assistance can be found at Oklahoma 2-1-1. It is a free and confidential community helpline available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 2-1-1 helps people access information they need to navigate the ever increasing and complex array of human services. For community, housing and financial assistance resources dial 2-1-1. (<https://csctulsa.org/211-oklahoma/>)



### Birthright Living Legacy

The mission of Birthright Living Legacy is to validate the merit fathers bring to parenting. We celebrate and support fathers by equipping them with the tools and resources to lead successful families in the home out of the home or while incarcerated. We connect to a community of fathers through bi-weekly meetings, events, and workshops to improve parent-child relationships. In addition, Birthright Living Legacy provides support and counseling referrals to fathers while working to create a strong community of fathers dedicated to creating positive parent cycles. (<https://brlivinglegacy.com>)



### Salvation Army

The Salvation Army operates service centers in communities across Oklahoma. Services include food distribution, children's programs, disaster relief, rehabilitation centers, and more. (<https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/>)



### Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS)

For information about drug/alcohol dependence and prevention, call the Reach Out Hotline at 1-800-522- 9054 or (<https://oklahoma.gov/odmhsas.html>). Teens can talk to a peer who is trained to assist callers with any concerns including drugs and alcohol by contacting Teenline at 1-800-522-8336, between the hours of 3pm and midnight.



### University of Oklahoma Center on Child Abuse & Neglect

The Center on Child Abuse and Neglect offers assessment and treatment for children who have been abused or neglected, adolescent sex offenders, and women and the children of women who used inappropriate substances during pregnancy. They also provide assessments for children at high-risk for abuse or neglect. For more information call 405-271-8858 or (<https://medicine.ouhsc.edu/Academic-Departments/Pediatrics/Sections/Developmental-Behavioral-Pediatrics/Patient-Care/Center-on-Child-Abuse-and-Neglect>)



### Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR)

OPSR was created to help Oklahoma families access the early care and education, family support, and health and mental health services they need to support their children during the most critical period of development from birth to age five. OPSR facilitates collaborative planning and decision making to increase coordination between programs, to maximize the use of public and private funding, and to pursue policies that improve learning opportunities and environments for Oklahoma's children. (<https://okschoollreadiness.org>)



### The Oklahoma Association of Youth Services

Oklahoma Youth Services Agency provides counseling, mentoring, first offender programs, shelters, intervention centers, and youth services. (<https://www.oays.org/>)



### Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies

Community Action Agencies are locally governed non-profit organizations that work to improve the lives of low-income individuals by creating opportunities for increased self-sufficiency and greater participation in the community. Community Action Agencies serve all 77 counties in Oklahoma. For more information call 405-949-1495 or (<https://okacaa.org/>)





### Women's Justice Team

Women's Justice Team (WJT) offers on-site, and remote mental health and substance use treatment services to female-identified individuals in an outpatient setting. The program takes a multi-generational approach to client care because trauma, incarceration, unmanaged mental illness, and disordered substance use effects individuals and their families. The WJT parenting program specializes in providing gender-responsive care to parents that both restores parent capacity and strengthens family bonds. WJT provides family-inclusive, trauma-informed parenting groups that help build parenting skills to support the healing of families in early recovery. WJT provides maternal health care for pregnant clients, including referrals for prenatal care, doula assistance, and Family Care Plans. For more information about the WJT, call 918-560-1320. <https://www.fcsok.org/womens-justice-team/>



### Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY)

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth works to improve services to children through planning, coordinating, and communicating with communities and between public and private agencies; independent monitoring of the children and youth service system; and testing models and demonstration programs for effective services. For more information call 405-606-4900 or (<https://www.oklahoma.gov/occy>)



### Calm Waters

Help for children and families in their grief journey caused by death, divorce or other significant loss. For more information call 405-841-4800 or (<https://www.calmwaters.org/>)



### Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma

Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma helps people overcome challenges to employment through its little to no cost micro credential programs or no cost employment programs for youth, veterans and re-entry populations. After completion of Goodwill programs, clients have an opportunity to speak with employment specialists to help find a job. (<https://okgoodwill.org/programs-and-employment/employment-programs/reentry-preparation-program/>)



### Warmline for Oklahoma Child Care Providers

The Oklahoma Warmline provides families, childcare providers, and caregivers free consultation and support for nurturing infants, toddlers, and children up to age 13 as they grow and develop. Trained consultants specializing in child health, development, and behavioral health are available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. They offer practical advice, generate ideas and solutions for daily challenges, provide support, and help connect you with additional resources and referrals when needed. (<https://okwarmline.org/>)



### Oklahoma Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

The child may have a court appointed CASA volunteer. The CASA volunteer's role is to ensure that the rights of the child are represented in all proceedings. (<https://oklahomacasa.org/>)



### Oklahoma Child Care Resource & Referral Association (OCCRRA)

The OCCRRA is an organization devoted to serving communities statewide in ways that enhance Oklahoma's childcare resources. Information is available on training, as well as listings of licensed childcare facilities, with links to local childcare resource and referral agencies. For more information, call 1-888-962-2772 or (<https://www.oklahomachildcare.org/>)



### Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC)

A quick FAQ reference for Oklahoma prisons is available by visiting (<https://oklahoma.gov/doc/offender-info.html>)



### Oklahoma Native American Resource Guide

The Oklahoma Digital Prairie provides the Native American Resource guide with a list of programs and resources by visiting (<https://www.digitalprairie.ok.gov/digital/collection/stgovpub/id/23317>)



### NICWA Resources for Parents Facing Incarceration, and Their Children, Families and Caregivers

This publication from the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) offers essential resources for those navigating the effects of parental incarceration. ([https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/064\\_NICWA\\_San-Manuel-Parent-Resource\\_9.29.pdf](https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/064_NICWA_San-Manuel-Parent-Resource_9.29.pdf))



### Parenting in Jail

Parenting in Jail, a program of Family & Children's Services, provides evidence-based parenting classes to individuals in the following county jails: Tulsa, Okmulgee, Osage, Creek, and Rogers. In addition to classes, participants may be eligible for weekly in-jail contact visits with their minor children. Caregivers are connected to community resources and provided information regarding how to support children with incarcerated parents. Community-based parenting classes are also available to individuals living in Tulsa and surrounding counties if they are involved in the criminal legal system. For more information about the Parenting in Jail program, call 918-560-1300. <https://www.fcsok.org/womens-justice>



### Latino Community Development Agency

Resources are available to help strengthen families about protective factors and community resources. (<https://lcdaok.com>)



### Hispanic Resource Center; Tulsa City-County Library

Provides the opportunity to learn about Latino history and culture. Strengthening cultural and community connections is a protective factor. (<https://www.tulsalibrary.org/locations/visit-the-hispanic-resource-center>)



### Family Resource Centers (FRCs)

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are supportive and welcoming places for all families. These centers offer a range of free or low-cost services, including parenting and play groups, as well as clothing, diapers, and various household items. Each service or support is designed to help families navigate their unique needs. FRCs focus on building strong support networks, ensuring everyone feels understood and valued. Through their programs, they promote resilience and healing, aiming to improve children's well-being and strengthen family bonds. To learn more information or connect with an FRC near you, visit <https://parentpro.org/content/services>.





## Mentoring, supports, and youth organizations



### Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma (BBBSOK)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma's mentoring programs are designed to create positive, measurable outcomes for youth, including educational success, avoidance of risky behaviors, higher aspirations, greater confidence, and better relationships. BBBS matches children (called Littles) with caring adult role models (called Bigs). Bigs share experiences with Littles that expand their world in new ways. BBBSOK services are available in the metro areas of Bartlesville, Norman, Oklahoma City, Stillwater, and Tulsa. For more information, ([www.bigoklahoma.org](http://www.bigoklahoma.org)) or call 918-744-4400.



### Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts is an organization that promotes leadership, success, and adventure in a safe, no-limits environment designed by girls for girls. Girl Scouts aims to develop a strong sense of self, positive values, learning from setbacks, healthy relationships, and problem-solving skills. Girl Scouts participation is available to youth in grades K-1 (Daisies), 2-3 (Brownies), 4-5 (Juniors), 6-8 (Cadettes), 9-10 (Seniors), and 11-12 (Ambassadors). For more information or to find a local Girls Scout program (<https://www.girlscouts.org/>)



### Girl Scouts Beyond Bars of Oklahoma

Girl Scouts of Eastern Oklahoma The Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program works with girls with incarcerated mothers, providing support and transportation to visit and maintain contact. For more information call 918-749-2551 or toll-free 800-707-9914 or (<https://www.gseok.org/en/members/for-parents-and-families/girl-scouts-beyond-bars.html>)



### Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America provides safe places for children to grow and thrive, engaging programs focused on academics, health, and leadership, and trained staff who guide, coach, and motivate kids to be successful. Programs are available for age groups 6 to 9, 10 to 12, 13 to 15, and 16+ years. To locate your nearest Boys and Girls Club call 404-487-5700 or (<https://www.bgca.org/>)



### Scouts BSA

Scouts BSA offers a variety of programs including: Cub Scouts for youth grades K-5, Scouts BSA for youth 11-17 years old, Venturing Co-ed 14-20 years old, Sea Scouting Co-ed 14-20 years old, and Exploring Co-ed 10-20 years old. (<https://www.scouting.org/>)

Being a Cub Scout means you are a member of a worldwide youth movement that stands for certain values and beliefs. Young people of different ages have different ranks in Cub Scouting from Tiger Cub (age 7) to Webelos Scout (age 10). (<https://www.scouting.org/programs/cub-%20scouts/>)



### 4-H Youth Development

This program is for grades 3rd-12th can participate and provides kids with community, mentors, and learning opportunities to develop skills they need to create positive change in their lives and communities. A few of their activities include gardening, science, agriculture, arts, STEM, healthy living, civic engagement and more. (<https://4-h.org/>)



### Grandparent Toolkit

This toolkit and video series help grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. The toolkit's goal is to help increase grandparents confidence and knowledge about common issues and learn about available resources for grandparents. <https://oklahoma.gov/health/health-education/children--family-health/maternal-and-child-health-service/grandparent-toolkit.html>



### Prison Fellowship® Angel Tree®

Prison Fellowship® Angel Tree® fosters relationships between children and their incarcerated parents through local churches that provide Christmas gifts and a personal message from the parent to the child. Angel Tree® also supports the family year-round by sending kids to Christian summer camps, offering one-day sports camps, and providing connections to mentoring and other community programs, all at no cost to the families. (<https://www.prisonfellowship.org/family>)



### Oklahoma Messages Project

Oklahoma Messages Project's mission is to improve children's lives through shared reading via video with their incarcerated parents. OK Messages Project goes into prisons to coach and film parents reading books and sharing a hopeful message. The DVDs are mailed to the child(ren) with the book read on the video. The program, "Messages from Mom and Dad with Bedtime Stories" is an important part of helping children thrive during their parents' absence. When kids hear, 'I want you to know that Mommy is safe, and it's not your fault that we're separated. I miss and love you so much! I'm very proud of you, how you help your sister and grandma, and do your homework—So let's read a book together...'" their worry and sadness decrease significantly. The child-parent connection is restored. Their self-esteem and hope are boosted; and while reading together with parents nightly, their reading skills improve, and they do better in school. For more information about the Oklahoma Messages Project, call 405-285-5955. <https://okmessagesproject.org/>



### New Day Camp

New Day Camp, offered through the Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries of Oklahoma (CJAMM), is for children ages 8 to 14 years who currently have or have had in the past, at least one incarcerated parent. The camp is hosted at Lake Texoma and includes activities to address the special needs of this group of young people may have. [office@cjammm.org](mailto:office@cjammm.org) (<https://www.cjammm.org/new-day-camp/>)



### Light Christian Academy

Light Christian Academy was established in 2012 to serve students with incarcerated parents. While we continue to support families affected by incarceration, we are expanding our reach by opening enrollment to students in the surrounding community. Eligible zip codes include 73111, 73104, 73105, 73106, 73117, and 73121. Light Christian Academy is a Pre-K through 4th grade college-preparatory Christian school



### New Hope Oklahoma

New Hope Oklahoma is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing life skills development and social and emotional support services for children of the justice-involved, across Oklahoma. New Hope offers high-quality, free programming in schools, led by licensed behavioral health professionals and certified teaching staff. Programs are primarily embedded within school sites, but also can be embedded in community centers and churches during the after school hours. In addition to after school programs, New Hope offers free residential summer camps for qualifying youth ages 9-14 years, and day camps for youth ages 5-8 years, during the summer months. <https://newhopeoklahoma.org>



### Oklahoma Family Network (OFN)

The Oklahoma Family Network is Oklahoma's parent-to-parent mentorship network for those raising children with special medical needs, developmental delays, or a disability. OFN provides support to families through parent-to-parent mentorship and educational training. Call 1-877-871-5072 or (<https://oklahomafamilynetwork.org/>)



## Internet links

The Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee provides these Internet links as a service to caregivers. If you do not have access to the Internet, try your local library or ask a friend to print materials from a home computer.

### Other Toolkits and Guides:

Statewide Correctional  
Initiatives Supporting  
Children with Incarcerated  
Parents: An Action Plan for  
Policymakers



Science Direct:  
Children and Youth  
Services Review



National Center for  
Homeless Education



The National Resource  
Center on Children  
and Families of the  
Incarcerated



Youth.Gov Children  
of Incarcerated Parents  
Tools, Guides, & Resources



Sesame Street  
Resources



### Faith-Based Organizations

Office of Faith-Based and  
Community Initiatives  
(State of Oklahoma)



Criminal Justice and  
Mercy Ministries of  
Oklahoma, Inc. (CJAMM)



Prison Fellowship®  
Angel Tree®



If using the print version of this toolkit, please search for the names of the webpages provided in each box.

## Reading lists and videos for children, caregivers and providers

The following books were written to help children understand the experience of having a mother or father in prison or jail. When a parent, counselor or caregiver reads these books to children, it can help create the opportunity to talk more about the child's feelings to help them process and cope.

### **Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream for Me (2013)**

*Daniel Beaty*

A poignant children's book about an absent father's enduring love and the dreams he leaves behind.

### **Far Apart, Close in Heart: Being a Family When a Loved One is Incarcerated (2017)**

*Becky Birtha*

A sensitive story addressing children's varied emotions when a parent is incarcerated, emphasizing that they are not alone.

### **Kennedy's Big Visit (2015)**

*Daphne Brooks*

A touching tale about a young girl's emotional journey visiting her father in prison and their unbreakable bond.

### **Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation (2015)**

*Edwidge Danticat*

A story of a girl who finds hope and connection through her mother's recorded bedtime tales while she is detained.

### **Almost Like Visiting (2016)**

*Shannon Ellis*

A resourceful book exploring the emotions of children during video visits with incarcerated parents.

### **Our Moms (2018)**

*Q. Futrell*

An easy-to-read guide that fosters understanding of parental incarceration while promoting diversity and support.

### **Deena Misses Her Mom (2017)**

*Jonae Haynesworth*

A story about a girl struggling with anger and grief after her mother's incarceration and her journey toward healing.

### **The Night Dad Went to Jail: What to Expect When Someone You Love Goes to Jail (2013)**

*Melissa Higgins*

A guide for children dealing with the emotions and uncertainty when a loved one is jailed.

### **Missing Daddy (2019)**

*Mariam Kaba*

A heartfelt account of a girl's longing for her imprisoned father and the joy of their visits.

### **See You Soon (2022)**

*Mariame Kaba*

An illustrated story showing the love and connection between a girl and her mother, despite incarceration.

### **Love Never Leaves: Children Coping with the Incarceration of Their Loved One (2024)**

*Katrina McCutchen*

Calvin's emotional journey highlights the enduring power of love despite his father's incarceration.

### **Visiting Day (2015)**

*Jacqueline Woodson*

A beautifully illustrated story capturing the anticipation and joy of a girl's monthly visit to her father in prison.

### **My Daddy's in Jail (2015)**

*Anthony Curcio*

A whimsical yet informative story that helps children understand jail and navigate their feelings.

### **Two of Every 100 (2010)**

*Richard W. Dyches*

A workbook designed to help children with incarcerated parents express their feelings and concerns.

### **Anna's Test (2019)**

*Whitney Hollins*

Anna eagerly shares her academic success with her incarcerated father, fostering conversations about parental incarceration.







### **When Dad Was Away (2013)**

*Karen Littlewood*

A girl copes with her father's imprisonment and finds comfort in his recorded stories and family support.

### **Someone I Know Lives in Prison (2013)**

*Rebecca Myers*

An educational tool that helps children understand the prison visitation process.

### **Sing, Sing Midnight (2016)**

*Emily Ridge Gallagher*

A lyrical tale of a girl who finds connection and comfort through her father's unexpected answers during his incarceration.

### **Dear Dad, Love Nelson: The Story of One Boy and his Incarcerated Father (2023)**

*Margaret McBride*

This story builds awareness of parental incarceration and increases empathy for people who have an incarcerated loved one.

### **Questions for Dad: Helping Children Cope with Parental Incarceration (2022)**

*Ryan Stowe*

Two siblings confront their questions and emotions about their father's incarceration, learning to support each other.

### **Welcome Home: Mommy Gets Out Today (2015)**

*Jamantha Williams Watson*

A story about two children navigating the joy and challenges of reuniting with a mother returning from prison.

## Resources for policymakers



**Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents: Bureau of Justice Assistance U.S. Department of Justice:** (<https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/IACP-SafeguardingChildren.pdf>)



**Child Welfare Information Gateway** (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>)



**The Echoes of Incarceration Projects:** Young filmmakers with incarcerated parents created a film about their experience. (<https://www.echoesofincarceration.org/>)



**Caring Through Struggle: Caregivers of Children with Incarcerated Parents.** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uGikgx6QTW>)



**Keeping Children Safe when their Parents are Arrested: Local Approaches that Work** (<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/keeping-children-safe-when-their-parents-are-arrested-local>)



**SchoolHouse Connection** (<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/>)



**Every Door Closed: Barriers Facing Parents with Criminal Records** / Amy E. Hirsch, et al., Center for Law and Social Policy, Community Legal Services, 2002, (<https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/every-door-closed-barriers-facing-parents-criminal-records>)



**Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Action Plan for Federal Policymakers Justice Center,** The Council of State Governments, 2009 (<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/children-incarcerated-parents-action-plan-federal-policymakers>)



**Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children, The Bureau of Justice Statistics Report** Glaze, L. and Maruschak, L., August 2008, revised March 2010, (<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>)



**Oklahoma Study of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children** – 2014 Author: Susan F. Sharp, Ph.D., David Axlyn McLeod, Ph.D, MSW, Melissa S. Jones, MA, (<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/occy/office-of-planning-and-coordination/2014-Oklahoma-Study-of-Incarcerated-Mothers-and-their-Children.pdf>)



**Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee / Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth** ([oklahoma.gov/occy/departments/planning-and-coordination/p-c-cip/children-of-incarcerated-parents-advisory-committee.html](https://oklahoma.gov/occy/departments/planning-and-coordination/p-c-cip/children-of-incarcerated-parents-advisory-committee.html))



**The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan** (US DHHS CDC, 2008) This report succinctly summarizes the short and long-term effects on children of chronic and/or severe stress, including incarceration of a family member. Data focuses on the results of the Adverse (<https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/6978>)



**Oklahoma Study of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children Phase 1, 2 and 3** Author: Susan F. Sharp, Ph.D., Study of Incarcerated Women and Their Children in Oklahoma, October 2004, 2005, (<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/oklahoma-study-incarcerated-mothers-and-their-children-phase-ii>)



## Books for caregivers and service providers

### **Incarceration and Families (2016)**

*Hillary W. Poole*

This book explores the challenges faced by more than 2.5 million American children who have incarcerated parents. It offers advice and encouragement for kids navigating these difficult circumstances while highlighting changes in family structures in modern times. The book includes accessible information and resources to help children feel less isolated.

### **Parental Incarceration and the Family: Psychological and Social Effects of Imprisonment on Children, Parents, and Caregivers (2014)**

*Joyce A. Arditti*

This book examines how parental incarceration impacts children, caregivers, and the incarcerated parent, focusing on the disadvantages children face and the adjustments required of caregivers. Through research and personal stories, it paints a vivid picture of the family dynamics affected by imprisonment. The author advocates for policy changes that better address the needs of families with incarcerated members.

### **The Shadow System: Mass Incarceration and the American Family (2020)**

*Sylvia A. Harvey*

This book follows three families navigating the hardships caused by mass incarceration, from a father serving a life sentence to a mother fighting for custody. It sheds light on how the system fractures families and challenges their resilience. The author provides a human perspective on systemic injustice while illustrating the emotional and social costs of incarceration.

### **Holding On: Family and Fatherhood during Incarceration and Reentry (2019)**

*Tasseli McKay*

Based on a ten-year study, this book examines the parenting and relationships of incarcerated men and their families. It highlights the central role these men play as fathers and partners and how their absence impacts loved ones. The book challenges common perceptions about incarcerated men and advocates for policies that support vulnerable families. The research bridges gaps between family well-being and incarceration studies.

### **Doing Time on the Outside: Incarceration and Family Life in Urban America (2007)**

*Donald Braman*

This book reveals the financial, social, and emotional toll incarceration takes on families. It focuses on urban families and the challenges they face while supporting loved ones behind bars. The author provides a detailed account of how imprisonment reshapes family dynamics and relationships.

### **Family Arrested: How to Survive the Incarceration of a Loved One (2002)**

*Ann Edenfield*

Drawing from personal experience, this book offers practical advice for families dealing with the incarceration of a loved one. It explains the legal and emotional steps families must navigate, from arrest through sentencing and imprisonment. The book provides a roadmap to help families survive and adapt to these challenges.

### **Parenting Through Incarceration and Beyond (2023)**

*Kevin D. Johnson II*

This book empowers incarcerated parents to maintain meaningful relationships with their children and offers strategies for parenting during and after incarceration. It emphasizes the importance of family bonds in promoting healing and resilience. The author calls for a more compassionate and inclusive society that supports families facing these unique challenges.



## Research and information for providers



### **The Antisocial Behavior of the Adolescent Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Developmental Perspective**

*Eddy and Reid (OSLC, 2002)*

This study explores the relationship between parental criminality and adolescent antisocial behavior, examining effective interventions and educational programs for incarcerated parents. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/antisocial-behavior-adolescent-children-incarcerated-parents-developmental-perspective-0>



### **Childhood Loss and Behavioral Problems: Loosening the Links**

*Viboch, Vera (2005)*

This article explains the connection between parental incarceration and child misbehavior, focusing on grief and loss, effective responses to children's feelings of loss, helping children understand parental incarceration, and fostering stability and security. <https://www.vera.org/publications/childhood-loss-and-behavioral-problems-loosening-the-links>



### **Prisoners in 2011**

*Carson, E.A. & W.J. Sabol (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012)*

Highlights data and trends in the incarcerated population during 2011. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p11.pdf>



### **Parents in Prison: Why Keeping Low-Level Drug Offenders in Prison Hurts Kids, and What the Justice Department is Doing to Help**

*Child Trends (August 22, 2013)*

Highlights the adverse effects of incarcerating low-level offenders on children and discusses related justice department initiatives. <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/parents-in-prison-why-keeping-low-level-drug-offenders-in-prison-hurts-kids-and-what-the-justice-department-is-doing-to-help>



### **Broken Bonds: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents**

*Vigne, Davies, Brazzell (Urban Institute, 2008)*

This report highlights the emotional and behavioral impacts of parental incarceration on children and identifies protective factors that help build resilience within families. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/31486/411616-Broken-Bonds-Understanding-and-Addressing-the-Needs-of-Children-with-Incarcerated-Parents.PDF>







### **Children's Antisocial Behavior, Mental Health, Drug Use, and Educational Experience after Parental Incarceration: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis**

Murray, J., D.P. Farrington, & I. Sekol (2012)  
Explores the long-term impacts of parental incarceration on children, focusing on antisocial behavior, mental health, and education. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22229730/>



### **Families Left Behind: The Hidden Costs of Incarceration and Reentry**

Travis, McBride, Solomon (Urban Institute, 2005)

A report for social service providers discussing the effects of incarceration on family dynamics, visitation challenges, and the role of families in stabilization and reintegration. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/50461/310882-Families-Left-Behind.PDF>



### **Prisoners in 2012 – Advance Counts**

Carson, E.A. & D. Golinelli (Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, 2013)

Provides statistical insights into the incarcerated population in 2012. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p12ac.pdf>



### **Mean Lives, Mean Laws: Oklahoma's Women Prisoners**

Sharp, S.F., & Juanita Ortiz (2014)

Discusses the experiences of incarcerated women in Oklahoma, shedding light on systemic issues and social consequences. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.36019/9780813562773/html>



### **Parental Incarceration and Child Wellbeing in Fragile Families Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (Fragile Families Research Brief Number 42, 2008)**

Discusses the effects of parental incarceration on child wellbeing and family dynamics in fragile families. <https://fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/sites/fragilefamilies/files/researchbrief42.pdf>



### **Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children**

Glaze, L.E. & L.M. Maruschak (Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, 2008)

Explores the impacts of parental incarceration on minor children and family dynamics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>



### **Living with a Parent in Prison: Learning from Young People**

Catherine Flynn & Kathryn Gor (2024)

This study shares children's perspectives on coping with parental imprisonment. It highlights their need for connectedness, respect, and recognition, urging improved support from families, schools, and justice systems. [https://shineforkids.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/MonashUniversity\\_ChildrensVoices\\_FinalReport\\_September2024.pdf](https://shineforkids.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/MonashUniversity_ChildrensVoices_FinalReport_September2024.pdf)



### **The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health across the Lifespan**

Summarizes the effects of chronic stress, including parental incarceration, on children's health and development, based on the ACE Study findings. <https://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/22891>

## National Organizations



There are many national organizations that provide support or information.

The Annie E. Casey  
Foundation Kids Count  
Data Center



ASU Center of  
Child Well-Being



WEGOTUSNOW



CSG Justice Center:  
Evidence-Based and  
Promising Programs  
Supporting Incarcerated  
Parents, Their Children and  
Families



Osborne Association



National Center  
for Fathering



If using the print version of this toolkit, please search for the names of the webpages provided in each box.



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2. Parents Behind Bars: Children of Incarcerated Family Members (2012). Idaho's Criminal Justice Commission
3. Beyond the Walls: A Guide to Services for Families Affected by Incarceration. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
4. How to Explain...Jails and Prisons...to Children: A Caregiver's Guide, Oregon Department of Corrections Children of Incarcerated Parents Project Elizabeth Sazie, MD, MPH, Diane Ponder, LCSW and Juanita Johnson
5. Family and Corrections Network (FCN) Including the Children of Prisoners Library. [www.fcnetwork.org](http://www.fcnetwork.org)
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## Survey: Give us your feedback

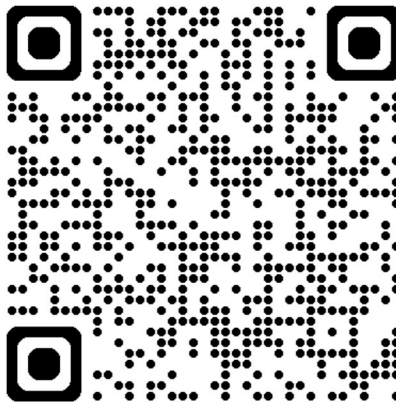
Share your experience with the CIP Toolkit and help us improve future editions.

This brief, voluntary survey invites you to share how you use the Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) Toolkit and which resources have been most helpful.

Your feedback helps the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) and the CIP Advisory Committee strengthen future versions of the toolkit. Responses are anonymous, no identifying information is collected or shared, and the survey takes approximately three to five minutes to complete.

You may also report any missing information, suggest new resources, or request improvements. Alternative formats are available by emailing [danielle.dill@occy.ok.gov](mailto:danielle.dill@occy.ok.gov). All responses are used solely for program improvement.

Scan or click the QR Code



Or visit [tinyurl.com/2026CIPSURVEY](https://tinyurl.com/2026CIPSURVEY)

Thank you for participating.



# Notes



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