



Oklahoma

CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS



“When Oklahoma knows how many of our children are injured by having a parent imprisoned, we can take needed steps to offer a positive path instead of abandoning them to follow their parents’ footsteps into prison. Unaddressed, our injured children as adults will need many additional state resources to pay for prison beds and to replace the tax dollars which would otherwise have been contributed by those children as hard working citizens”.
April Sellers White, Co-Chair

Did You Know?

More than 2.7 million children in the United States have an incarcerated parent (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

On any given day in Oklahoma tens of thousands of children have an incarcerated parent. Considering only those locked up in prisons and county jails and the population turnover of these facilities, the tens of thousands could be multiplied many times over. Put simply, the number of Oklahoma children affected by parental incarceration is staggering.

Prison Fellowship Ministries, Project Angel Tree is a prison fellowship program that connects parents in prison with their children. According to the 2012 Project Angle Tree data, there were at least 6,140 Oklahoma children that received Christmas gifts.

Oklahoma was selected as one of ten states to participate in a pilot launch of the Sesame Street toolkit entitled, “Little Children Big Challenges: Incarceration.” The toolkits contain a Sesame Street DVD, A Guide for Parents and Caregivers and a Children’s Storybook. Sesame Street is providing the educational toolkits free. More than 60 Oklahoma child serving agencies and community organizations have ordered over 8,000 toolkits. Within the Department of Corrections, sufficient toolkits have been received at each facility to provide one to each incarcerated woman. Staff at each facility has developed their own roll-out plan to facilitate distribution to caregivers and children. Check out their website: www.Sesameworkshop.org/incarceration

Since 2011, the Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee has reviewed research and engaged stakeholders in exploring the gap between what we know from the literature and what collaborative ways Oklahoma is doing to better meet the needs of children with incarcerated parents.

Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee Recommendations:

- Continue with the Oklahoma Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents Program and expand mentorship services.
- Expand partnerships between local communities for the purpose of encouraging their resources to be part of the United Resource One client management solution as the system moves from a pilot into implementation.
- Continue to strengthen and broaden current partnerships and statewide initiatives, such as the launching of the Sesame Street Resource Toolkit- Little Children Big Challenges: Incarceration. Partnerships and programs like Sesame Street are important for Oklahoma’s children with incarcerated parents, inmates, families, and caregivers.
- Continue development of a Children of Incarcerated Parents Resource Toolkit.



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"My heart was hurting because my mama was gone and gone and gone. Dear Mama, I miss you. I wish you would come home today".
6 years old



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In 2013, the Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Mentoring Program provided one-to-one mentoring to 112 children and youth through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma (BBBSOK). The BBBSOK Amachi Program served 613 children of incarcerated parents in 2013. They currently have 229 children of incarcerated parents in need of a mentor statewide.

In 2012 and 2013, fifteen children have been enrolled in Little Light Christian School, a private non-profit elementary school specifically serving children with incarcerated parents.

According to OKDHS, in February 2014, there were 1342 children placed in state custody that had one or more parents incarcerated.

In 2011-2012, Head Start provided services to 158 families affected by incarceration.

In 2013, Girl Scouts of Eastern Oklahoma provided monthly transportation and reentry services to 625 children at state female correctional centers, 415 were transferred to community troops to continue leadership experiences, and 50 children were referred for additional mental health services and attended group therapy sessions.

In 2013, Oklahoma Messages Project sent DVD messages from incarcerated moms and dads for Mother's Day, Father's Day and Christmas to 823 children. Overall, since they launched the project, over 2700 children have received DVD messages and books.

In 2013, over 90 Oklahoma children, with incarcerated parents, attended New Day Camp 1 (ages 8-11) and around 45 children attend New Day Camp 2 (ages 12-14).

In August 2013, the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth launched the pilot phase United Resource One (UR-1) test model, partnering with the Western Oklahoma Family Care Center. This web-based resource center application is designed to manage and display services and clients for local communities and is currently developing in the right direction, soon to be fully implemented.

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