Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Invisible Population

“To be in your children’s memories tomorrow, you have to be in their lives today.” – Barbara Johnson

July 26, 2017

Welcome

• Thank you for being here today and choosing to attend this workshop!

Introduction

• Lead Presenter
  • Judy Krysik, PhD, MSW
  • Center for Child Well-Being
• Co-Presenter
  • Jordan Ramil, BSW student
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• Co-Presenter
  • Sherry Boyd-Grossman, BS student
  • Center for Child Well-Being
Video

- An Unlikely Partnership-Strengthening Families touched by Incarceration
  - https://vimeo.com/175240502

Scope of the Problem

- The U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world.
- Between 2 and 3 million children have incarcerated parents.
- 10 million children experience having parents somewhere in the criminal justice process.

Incarceration Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Minor Children (Total)</th>
<th>Parents (Total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>145,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>195,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>220,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>245,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Population of Interest

• Who is affected?
  • In 2015, research stated more than 5 million (7%) of all U.S. children experienced having had a parent go to jail or prison.

Population of Interest

• Age
  • 1.2 million incarcerated men and women have children under 18.
  • Among children younger than 6, 5% have a parent in jail or prison.
  • Among children 6-11 and 12-17, 8% each have a parent in jail or prison.

A Disproportionate Impact on Poor, Urban and Minorities

• Race
  • 1 in 15 African American children
  • 1 in 42 Latino children
  • 1 in 111 white children
A Disproportionate Impact on Poor, Urban and Minorities

- Socioeconomic Status
  - Children living in poverty are more than 3 times as likely to have experienced the incarceration of a parent as children in families with incomes at least twice the poverty level.

(Robertson, 2012)
(Murphey & Cooper, 2015)

Population of Interest

- Why is this population important?
  - Parental incarceration can be detrimental to children.
  - There are many gaps in the field’s current understanding including effects of the earlier stages of parental criminal justice involvement on the child.

(Peterson, Fontaine, Arias, & Cramer, 2015)

Risks Associated with Parental Incarceration

- Deprivation of basic necessities and opportunities
- Danger of secondary victimization and depersonalization
- Deterioration of overall situation of a child
- Distance from incarcerated parent
- Descent into antisocial behavior

(Robertson, 2012)
Impact on the Family System

- Children
  - Possible increased exposure to ACEs
  - Behavior problems
  - Insecure attachment
  - Cognitive delays and difficulties in school

Adversities of Children

- Short-term Effects
  - Poor school performance
  - Nightmares, sleep disturbance

Adversities of Children

- Long-term Effects
  - Low educational success
  - No attachment/bond forms
  - Psychological and emotional problems
Impact on the Family System

• Incarcerated Parent(s)
  • Chemical and mental health issues
  • Parent-child relationship
  • Termination of parental rights

Impact on the Family System

• Caregiver
  • Emotions
  • Finances

What Have We Learned from Caregivers?

• Caregivers bear burdens
  • Stigma and shame
  • Increased financial strain
  • Physical and emotional stress
  • Lack of external resources
  • Disclosure of parents’ incarceration
  • The stability and quality of the home environment

Types of Caregivers

84.2%
15.1%
0.7%

De Masi & Bohn, 2010
Glaze & Maruschak, 2010
NRCCFI, 2014
Shlafer, Gerrity, Ruhland, & Wheeler, 2013
Premier, 2009
Impact on the Family System

- Positive Impact is also possible
- Removal of:
  - Chaos
  - Abuse
  - Financial insecurity

(Turanovic, J.J., & Rodriguez, N. 2017)

Current Adverse Policies- Unintended Consequences

- Sentencing:
  - 3 Strike Rule
    - Life Sentence mandatory if they are convicted of a serious violent felony and have two or more prior convictions of either serious violent felony or serious drug offense
  - Location/distance

Current Adverse Policies- Unintended Consequences

- Adoption and Safe Families Act
  - CIP are disproportionately impacted by the termination of parental rights practices
- Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act
  - CIP's adversely impacted because not guaranteed placement with family once in foster care and because once released, parent may not be able to afford to care for children.
Promising Policies/Programs

• Girl Scouts Behind Bars
• Big Brothers, Big Sisters
• California – arrest/phone call
• Oklahoma-ask
• Hawaii-distance of facility

Areas of Opportunity

- AZ-No specific arrest protocol for children present
- DOC doesn’t collect or maintain records on prisoners who are parents of minor children.

Recommendations

- American Bar Association-Resolution 102E
  • Correctional facilities located closer to their families
  • Promoting low or no-cost public transportation
  • Adjusting visitation rules
  • Updating visitation areas, more child-friendly
  • Reasonable opportunities for incarcerated parents to contact their children
  • Reducing visitation barriers to children in foster care
  • Parenting skills programs to incarcerated parents
  • Support incarcerated parents participation in court cases related to child dependency
Recommendations

• Former Director of National Institute of Justice, Nancy Rodriguez
  • Research
    • Use of mental health services during incarceration
    • How CIP come to attention of welfare agencies
    • Influence of various social and cultural processes on receiving mental health care
    • Whether intervention/treatment was effective
  • Data Collection-DOC should collect data, using caseworkers not officers
    • Well-being of children during intake process

Bill of Rights

• Developed by the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (2003):

  • I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent’s arrest.
  • I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.
  • I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.
  • I have the right to be well cared for in my parent’s absence.

  • I have the right to speak with, see, and touch my parent.
  • I have the right to support as I face my parent’s incarceration.
  • I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated.
  • I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.
Summary

• Children of the incarcerated are innocent victims and have their own unique and deserving needs.
• Before we can help them, we have to see them
• Most important next research steps:
  • Look at the unique experiences of children of incarcerated parents.
  • Develop a more complete understanding of the problem i.e. type of crime, etc
• Policy development requires caution due to lack of knowledge

Action Steps

1. Pay attention!
   • Familiarize yourself with the impact of parental incarceration on children.
2. Be proactive, look for partnerships!
   • Provide information to child welfare and correctional systems to help improve permanency outcomes for children.
3. Research, research, and more research!
   • More research is needed on impact, groups affected most, outcomes of intervention policies, programs, and partnerships.

Final Action Step

• What is needed is sustained intervention, with a focus on ACTION!

• Attend the Inaugural National Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) Conference in Phoenix, AZ April 22-25, 2018, Renaissance Hotel

• Action Planning event more than a conference

https://child-wellbeing.asu.edu/
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- Understanding the Impact of Parental Incarceration on the Child and Family
- Evidence of Program and Policy Effectiveness for Children of Incarcerated Parents
- Training and Support for Professionals who work with Children of Incarcerated Parents
- Coordinating Multiple Agencies that Impact the Children of Incarcerated Parents

https://child-wellbeing.asu.edu/

Questions?

Thank you!

References
