

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

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The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) created this resource to compile and organize several resources for parents facing incarceration, and those who face challenges because a parent is incarcerated, including children, their caregivers, and social workers who work with incarcerated parents and their families.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics states that nearly half of people facing incarceration in the United States are parents to children under the age of 18<sup>1</sup> and **20% of Native children have experienced a parent being incarcerated at some point in their lives**, in relation to 13% of Black children and 6% of Latine and White children.<sup>2</sup>

***“...nearly half of people facing incarceration in the United States are parents to children under the age of 18...”***

Parental incarceration is something that can greatly affect children’s well-being, including increased psychological stress, antisocial behavior, academic suspension or expulsion, and criminal activity for the affected children.<sup>3</sup>

Incarceration greatly affects the ways in which parents can interact with their children. The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that in 2004, **59% of parents in state prisons and 45% of parents in federal prisons did not have any personal visits with their children** under the age of 18.<sup>4</sup> Not having regular visits with their children compromises parental rights and their ability to develop and continue a healthy relationship with their children.

According to The Marshall Project, between 2006 and 2018, 32,000 incarcerated parents had their parental rights terminated. Of those, 5,000 lost their rights solely because they were incarcerated—a circumstance that often prevents them from maintaining relationships with their children, despite the critical importance of those bonds, regardless of incarceration status.<sup>5</sup>

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## SOURCES ON PAGE 1

<sup>1</sup> Maruschak, L. M., Bronson, J., & Alper, M. (2021). *Parents in prison and their minor children: Survey of prison inmates, 2016*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2016, April 19). *Children of Incarcerated Parents*.

<sup>3</sup> Martin, E. (2017). *Hidden consequences: The impact of incarceration on dependent children*. National Institute of Justice.

<sup>4</sup> Maruschak, L. M., Bronson, J., & Alper, M. (2021). *Parents in prison and their minor children: Survey of prison inmates, 2016*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>5</sup> Hager, E., & Flagg, A. (2018, December 2). *How incarcerated parents are losing their children forever*. The Marshall Project.

**In the resources section below there are a variety of resources for children with incarcerated parents, parents facing incarceration, caregivers of children with incarcerated parents, social workers working with incarcerated parents, Native-specific resources, and resources for policymakers.**

The resources address a variety of topics including how to locate and access services, parenting curriculum, educational materials on the experiences of incarcerated parents, children with incarcerated parents and their family members, and practice tips on how to work effectively with each group.

The correction system is complex, and navigating it is challenging, but with the right information and approach, the challenges of supporting incarcerated parents and their children and family members can be addressed successfully. It is important for parents who are incarcerated to continue to be able to have a relationship with their child. **The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) requires that active efforts are carried out to support Native children maintaining and building relationships with their parents, and these apply to parents facing incarceration as well.**

Active efforts for the children of incarcerated parents can be carried out by maintaining regular visits (either in-person or video visits) between the child and their parent, and identifying services to help the parent overcome barriers, including resources while they are incarcerated and after they are released.

**It is important to continue active efforts for parents facing incarceration, to best support them in building and maintaining healthy relationships with their children.**

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## RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

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### RESOURCES PROVIDED BY SESAME STREET FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

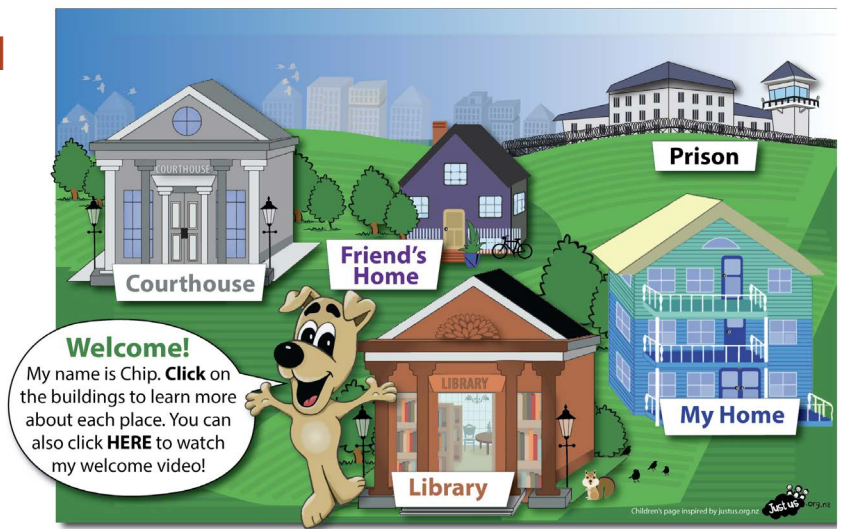
<https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/incarceration/> includes:

- “Alex Copes with a Family Member’s Incarceration” video
- “In My Family” storybook: This read-aloud story shows how a child may feel when a parent misses a special event
- A number of resources, in English and Spanish, for children ages 0–6, including videos, art activities, and resource sheets for parents and providers to use to interact with children



# CONNECTICUT CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS INITIATIVE—CHILDREN’S PAGE

<https://ctcip.org/main-childrens-page/> is a page geared toward children of parents facing incarceration, with a guide to what different places in a child’s life, including a prison and a courthouse, could look like.



## On the “Prison” page you will find:

- Information like “This is what your parent may eat” and “This is what your parent may do”.
- Pictures with words to click on for further information about common situations in a prison, including the waiting room, and contact and noncontact visits.
- Answers to frequently asked questions about the child and their parent in prison.

## On the “Courthouse” page you will find:

- A picture with words to click on for further information about what different roles people in the courtroom play.

## On the “My Home” page you will find:

- Answers to frequently asked questions about the child’s feelings and their family members.
- Letterhead for children to write letters, to their parents facing incarceration, or to share with their caregiver, or to keep for themselves.
- Some games to play from National Geographic, Nickelodeon, and Fun Brain.

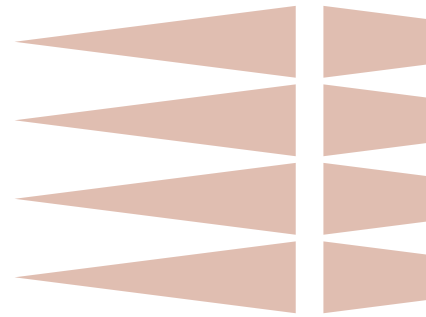
## On the “Friend’s Home” page you will find:

- Answers to frequently asked questions for children to talk to peers about their parent who is incarcerated.
- A guide sheet for children to talk to their friends whose parents are incarcerated.
- A Sesame Street video called “Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration”:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDUdniEig38&t=162s>

## On the “Library” page you will find:

- An interactive picture of words children might hear about incarceration with explanations.
- A number of educational games on different subjects: Math, English/ Language Arts, Science, and a coloring book.
- A list of books about children with incarcerated parents, for kids, teens, and caregivers.

# RESOURCES FOR PARENTS FACING INCARCERATION



## COMMUNITY FAMILY SERVICES

Community Family Life Services is a nonprofit dedicated to ending poverty and homelessness for children and families, beginning work with women who are in prison or jail and returning to their communities:

- They have a Parent Education and Home Visitor's Program for at-risk families in Washington D.C., specifically focused on incarcerated mothers reuniting with their children using the Nurturing Skills for Families Curriculum <https://www.cflsdc.org/>

## PRISON NURSERY PROGRAMS

Prison Nursery Programs allow mothers to keep their infants with them inside of correctional facilities, here is a list of nursery programs available in some states

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2012/rpt/2012-R-0157.htm>

## OSBORNE ASSOCIATION

This organization serves individuals, families, and their broader communities who have been affected by the criminal legal system with in-person programs and video visiting programs, prison-based services, and re-entry programs like discharge planning, kinship reentry housing programs, and pathways for reentry planning with employment and parenting.

### Some programs include:

- Prison-based services for those facing incarceration to prepare for life after they return to communities.
- Services include those focused on restorative justice, housing resources, and resources specifically for older adults and young adults facing incarceration.
- Programs for children and families specifically can be found online at: <https://www.osborneny.org/our-advocacy/children-families>.
- Information sheet for the New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents, a project of the Osborne Association can be found online at: [https://www.susu-osborne.org/files/ugd/e17be8\\_0c6c50aa3db34d46bd56c615dda48e28.pdf](https://www.susu-osborne.org/files/ugd/e17be8_0c6c50aa3db34d46bd56c615dda48e28.pdf)

**New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents (NYCIP)**  
a project of Osborne Association

NYCIP raises awareness, promotes policies and practices, and builds partnerships to ensure that children's rights are upheld, relationships supported, and their potential nurtured during their parent's involvement in the criminal legal system.

Launched by Osborne Association in 2006, NYCIP is a partnership of over 50 organizations and government agencies, people with lived experience, and the faith-based community who collaborate to turn the *Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights* into a reality.

**1-IN-14 CHILDREN**  
An estimated 1 in 14 children in the U.S. have experienced parental incarceration. That's over 5 million children nationwide.

1-IN-9 BLACK CHILDREN	1-IN-28 HISPANIC CHILDREN	1-IN-57 WHITE CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE PARENTAL INCARCERATION ON ANY GIVEN DAY DUE TO RACIAL DISPARITIES IN THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM.		

**CHILDREN NEED TO BE SEEN AND SUPPORTED**

- Separation due to incarceration is a complex loss due to ambiguity and stigma.
- Parental incarceration is an Adverse Childhood Experience.
- Children are more likely to experience homelessness, negative health and behavioral outcomes, and academic challenges.
- Tailored support, strong adult relationships, and peer support promote children's well-being.
- Most children want and benefit from a relationship with their incarcerated parent.

**Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights**

1. Every child has the right to know who their parent or caregiver is and to have that information shared with them.
2. Every child has the right to know the location of their parent or caregiver and to have that information shared with them.
3. Every child has the right to know the date of their parent or caregiver's release and to have that information shared with them.
4. Every child has the right to know the location of their parent or caregiver's release and to have that information shared with them.
5. Every child has the right to know the date of their parent or caregiver's release and to have that information shared with them.
6. Every child has the right to know the location of their parent or caregiver's release and to have that information shared with them.
7. Every child has the right to know the date of their parent or caregiver's release and to have that information shared with them.

See Us, Support Us  
Visit SUSU to connect with resources



# THE NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

The National Fatherhood Initiative, an organization focused on parenting curriculum and resources for fathers provides resources online at <https://www.fatherhood.org/>

- **InsideOut Dad** is a curriculum specifically for incarcerated fathers that develops pro-fathering attitudes and gives fathers necessary skills and strategies to prepare for release. <https://store.fatherhood.org/insideout-dad-facilitators-kit/?hsLang=en>.

## PREP

PREP, an organization that provides trainings and resources for couples and parents, can be found online at <https://prepinc.com/>.

- **Walking the Line** is a curriculum for people facing incarceration to talk about maintaining relationships and the barriers of incarceration, including parenting relationships. <https://prepinc.com/collections/walking-the-line>



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# RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS

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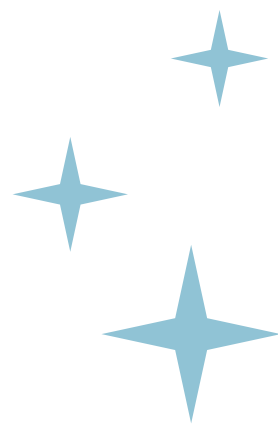
- **For state and local resources**, consult this [Directory of Programs Serving Children & Families of the Incarcerated from the National Resource Center on Children & Families of the Incarcerated](#).
- **The Connecticut Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative** has a number of services and programs to support children and families with a parent facing incarceration: <https://ctcip.org/services/cip-specific/>

**They have a number of resources for how to prepare for sentencing and resources while in prison:**

- [Tips from a Father in Prison](#) from [The Incarcerated Fathers Library](#)
- [Tips on How to Work With Your Lawyer](#)
- [Preparing a Child for a Prison Visit](#)
- [What to Tell Children When a Parent or Family Member Goes to Prison.](#)
- [Telling the children](#) scenarios of telling a child their family member is incarcerated.
- [How to Explain Jails and Prisons to Children: A Caregivers Guide from the Initiative Foundation.](#)

## **Child Welfare and Incarceration Resources:**

- [Child welfare agencies and involving incarcerated parents.](#)
- [Parental arrests and placement of children.](#)
- [Eligibility for Medicaid when parents are incarcerated.](#)
- [Social security benefits and incarcerated parents.](#)
- [TANF assistance for children of incarcerated parents.](#)
- [SNAP assistance for children of incarcerated parents.](#)
- [A Handbook for the Families and Friends of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Prison Inmates](#) (but applicable to families across the country).
- **PB&J Family Services** is an organization in the Albuquerque area that supports children at risk through a number of different programs for children and their caregivers: <https://pbjfamilyservices.org/programs/>.
  - These include **Children's Support Groups, NM Home Visiting Programs, and Family Outreach Programs**



- **HealthyChildren.org** has resources on how to support children when their parents are in prison like: [Tips to Support Children When a Parent is in Prison - HealthyChildren.org](#)
- **[Assisting Families of Inmates](#)** is an organization that supports the needs of families of the incarcerated
  - [Visitation Programs](#)
  - [Family Support Services](#)
- **The Essie Justice Group** is an organization to support women who have incarcerated loved ones. Their [Healing to Advocacy Program](#) is a community for women and gender expansive people who have been impacted by loved ones in incarceration.

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## RESOURCES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS WORKING WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS

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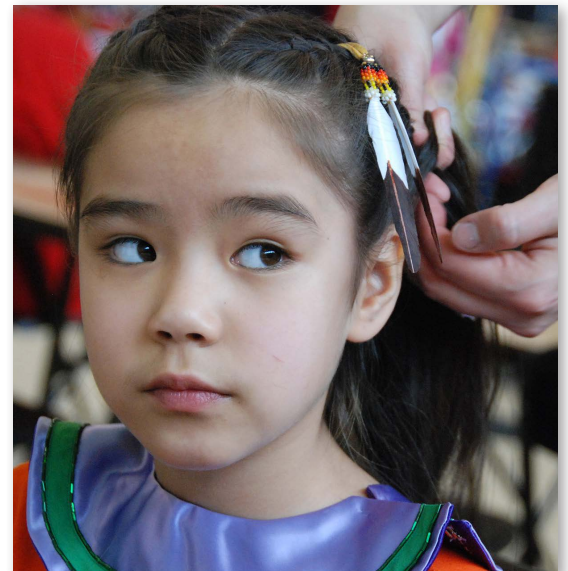
- **The Council of State Governments' Justice Center** outlines why it is important to have evidence-based programs to support parents who are incarcerated and their children and families:
  - [Evidence-Based and Promising Programs and Practices to Support Parents Who Are Incarcerated and Their Children and Families.](#)
  - They also have a tipsheet of [Best Practices for Child-Friendly Video Visiting.](#)
- **The San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership** has created a helpful tipsheet of the [Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights.](#)
- **The Messages Project** is an organization where volunteers record messages of incarcerated parents for their children, often reading books, as a way to maintain connection between children and their incarcerated parents.

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## NATIVE-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

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- **Tribal Access to Justice Innovation** has a number of resources for Native people facing incarceration as seen here:
  - [Resources | Tribal Justice.](#)
- **The Judicial Council of California** has a resource guide on [The Indian Child Welfare Act for Incarcerated Parents](#), with information that is applicable to those in and out of the state of California.



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# RESOURCES FOR POLICYMAKERS

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- [The National Resource Center on Children & Families of the Incarcerated](#), from Rutgers Camden, is a nationwide organization that focuses on programs that serve children and families of people facing incarceration:
    - They have resource libraries and research resources for service providers and families, but also for anyone who wants to learn more about the impact that incarceration has on children and families.
  - [The Sentencing Project](#) advocates for effective and humane responses to crime, with the intention of minimizing imprisonment.
    - They have a number of advocacy priorities outlined [here](#), and a [resource library](#) with publications, fact sheets, webinars, and other resources.
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**Millions of children in the United States are affected by parents facing incarceration, and this has significant impact on their ability to build and maintain healthy relationships with their parents.**

This is especially the case for Native, Black, and Latine children, who disproportionately are affected by parental incarceration. While resources specifically for Native parents, children, family members, and others affected by incarceration are not as prevalent, many of the resources listed in this document may be able to be culturally adapted.

Areas for future resource development include cultural factors for Native children and families, application of the Indian Child Welfare Act, and working effectively with Tribal Nations and Native organizations.

**For many Native children, their parent may be a primary connection to their Tribe or community, so whenever possible, it is important for the child to maintain relationships with the parent to help them nurture and maintain their connection to community, extended family, and culture.**



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** We extend our sincere gratitude to the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation for their generous financial support, which made the development of this resource possible.



**NICWA**  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

## About the National Indian Child Welfare Association

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) protects the safety, health, and cultural identity of Native children and families today and for future generations. NICWA strengthens tribal capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect, advances policies that uphold Tribal sovereignty, and promotes Native-led, culturally grounded approaches to child welfare.

Through advocacy, coalition-building, workforce training, and technical assistance to improve service systems, NICWA works at the Tribal, local, state, and national levels to ensure that Native children can thrive within their families and communities.

**Learn more at [www.nicwa.org](http://www.nicwa.org).**