

The Student of Incarcerated Parents¹

According to the [National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated](#), on any given day, an estimated 2.7 million children in America have at least one parent in prison or jail. Nationally, one child in 28 has an incarcerated parent. In North Carolina, men and women in prison in early 2019 reported that they had almost 29,000 minor children.

Impact of Parental Incarceration on the Student

The health and well-being of children are closely associated with school performance and affected by all aspects of the child's life. The [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) questionnaire](#) asks about a household member going to prison, which contributes to an increased ACEs score. All professionals, both in schools and in the community, are encouraged to recognize the shame, stigma, and trauma that can exist for children with incarcerated and returning parents. The American Institutes for Research has shared the impact of parental incarceration as a childhood trauma on school performance, demonstrated through an increase in various physical, cognitive and behavioral health issues.

Assisting the Student

Language

School staff members are encouraged to think about the language being used related to the incarcerated parent and the message demonstrated by that language. It is better to speak of:

- The child's parent/mother/father rather than inmate, prisoner, offender, perpetrator;
- Formally incarcerated or parents who have come home rather than ex-offender, ex-inmate;
- Visiting the parent or a visit rather than visitation.

Including the Incarcerated Parent

School nurses and staff members are also encouraged to consider ways to support the child-parent relationship and to include the incarcerated parent (when safe and appropriate) in his/her child's school life as much as possible. This can include sending report cards and other updates to the parent, including the parent in IEP and case planning meetings (via phone), and providing additional support to a child before and after a visit.

Resources for Schools

American Institutes for Research Webinar
[Supporting Children of Incarcerated Parents in School \(COIP\)](#)

¹ This section was jointly prepared with staff from Our Children's Place of Coastal Horizons Center, Inc.

North Carolina School Health Program Manual

Section E, Students at Risk, Chapter 8, Incarcerated Parents

Creating Safer Spaces

<http://www.osborneny.org/services/strengthening-communities/new-york-initiative-for-children-of-incarcerated-parents/nycip-creating-safe-spaces/>

Tip Sheet for Youth: Youth Supporting Fellow Youth Who Have an Incarcerated Parent

http://youth.gov/sites/default/files/COIP_TipSheet_Youth_Final.pdf

Tip Sheet for Providers: Supporting Children Who Have an Incarcerated Parent

http://youth.gov/sites/default/files/COIP-TipSheet-Providers_Final.pdf

Tip Sheet for Teachers (Pre-K through 12): Supporting Children Who Have an Incarcerated Parent

http://youth.gov/sites/default/files/COIP_TipSheet-Teachers_508.pdf

Our Children's Place of Coastal Horizons Center

<https://www.ourchildrensplace.com/>