



NY Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Raising awareness, promoting policy and practice change, and building partnerships to uphold the rights, maintain the relationships, and meet the needs of children impacted by their parent's criminal justice involvement.

The NY Initiative has several policy reform goals which are consistent with the *Children's Bill of Rights* and the roadmap for criminal justice system reform which it represents. These are:

- To implement a child-sensitive arrest protocol in NY State, consistent with best practices nationally, which minimizes the trauma and harm children experience when a parent is arrested.
- To ensure that children and families are considered during the sentencing process by including a Family Impact Statement among the factors considered.
- To improve children's access to their parents through visiting, phone calls and letters and other creative mechanisms that support the strengthening of the parent-child relationship. This includes considering proximity to children as a criteria for prison assignment.
- To increase the programs available for both children and incarcerated parents which support their relationship and minimize the harm that can result from parent-child separation.
- To increase the data and information available about children of incarcerated parents in order to better meet their needs and inform the policies and practices of agencies and organizations who come into contact with children and families.
- To increase the support available for caregivers in the community, including implementing Subsidized Guardianship in NY State.
- To infuse the agendas, policies and practices of government agencies and community-based organizations with an awareness and consideration of the needs and experiences of children of incarcerated parents.
- To build professional capacity around this issue so diverse professionals across fields have a core competency/ minimum fluency regarding the impact of parental incarceration on children and families.

Accomplishments and Ongoing Efforts:

In the area of ARREST policies in New York City, we:

- Examined and wrote a summary of national child-sensitive arrest policies
- Conducted two focus groups with parents who had been arrested and wrote a report based on these
- Worked closely with the Brooklyn District Attorney's office who worked with Brooklyn NYPD to implement training re: asking about children at various points at and following arrest.
- Met with Citywide Police Department Chief
- Wrote letter to Police Commissioner Kelly

- Working to offer supportive information and resources to families post-arrest through Citywide information hotline

In the area of VISITING and other forms of contact, we:

- Coordinate 2 site visits per year to model Children's Centers and Visiting Programs in NY State (at Sing Sing and Bedford Hills Correctional Facilities) which are attended by diverse professionals.
- Hosted a teleconference presentation of model visiting programs in New Mexico and Tennessee.
- Wrote Televisiting Guidelines that were provided to the State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS).
- In partnership with NYC DOC, provide coloring books and crayons to city-sentenced fathers/ grandfathers/ uncles/ brothers when children come to visit them.
- Conducted brief training of about 40 Corrections Officers at Rikers (they receive about 1000-1500 visitors a day and are a visitors first point of contact). Training focused on the importance of visiting for children and of positive Officer-child interactions.
- With the Incarcerated Mothers Committee of the Coalition for Women Prisoners (at the Correctional Association), advocated for a Family Reunion Program at Albion that was included in the 2009 State budget.
- Launched our "HUB Near Home" campaign to raise awareness of the impact of incarcerating parents so far from their children and to advocate for proximity to children to be considered as a criteria for prison assignment, after security and medical needs.

In the area of DATA COLLECTION and RESEARCH, we:

- Examined existing data on children of incarcerated parents, including its absence in national and local child well-being surveys/ measures.
- Conducted a *Families Court Survey* within a men's and women's prison and received close to 800 responses back from parents providing rich information about their children.
- Worked with our Statewide Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to collect new data in some of its residential programs to identify, for the first time, which youth have incarcerated parents.
- Discussed with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), NYC's child welfare agency, the addition of a question in their database to identify children whose parents are incarcerated. To date, there is no way to gather this information.
- Contacted Christopher Mumola at the Bureau of Justice Statistics and author of the frequently cited report, *Incarcerated Parents and Their Children* (2001). He has been helpful in sharing his national data collection experience and in advising the Workgroup's efforts.
- The NYU Wagner School of Public Administration students completed their report, "A Case for Counting and Tracking Children of Promise" in which they interviewed many City and State agency representatives, national experts and others to make recommendations for sensitively identifying and collecting information about children of incarcerated parents. The report's recommendations emphasize services and support (and agency accountability) as the guiding reasons to collect this currently unknown information.
- Met with the Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) who interview every arrested person in NYC to discuss adding questions about the arrestee's children. CJA open to considering doing a snapshot sample with additional questions about children that would not be part of their interview but would provide a wealth of data about a little known topic—the children of arrestees.

- Proposed to the Governor's Children's Cabinet that children of incarcerated parents be included in the issues under "disconnected youth" that they examine, and as a result, a Subcommittee made up of diverse State agencies has been formed to examine this issue at a Statewide level and make recommendations to the Governor's Children's Cabinet.
- Working with a State level agency to conduct focus groups with youth and caregivers to inform the annual *Kids Count* well-being survey conducted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In the area of YOUTH EMPOWERMENT and LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, we:

- Recruited a small group of young people whose parents are incarcerated to participate on the Youth Advisory Board (YAB).
- YAB members participated in local and national conferences including New York City's Sharing Success conference and the national conference of the Child Welfare League of America.
- Three YAB members were interviewed on WBAI radio show, "On the Count," with radio host Eddie Ellis. The show focused on the impact of incarceration on children and families.
- Trained Guidance Counselors at middle school in the Bronx.
- Presented as part of national Bill of Rights teleconference training.
- Plan to conduct more outreach to youth organizations and train youth service providers.
- Built a partnership with the CUY School of Journalism to offer media workshops to the YAB.

<p>For more information about the NY Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents please contact Tanya Krupat at tkrupat@osborneny.org or Will Norris a wnorris@osborneny.org or call 718-637-6560</p>
