

# Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Toolkit



**Child Welfare  
Services**

# Children of Incarcerated Parents Toolkit

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## **Introduction**

If you have suddenly started taking care of a child whose parent is in jail or prison, or you are the primary caregiver to your grandchildren while their parents are in jail or prison, this toolkit is for you.

If, last night, law enforcement came to your home and arrested your husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend in front of the children, this toolkit is for you.

If you are a teacher or a school counselor who knows that your student's parent is in jail or prison, this toolkit may be for you.

If you are a teacher and a child is asking difficult questions related to the criminal justice system, this toolkit may be for you.

If you are a social worker looking for resources to help a foster parent with a child whose mother or father was arrested last night, this toolkit may be for you.

If you operate a day care center and your client needs a place for her kids to stay for a few nights because she was arrested on a probation violation and needs some time to figure things out, this toolkit may be for you.

If 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, this toolkit may be for you.

## **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 and your child, client or 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 Children of Incarcerated 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. Or, 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 of prisoners may have many things in common. They cope with the criminal justice system, deal with the impact on the children, have to 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. But each family and each caregiving circumstance is 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 moved 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 these children.

Teachers, health care providers, social workers, clergy and those who work as coaches, librarians and recreation directors are not trained to help children or their caregivers cope with this crisis.

**Influences on the Caregivers' 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



**From Interviews with Caregivers**

What Do Children of Prisoners and Their Caregivers Need? (Adalist-Estrin, Family and Corrections Network-FCN). Every child, family and circumstance is different. Some children are used to parents who were not around much before their incarceration. Some children have parents who are unpredictable because of depression or drugs or alcohol. Other children's parents were actively involved with them before they went to jail or prison.

Some children may have been traumatized by witnessing a violent arrest or may have a history of traumatizing experiences. Some children of prisoners may have no contact with their parent; others talk to their incarcerated parent every day.

Some children move to a new city or state. Some change schools or go into day care so their caregivers can work. 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.

**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 about services in the community
- Guidance about 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 care-giving
- Help with managing the needs and services that are all too often fragmented, unavailable or costly

### **Most Children of Prisoners 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 may 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 on 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.

Work closely with trusted adults at school to help your 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.

### **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. 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.

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

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

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

9. Read with your children. Encourage your library to include books and pamphlets about children of prisoners in its collection.

10. 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.

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### **Questions a Child Might Ask when a Family Member Goes to Prison**

There are no answers that fit all difficult questions that a child or young student 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.

Jails and prisons 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.

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) recognizes that incarceration not only affects inmates but also their family and friends. ODOC has created a handbook to help answer questions that you may have regarding inmates sentenced to Oklahoma's prison system. This book, *Guide for Families & Friends of offenders: State of Oklahoma Corrections Department*, is intended to provide general information. An appendix of correctional facility contract information is available at the end of the handbook. You can access their website by going to: [www.ok.gov/doc/](http://www.ok.gov/doc/).

## 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 [www.ok.gov/doc/](http://www.ok.gov/doc/).



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 other inmates 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?

“Inmates 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 inmates eat meals in their cells. Inmates 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 inmates who want to earn their high school degree 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 inmates. 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.”

For additional information and support, see page 14 for a list of free brochures that will offer additional answers for caregivers and educators alike. These brochures are offered through the Family Corrections Network (FCN).



## 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, day care 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 Department of Human Services (DHS) office in December and July for heating and cooling assistance. Check with your local utility company and ask if there are other assistance programs.

Visit [www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/liheap/](http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/liheap/).

### 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 children's guardians or caregivers can apply on behalf of the children or may include them as a part of their own SNAP household if they are also participating in the program. Apply at your local DHS office or visit [www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/snap/](http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/snap/).

### Child Support Services

DHS Child Support Services is here to help ensure that both parents are providing the financial support their children need. If you are together, and the other parent is incarcerated, you may want to apply for TANF. If so, the state may proceed with a child support case. 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 DHS office or visit the Office of Child Support Enforcement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocse/realistic\\_child\\_support\\_orders\\_for\\_incarcerated\\_parents.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocse/realistic_child_support_orders_for_incarcerated_parents.pdf).

### 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. Visit [www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/tanf/](http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/tanf/).

## **Child Welfare Services**

Child Welfare Services is required to engage parents, including absent and noncustodial, in case planning for their children in foster care whenever possible and appropriate. Even if the parents are incarcerated. For more information call your local DHS office or visit their website: <http://www.okdhs.org>. For information on case planning for incarcerated parents, go to <http://www.okdhs.org/library/policy/oac340/075/06/0045000.htm>.

To report child abuse or neglect, call the statewide Child Abuse Hotline at anytime, at 1-800-522-3511 or your local county DHS 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**

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) helps to pay for the cost of child care 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 DHS office. For information call 1-844-834-8314 or go to <http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/>.

## **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 go to <http://www.okhca.org/>.

## **Oklahoma County Health Departments**

Oklahoma currently has 68 county health departments and two independent city-county health departments serving 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, and the SoonerStart early intervention program. For information call the Oklahoma State Department of Health at 1-800-522-0203 or go to <http://www.ok.gov/health/>.

## **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 service is provided throughout the state in county health departments, clinics, hospitals and health centers. For more information, go to [http://www.ok.gov/health/Child\\_and\\_Family\\_Health/WIC/](http://www.ok.gov/health/Child_and_Family_Health/WIC/).

## **Build Healthy Relationships and Enhance Child Development**

The Child Guidance program is to build healthy family relationships and enhance child development. The program provides behavioral health services, childhood development and parent education services, and speech-language services. Services are provided on a sliding fee scale based on income and size of the family. For more information call 405-271-4477 or your local county health department or go to [http://www.ok.gov/health/Child\\_and\\_Family\\_Health/Child\\_Guidance\\_Service/](http://www.ok.gov/health/Child_and_Family_Health/Child_Guidance_Service/).

## **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 visit <http://www.ssa.gov/>.

## **Social Security Cards**

You do not have to be the children's legal guardian to obtain Social Security cards for them. 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, 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 405-271-4040 or go to [http://www.ok.gov/health/Birth\\_Death\\_Certificates/index.html](http://www.ok.gov/health/Birth_Death_Certificates/index.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 the purpose of 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. Also, information is available on the Oklahoma Department of Education website: <http://www.ok.gov/sde/>.

If you have a child with developmental disabilities or chronic medical conditions, you or your 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 Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services at 405-521-3351 or visit <http://www.ok.gov/sde/>.

## **Reduced-Price/Free Breakfast or Lunch**

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

## **Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE)**

For resources, tips, tools and support for parents to advocate for their child's education, visit [www.ok.gov/sde/community](http://www.ok.gov/sde/community).

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

These programs provide a comprehensive program of child care, education, health, mental health, nutrition, parent involvement and services for children with disabilities. Early Head Start is for children from birth to age 3; Head Start is for children age 3-5. Eligibility is based on family income. For more information visit <http://www.okacaa.org/headstart/>.



## **Additional Oklahoma programs and agencies that offer services and supports to families**

### **Oklahoma 2-1-1 Helpline**

Resources for food, clothing, shelter, and financial assistance. United Way 2-1-1 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. 2-1-1 provides callers with information and referrals to human services for everyday needs and in times of crisis. For more information go to <http://www.211oklahoma.org/>.

### **Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army operates service centers in communities across Oklahoma. Services include food distribution, children's programs, disaster relief, rehabilitation centers, etc. Visit [www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org) for more information.

### **Oklahoma "United We Ride"**

The website helps citizens stay informed and find transit systems in their counties. For more public transit information visit <http://www.ok.gov/unitedweride/>

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

For information about drug/alcohol abuse and prevention, call the Reach Out Hotline at 1-800-522-9054 or go to <http://ok.gov/odmhsas/>. Teens with problems can talk to a peer who is trained to assist callers by contacting Teenline at 1-800-522-8336.

### **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 provide assessments for children at high-risk for abuse or neglect. For more information call 405-271-8858 or visit <http://www.oumedicine.com/ccan>.

### **Smart Start Oklahoma**

Smart Start is Oklahoma's statewide early childhood initiative and serves as the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council. Smart Start Oklahoma seeks to provide better opportunities to the children and families in Oklahoma. Its mission is to lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system focused on strengthening families and school readiness for all children. For more information go to <http://smartstartok.org/>.

### **Oklahoma Association of Youth Services**

Oklahoma Youth Services Agency provides counseling, mentoring, first offender programs, shelters, intervention centers, and youth services. For more information call 405-528-4120 or visit <http://oays.org>.

### **Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies**

Community Action Agencies are locally controlled 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. In Oklahoma, Community Action Agencies serve all 77 counties. For more information call 405-949-1495 or visit <http://okacaa.org>.

### **Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth**

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 visit <http://www.ok.gov/occy>.

### **Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee**

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth coordinates an advisory committee that works collaboratively with agencies and service providers to better meet the needs and improve the quality of life for children of incarcerated parents. For more information call 405-606-4900 or visit <http://www.ok.gov/occy>.

### **Oklahoma Department of Human Services Child Care Warmline**

The Warmline for Oklahoma Child Care Providers offers free telephone consultation on numerous topics of concern from providing support, practical advice and resources about parent-child relationships and the behavior and development of children from infants to teens. Consultants answer the Warmline Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. For more information call 1-888-574-5437 or visit [http://www.ok.gov/health/Child\\_and\\_Family\\_Health/Child\\_Guidance\\_Service/Child\\_Care\\_Warmline/](http://www.ok.gov/health/Child_and_Family_Health/Child_Guidance_Service/Child_Care_Warmline/) or <http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/spinit/docs/warmline.htm>.

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

The OCCRRA is an organization devoted to serving communities statewide in ways that enhance Oklahoma's child care resources. Information is available on training, as well as listings of licensed child care facilities, with links to local child care resource and referral agencies. For more information, call 1-888-962-2772 or visit <http://www.oklahomachildcare.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 children are represented in all proceedings. For more information go to [www.oklahomacasa.org/](http://www.oklahomacasa.org/).

### **Oklahoma Department of Corrections (DOC)**

In order to coordinate a visit at the DOC facility, first read about the visitation program and the procedure by getting a copy of *the State of Oklahoma Corrections Department/Guide for Families and Friends of offenders* to facilities. Go to DOC's website to learn more: [www.ok.gov/doc/documents/guideforfamilies.pdf](http://www.ok.gov/doc/documents/guideforfamilies.pdf)

### **Oklahoma Indian Tribe Education Guides**

<http://ok.gov/sde/tribe-education-resources>

Oklahoma State University School of Media & Strategic Communications

<http://www.ok.gov/unitedweride/>

2014 Oklahoma Tribal Behavioral Health Resource Directory

[http://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/Mental\\_Health\\_/Children,\\_Youth,\\_and\\_Family\\_Services/Systems\\_of\\_Care/Tribal\\_Relations/](http://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/Mental_Health_/Children,_Youth,_and_Family_Services/Systems_of_Care/Tribal_Relations/)

Oklahoma Native American Resource Guide

[http://www.okdhs.org/NR/rdonlyres/65DCFEDA-6E77-4E12-BC1E-62AEEAO5EF4B/0/S11049\\_OkNativeAmerResource\\_fod\\_06012011.pdf](http://www.okdhs.org/NR/rdonlyres/65DCFEDA-6E77-4E12-BC1E-62AEEAO5EF4B/0/S11049_OkNativeAmerResource_fod_06012011.pdf)

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

<http://tulsalibrary.org/hrc/>

Latino Community Development Agency

<http://lcdaok.com/programs/>

## **Mentoring, Supports and Youth Organizations**

### **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma**

Having a mom or dad in prison can make growing up more difficult. Children with an incarcerated parent often need additional support and guidance. Big Brothers Big Sisters Amachi program helps broaden their perspectives on what they can achieve in life. For more information call 918-576-6400 or visit [www.bbbsok.org](http://www.bbbsok.org).

### **Girl Scouts**

Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place. For more information visit [www.gseok.org](http://www.gseok.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. This program can be reached 918-749-2551 or toll-free 800-707-9914 or <http://www.gseok.org/>.

### **Boys & Girls Clubs of America**

The mission of the club is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. To locate your nearest Boys and Girls Club call 1-800-854-CLUB or visit <http://www.bgca.org/whoware/Pages/FindaClub.aspx/>.

### **Boy Scouts of America**

The Boy Scouts of America provides a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of citizenship, and develops personal fitness. The Boy Scouts program is for boys who are 11 years old, are at least 10 years old and have finished the fifth grade, or are at least 10 years old and have earned the Arrow of Light award as a Cub Scout. For more information visit <http://www.okscouts.org/joinscouting/>.

### **Cub Scouts of America**

Being a Cub Scout means you are a member of a worldwide youth movement that stands for certain values and beliefs. Boys of different ages have different ranks in Cub Scouting from Tiger Cub (age 7) to Webelos Scout (age 10). For more information go to <http://www.okscouts.org/joinscouting/>.

### **4-H Youth Development**

The program is open to youth ages 9-10, and in many locations there are programs also for 5- to 8-year-olds. To find the 4-H program in your county, call 405-7444-5394 or visit <http://www.4-h.org/fnd4H/>.



### **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**

A number of services are available to grandparents raising grandchildren (and other relatives serving as parents). To learn about services, resources and to get a manual entitled “Starting Points for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren,” contact your local Area Agency on Aging 1-800-211-2116 or visit one of these websites:

<http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/aging/grand/>  
<http://www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com/States/Oklahoma.htm>  
<http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/relationships/friends-family/grandfacts/grandfacts-oklahoma.pdf>  
<http://sunbeamfamilyservices.org/programs/senior-services/grandparents-raising-grandchildren-apply-now-for-help/>  
<http://www.grandsplace.org/gp8/ok.html>

Grandparents raising a grandchild who is 18 years old or younger may qualify for the respite care program. For more information contact OASIS Respite Care at 1-888-771-4550 toll-free or Metro Oklahoma City at 405-271-4550 to apply



### **Angel Tree**

Angel Tree Camping provides religious ministry and support to the children and families of prisoners by distributing holiday gifts to children of prisoners and providing a children’s camping program. For more information visit [www.angeltree.org](http://www.angeltree.org).

**New Hope Oklahoma** is a Tulsa-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing services for children of prisoners. For more information go to <http://www.newhopeoklahoma.org>.

**Camp New Day** offers two weeks of residential camp for children of incarcerated parents. For more information go to [http://www.okumcministries.org/cjamm/new\\_day\\_camp.htm](http://www.okumcministries.org/cjamm/new_day_camp.htm).

### **Little Light Ministries Christian School**

Little Light Christian School is a non-traditional elementary school serving children in grades K-6 who have a parent who has been or is now in jail or prison. For more information go to <http://www.littlelight-ministries.org>.

**Redeeming the Family’s Oklahoma Messages Project** is a program that is making a difference in kids’ lives. The Oklahoma Messages Project will visit a prison and film mothers sharing a heartfelt message and reading a book to her children. The DVDs are mailed to the children with the book or poems the mom read on the video. For more information go to [redeemingthefamily.org](http://redeemingthefamily.org).

### **Oklahoma Family Network**

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 visit <http://www.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

#### **A Toolkit for Working with Children of Incarcerated Parents**

[www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/dbhr/youthtxttoolkit.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/dbhr/youthtxttoolkit.pdf)

#### **Promising Practices Toolkit: Working with Drug Endangered Children and their Families**

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/issues-content/dec/promising\\_practices\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/issues-content/dec/promising_practices_toolkit.pdf)

#### **Sesame Street Resources**

<http://www.SesameStreet.org/Parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/incarceration>

#### **The Adoption and Safe Families Act: Barriers to Reunification Between Children and Incarcerated Parents**

<https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=139&articleID=3641&keywords=parental%20rights>

#### **Tips for Parents, Teachers and Other Caregivers for Talking with Children Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events**

<http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/docs/KEN01-0093R.pdf>

#### **The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated**

<http://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/>

### Faith-Based Organizations

#### **Office of Community and Faith Engagement (State of Oklahoma)**

The Office of Community and Faith Engagement helps Oklahoma's poor and disadvantaged by linking government with faith-based and community organizations to provide social services. For more information visit <http://www.okdhs.org/divisionsoffices/comm/cfe/default.htm>.

#### **Oklahoma Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries**

[www.okumcministries.org/cjamm](http://www.okumcministries.org/cjamm)

#### **Prison Fellowship Ministries**

[www.prisonfellowship.org](http://www.prisonfellowship.org)



## **Reading Lists and Videos for Children, Caregivers and Providers**

The following books are 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.

### **A Terrible Thing Happened**

Author: Margaret Holmes (Magination Press, 2000) his gently told and tenderly illustrated story is for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode... an afterword for parents or caregivers offers extensive suggestions for helping traumatized children.

### **My Daddy is in Jail**

Author: Janet Bender (Youth Light Inc., 2008)

This is a long overdue resource for helping children cope with the incarceration of a loved one. It includes a read-aloud story, discussion guide and optional small group counseling activities.

### **What is Jail, Mommy?**

Author: Jackie Stanglin (Lifevest Publishing, 2006)

"One day after visiting... a little girl blurted out to her mother in frustration, 'What is jail anyway and why can't Daddy be home with us?'"

### **When Andy's Father Went to Prison**

Author: Martha W. Hickman (Whitman and Company, 1990)

This book illustrates the experiences of a young boy whose father went to prison, including his experiences at home and at school.

### **Empowering Children of Incarcerated Parents**

Author: Stacey Burgess, Tonia Caselman and Jennifer Carsey [www.youthlightbooks.com](http://www.youthlightbooks.com)

A workbook for children in grades 2-6 for counselors, social workers, psychologists and teachers who work with children who have a parent in jail or prison. Designed to be used with students individually or in small groups.

### **Visiting Day**

Author: Jacqueline Woodson (Scholastic Press, 2002)

The experience of a young girl and her grandmother who take the bus to visit her father in prison. This book has rich illustrations and features an African-American family.

### **Mama Loves Me from Away**

Author: Pat Brisson (Boyd's Mills Press, 2004)

A heartbreaking yet loving story about a mother and a child separated by a prison, and about how they try to stay in touch despite the physical distance between them.

### **Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration**

The Sesame Street program includes videos for the kids to watch and materials to read and work sheets that can be printed on your home printer. In addition to materials for children there are also materials for parents and caregivers. Go to the website to get started <http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/incarceration>.

### **A Sentence of Their Own**

“Chronicles one family’s annual pilgrimage to a new Hampshire state prison, revealing the damaging impact incarceration has on families.” A film by Edgar Barens (2001).

### **Bill of Rights Video**

A video with young people telling powerful stories about their experiences as youth with incarcerated parents. San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Project (2005).

### **Resources for Policymakers**

#### **Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents: Bureau of Justice Assistance U.S. Department of Justice:**

<https://www.bja.gov/Publications/IACP-SafeguardingChildren.pdf>

#### **Child Welfare Information Gateway**

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

#### **Promising Practices Toolkit**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/promising-practices-toolkit>

#### **The Echoes of Incarceration Projects**

Young filmmakers with incarcerated parents created a film about visiting.

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=905053386202187&pnref=story>

Caring Through Struggle: Caregivers of Children with Incarcerated parents.

<http://youtu.be/4uGikgx6QTw>

#### **Keeping Children Safe when their Parents are Arrested: Local Approaches that Work**

<http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/07/07-006.pdf>



**Children of Incarcerated Parents, National Conference of State Legislatures, Steve Christian, March 2009.**

<http://www.ncsl.org/documents/cyf/childrenofincarceratedparents.pdf>

**The Re-entry Myth Buster/Children of Incarcerated Parents Series**

A series of fact sheets intended to clarify federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families; designed to help these children, their caregivers, and the service providers who work with them.

[www.csgjusticecenter.org](http://www.csgjusticecenter.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,

[http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications\\_archive/files/0092.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications_archive/files/0092.pdf)

**Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Action Plan for Federal Policymakers**

Justice Center, The Council of State Governments, 2009, <http://nicic.gov/Library/024054>

**Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children, The Bureau of Justice Statistics Report**

Glaze, L. and Maruschak, L., August 2008, revised March 2010, <http://bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>

**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, <http://www.okkids.org>

**The Real Cost of Incarcerating Mothers: Study of Incarcerated Women and Their children. Report to the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth and the Oklahoma State Legislature.**

Author: Susan F. Sharp, Ph.D., 2008, <http://www.okkids.org>

**No Sympathy. Report to the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth**

Author: Susan F. Sharp, Ph.D., Study of Incarcerated Women and Their Children in Oklahoma, January 2010, <http://www.okkids.org>.

**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, <http://www.okkids.org>.



## **Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee**

Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, <http://www.ok.gov/occy>.

### **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 Childhood Experience (ACE) Study. [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/pdf/Childhood\\_Stress.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/pdf/Childhood_Stress.pdf).

## **Books for Caregivers and Service Providers**

### **Empowering Children of Incarcerated Parents**

Author: Stacey Burgess, Tonia Caselman, Jennifer Carsey (Youth Light, 2009)

This book is for counselors, social workers, psychologists and teachers who work with children ages 7-12 who have a parent who is in jail or prison.

### **When a Parent Goes to Jail: A Comprehensive Guide for Counseling Children of Incarcerated Parents**

Authors: Rebecca Yaffe and Lonnie Hoade (Rayve Productions Inc., 2000)

“This book could be used with individuals or small groups of children in therapeutic settings, but it also has a place on the shelf of every school and public library... to help children discuss and come to terms with having a parent in jail.” This is a book to read with children to help them understand their parent’s situation and their feelings.

### **All Alone in the World**

Author: Nell Bernstein (New Press, 2005)

This groundbreaking book by an author who grew up with an incarcerated father includes stories and perspectives from the families and children affected by incarceration, in addition to suggestions for policymakers and social service providers.

### **Children of Incarcerated Parents**

Editors: Katherine Gabel and Denise Johnston (Lexington Books, 1995)

“Children of criminal, jailed or imprisoned parents have long been identified as being at high risk for juvenile delinquency... this one-of-a-kind book outlines for professionals working with these children the optimum time to provide intervention following significant trauma, and shows that direct preventative and early intervention services to children of offenders can help them.”

### **Family Arrested**

Author: Ann Edenfield (Americana, 2002)

This is a highly useful summary written for families by a woman who had her husband incarcerated for many years. It offers tips for families on how to survive economically and emotionally.

### **Mothering from the Inside: Parenting in a Woman’s Prison**

Author: Sandra Enos (SUNY Press, 2001)

This book reveals how inmate mothers find places for their children to live, manage relationships with caregivers, demonstrate their fitness as mothers and negotiate rights to their children under challenging circumstances. It illustrates the impact of race, ethnicity and marginality.

### **Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Re-entry on Children, Families and Communities**

Editors: Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul (Urban Institute Press, 2003)

Addresses the difficult issues of parenting behind bars and fostering successful family relationships after release.

### **Loving Through Bars: Children with Parents in Prison**

Author: Cynthia Martone (Santa Monica Press, 2005)

Offers a searing and poignant view of some of the estimated 2.3 million children in the United States who have a parent in prison, presenting their particular plights through a series of powerful stories.

### **Doing Time Together: Love and Family in the Shadow of Prison**

Author: Megan Comfort (University of Chicago Press, 2008)

“Doing Time Together vividly details the ways that prisons shape and infiltrate the lives of women with husbands, fiancés and boyfriends behind bars. Megan Comfort spent years getting to know women visiting men at San Quentin State Prison ... tangling with the prison’s intrusive scrutiny and rigid rules turns these women into quasi-inmates, eroding the boundary between home and prison ... yet Comfort also finds that with social welfare weakened, prisons are the most powerful public institutions available to low-income women struggling to overcome untreated social ills ...”

### **Loss, Trauma and Resilience: Therapeutic Work with Ambiguous Loss**

Author: Pauline Boss (Norton, 2006)

“Pauline Boss insightfully sees traumatic loss as a relational disorder and not an individual pathology.... At a time when the violence and losses of war, terrorism and natural disasters [as well as the ambiguous loss of parents by children of the incarcerated] increasingly threaten to unravel the social fabric of entire communities, clinicians and humanitarian workers alike will welcome Boss’s clear guidelines for strengthening connections in families to better cope with the stress of such ambiguous and difficult situations and find new sources of meaning and hope.”

## **Research and Information for Providers**

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

(Viboch, Vera, 2005)

This article explains the connection between parental incarceration and child misbehavior. The effects of grief and loss, responding effectively to children’s feelings of loss, helping kids understand parental incarceration, and fostering stability and security for children are presented.

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

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

This report summarizes the impacts that the changes in daily life related to the incarceration of a parent brings to a family including the emotional and behavioral impacts on children and protective factors that help children build resilience.

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

(Eddy and Reid, OSLC, 2002)

This study summarizes the relationship between a parent’s criminality and the antisocial behaviors of adolescents with incarcerated parents, the behaviors and symptoms that children and youth display when a parent is incarcerated, the effect of education programs in prison for parents, and effective interventions that can assist adolescent children of the incarcerated.

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

(Travis, McBride, Solomon, Urban Institute, 2005)

Oriented towards social service providers, this report summarizes developmental the effects of parental incarceration on children including how imprisonment alters family dynamics, the challenges and benefits of visitation and contact, challenges of reunification, reintegration and the role that families have in providing support and stabilization.

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

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 Childhood Experience (ACE) Study.

### **Parental Incarceration and Child Wellbeing in Fragile Families**

This paper summarizes an extensive study of urban families with an incarcerated parent, including effects on economic outcomes, family stability and child development.

**Prisoners in 2011, Bureau of Justice Statistics** Carson, E.A. & W.J. Sabol (2012). Bulletin, retrieved August 15, 2013 from <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p11.pdf>.

**Glaze, L.E. & L.M. Maruschak (2008). Parents in prison and their minor children, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, retrieved August 15, 2013** from <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>

**Murray, J., D.P. Farrington, & I. Sekol (2012), Children’s antisocial behavior, mental health, drug use, and educational experience after parental incarceration: A systematic review and meta-analysis.** Psychological Bulletin 138(2): p. 175-210.

**Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (2008). Parental Incarceration and Child Wellbeing in Fragile Families, Fragile Families Research Brief Number 42, retrieved August 17, 2013** from: <http://www.f2f.ca.gov/res/pdf/ParentalIncarceration.pdf>

**Carson, E.A. & D. Golinelli (2013). Prisoners in 2012 – Advance Counts, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, retrieved August 19, 2013** from <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p12ac.pdf>

**Parents In Prison: Why Keeping Low-Level Drug Offenders in Prison Hurts Kids, and What the Justice Department is Doing to Help,** Author: Child Trends, August 22, 2013, <http://www.childtrends.org/parents-in-prison-why-keeping-low-level-drug-offenders-in-prison-hurts-kids-and-what-the-justice-department-is-doing-to-help/#sthash.0ISfPdnp.pdf>

**Sharp, S.F. & Juanita Ortiz (Contribution by) (2014). Mean Lives, Mean Laws: Oklahoma’s Women Prisoners National Organizations** There are many national organizations that provide support or information. Below is a partial listing of these organizations:

- **Family and Corrections Network** offers resources and referrals for kinship caregivers and others with incarcerated family members. [www.fcnetwork.org](http://www.fcnetwork.org)



- **Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents (CCIP)** provides counseling and support services for prisoners and their children. [www.e-ccip.org](http://www.e-ccip.org)
- **Hope House Resources for Children of Prisoners**  
<http://www.hopehousedc.org/resources/>  
**Incarcerated Parents and Their Children. Bureau of Justice Statistics**  
<http://www.fcnetwork.org/reading/childstats.html>
- **Prison Talk: An Online Community for Families of Prison Inmates**  
[www.prisontalk.com/](http://www.prisontalk.com/)
- **The National Institute of Corrections' Resources Relating to Children of Inmates** offers extensive information and resources for inmates and their families.  
<http://nicic.gov/library/Topic/40-children-of-inmates>
- **Offender Preparation and Education Network Inc. (OPEN)** provides self-help resources and other information for offenders and families.  
<http://openinc.org/resource.html>
- **San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership** offers training and resources as well as information on their "Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights" project.  
<http://www.sfcipp.org/>

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**Parents Behind Bars: Children of Incarcerated Family Members** (2012). Idaho's Criminal Justice Commission

**Beyond the Walls: A Guide to Services for Families Affected by Incarceration.** Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

**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

**Family and Corrections Network (FCN) Including the Children of Prisoners Library.** [www.fcnetwork.org](http://www.fcnetwork.org)

**A Behavioral Health Toolkit for Providers Working with Children of the Incarcerated and their Families.** (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2009)

**Children of Incarcerated Parents Web Portal.** This website, found at <http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents> consolidates, in a single online location, information regarding federal resources, grant opportunities, best and promising practices, and ongoing government initiatives that support children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers. The portal provides user-friendly information for stakeholders, including local and state governments, which wish to initiate their own collaborative processes to improve support for these children. For example, visit the portal to view the Children of Incarcerated Parents Framing Paper, which outlines the challenges children of incarcerated parents and their families face and provides strategies for service providers on how to enhance these children's social and emotional well-being.

**Women Behind Bars, The Voices of Oklahoma's Incarcerated Women and Their Children** (January 13, 2012).  
<http://womenbehindbarsthefilm.tumblr.com/>







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