



Exposure to Violence Among Children of Inmates: A Research Agenda

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Introduction

Recent research suggests that one of the most troubling aspects of exposure to violence among children is its ubiquity. Approximately 60% of all children have been exposed to violence through either direct victimization or indirect exposure over the past year (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, & Kracke 2009). Further, a substantial number of children experience multiple exposures as one in 10 children report five or more exposures over the previous year (Finkelhor et al. 2009a). Although many children are resilient, exposure to violence has been linked to a number of problematic behaviors including attachment difficulties, regressive behaviors, anxiety, depression, aggression, and conduct disorders. Research suggests that children exposed to violence are also more likely to experience a number of negative outcomes, including further victimization, delinquency, and involvement with the juvenile justice system (Finkelhor et al. 2009a).

One particular at-risk population for exposure to violence is children with incarcerated parents. While empirical evidence is scant, there is reason to suspect that this population is exposed to violence at higher rates than the general population (DeHart and Altschuler 2009; Greene, Haney, & Hurtado 2000). We further suspect that given the confluence of risk factors associated with parental incarceration and exposure to violence, these children are at heightened risk for multiple violent victimizations and exposures to violent incidents over the life course. It is also likely that children with incarcerated parents face heightened risks for negative outcomes associated with exposure to violence due to additional trauma experienced during the process of parental incarceration and the lack of a stable home environment after incarceration that

interferes with positive coping. Assessing the degree to which parental incarceration compounds the effects of exposure to violence is critical for formulating comprehensive strategies by both the justice system and social service agencies for addressing the needs of children with incarcerated parents.

In order to address this critical gap in our knowledge regarding exposure to violence among children with incarcerated parents, this paper looks at the existing literature for answers and suggests further research that would fill the gaps.

Exposure to Violence

Children can be exposed to violence in one of three ways: direct victimization, witnessing violent incidents, or witnessing the aftermath of violent incidents. Further, exposure to violence can occur in a number of domains, such as in the home, in the community/neighborhood, or in the school, among others. Recently, Finkelhor and colleagues (2009a) conducted one of the most thorough nationwide studies to estimate the prevalence of children exposed to violence across a number of domains. Their findings were startling as more than 60 percent of children were exposed to violence in the past year, either directly or indirectly. Almost half of that number was assaulted at least once in that period. One in 10 had suffered some form of child maltreatment – abuse or neglect – and 1 in 16 was victimized sexually. Almost 40 percent of all children experienced 2 or more direct victimizations in the previous year. The study also found that one form of violence may make a child more vulnerable to other forms of violence. Nearly two in five children were exposed to more than one type of violence in the past year. As children grow older, the incidences of victimization increase.

A large body of literature has firmly established that exposure to violence in any form has deleterious consequences on childhood and adolescent development. Concerning violence in the

home, a recent meta-analysis of 60 studies examining childhood exposure to domestic violence found that children exposed to domestic violence experience higher levels of internalizing, externalizing, and trauma symptoms. These symptoms appear to be higher for males compared to females (Evans, Davies, & DiLillo 2008, see also Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Gaffe 2003). For violence at school, a recent meta-analysis reviewing 11 studies has concluded that victimization through bullying is associated with increased levels of psychosomatic problems (Gini & Pozzoli 2009). Finally, for children who witness community violence, a recent meta-analysis of 114 studies revealed that traumatic symptoms, internalizing, and externalizing behaviors are all higher for children exposed to community violence (Fowler, Tompsett, Braciszewski, Jaques-Tiura, & Baltes 2009). Clearly, given the extremely high prevalence of exposure to violence and the severity of the consequences associated with exposure to violence, the substantial amount of research on the topic is understandable.

While the prevalence of exposure to violence is very high for the general population, certain subgroups of the population may have further increased risks for exposure to violence. For these children, the consequences of exposure to violence is particularly acute as they may experience direct or indirect exposure to violence more frequently, they may be more likely to experience polyvictimization (see Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Holt 2009b), and they may have increased risks for negative outcomes associated with exposure to violence. Although very few studies have been conducted, we expect that children with incarcerated parents represent a group of children who are among the most affected by exposure to violence. Further, given the instability of the home environment and concurrent trauma associated with parental incarceration, these children are much more likely to experience negative outcomes associated with exposure to violence.

Children of Incarcerated Parents

Awareness of children and families of incarcerated parents is steadily increasing across the globe. In the United States, researchers and policy makers are focused on the re-entry of offenders to neighborhoods (Travis 2005), the issue of mass imprisonment and racial disparities among children of inmates (Wakefield & Wildeman 2011), and families that use more than one service system (Goerge, Smithgall, Seshadri, & Ballard 2010) because they realize that children/families of inmates are in need of many services during and after their parent is serving time. In the United Kingdom, Sweden, Romania, Germany, and Australasia, a major concern is impact of parental incarceration on the mental health of children and families (Boswell 2002; Bor, McGee, & Fagan 2004). In September, 2011, the United Nations hosted a Day of General Discussion on the impact of incarceration as part of their focus on the rights of the child.

Children of incarcerated parents are a subset of American children at risk. They are forgotten -- overlooked in the criminal justice system, in social service circles, in public health, and schools -- even as their numbers spike upward along with the numbers of adults who are being imprisoned. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Justice estimated that 809,800 state and Federal prisoners were parents to 1,706,600 children under the age of 18. Those numbers represented an increase of about 761,000 children since 1991 (Glaze & Maruschak 2008). Since 1991, the number of children with a mother in prison more than doubled, up 131% and children with a father in prison increased by 77%. Minority children are disproportionately affected by parental incarceration as in state prisons, 41% of parents were Black, 33% were White, 20% were Hispanic, and 6% other (Glaze & Maruschak 2008).

Compared with other risk factors in criminology, parental imprisonment has received little research attention (Murray & Farrington 2008). The absence in the research literature is

surprising given current incarceration trends. Over the past dozen years, a number of studies have examined the impact of parental incarceration on families and children. Most notable are Murray & Farrington (2008), Gabel & Johnston (1995), Eddy & Reid (2002), Parke & Clarke-Stewart (2002), Petersilia (2003), Braman (2004), Bernstein (2005), Travis (2005), Farrington & Welsh (2007) and a number of studies from Europe (Robertson 2012; Rosenberg 2009). Murray & Farrington (2008) provide the most recent review of the effects of parental imprisonment on children and families. From the limited number of studies, they conclude that parental imprisonment is a “strong risk factor for a range of adverse outcomes for children, including antisocial behavior, offending, mental health problems, drug abuse, school failure, and unemployment.” Murray and Farrington’s review concludes that parental imprisonment “roughly trebles” the risk for child antisocial behavior.

The impact of incarceration varies depending upon the age and developmental level of the child (Parke & Clarke-Stewart 2002). For young children ages 2-6, the disruption of incarceration is associated with poor peer relationships, diminished cognitive abilities, or emotional and psychological problems (Parke & Clarke-Stewart 2002). School-age children experience school-related problems including poor grades or temporary instances of aggression (Sack et al. 1976). Stanton (1980) also found school problems – 70% of 166 children of incarcerated mothers showed poor academic performance and some (5%) exhibited classroom behavior problems. Teasing and ostracism also may occur (Jose-Kampfner 1991), and as children reach adolescence, suspension and dropout rates rise. A number of small scale studies have suggested that children can react to a parent being imprisoned by having disturbances in their sleep patterns, feelings of grief and loss, confusion and anger, low mood, becoming withdrawn or secretive, regressive behavior, attention seeking behavior, depression; and

symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder such as flashbacks about the crimes or arrests (Boswell 2002; Crawford 2003; Cunningham 2003; Peart & Asquith 1992; Philbrick 2002; Skinner & Swartz 1989; Hissel et al. 2011). More recently Wakefield & Wilderman (2011) examined child well-being indicators from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study and the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods. Both projects contain extensive data on a large and diverse sample of children of imprisoned parents in the US. The authors found that parental imprisonment worsened children's well being as it was positively associated with a range of mental health problems (such as depression) and behavioral problems (i.e. aggression). Parental imprisonment was found to exacerbate pre-existing behavioral problems, leaving many already disadvantaged children worse off after it. These studies rely heavily on administrative data, but they fail to examine the specific interactions of the families with support systems or to assess the validity of the administrative data.

Although researchers have theorized that children of incarcerated parents are a particularly high-risk group for future criminal offending (Dalley 2002; Eddy & Reid 2002; Hagan & Dinovitzer 1999; Johnston 1995; Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon 2003), very little empirical research has explored the relationship. The research does suggest that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to self-report involvement in delinquency (Gabel & Shindlecker 1993; Hungerford 1993; Lowenstein 1986) and to indicate that they had been arrested as juveniles (Johnston 1995; Myers, Smarsh, Amlund-Hagen, & Kennon 1999; Sharp & Marcus-Mendoza 2001). The effects of incarceration reach far beyond childhood as Huebner and Gustafson (2007) found that children of incarcerated mothers were more likely to serve time on probation.

Unfortunately, research on the impact of parental imprisonment on children and families

remains limited (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Nurse 2002). Studies of this issue have been small in scale, either in area, time or number of participants. The majority of research has relied on samples that are small, non-random, and/or clinically based. There is also little research that focuses upon children's experiences *per se*, with many studies being reliant upon caregiver accounts. Finally, researchers have not introduced controls for other factors that may lead to a spurious relationship between parental incarceration and negative child outcomes, particularly those relating to the home environment and family functioning before and during incarceration, as well as socio-demographic variables. In 2005, Murray & Farrington reported finding only 35 studies of prisoner's children, with only 13 studies including direct contact/interviews with children. Many studies carried methodological weaknesses; only 11 used standardized instruments; 10 used a control group; and six used longitudinal designs.

Exposure to Violence among Children with Incarcerated Parents

To date, there have been very few studies that systematically examine the degree to which children with incarcerated parents are a particularly vulnerable population in regards to exposure to violence (DeHart and Altschuler 2009; Greene, Haney, & Hurtado 2000). In a qualitative study of incarcerated women, DeHart and Alschuler (2009) found that many of the children of these women were exposed to substantial levels of violence. In a study of 102 incarcerated mothers, Greene and colleagues (2000) noted that 44% of mothers in their sample reported that their children experienced physical abuse, 9% reported that their children experienced sexual abuse, and 69% witnessed violence in the home. The lack of research on this topic is troubling given the sheer number of children experiencing parental incarceration, the likelihood that these children were exposed to violence in the past, the possibility of increased likelihood of further exposure to violence, and the host of negative outcomes associated with

both parental incarceration and exposure to violence. We suggest six mechanisms that explain why children of inmates are likely to be exposed to violence or are at increased risk for negative outcomes associated with exposure to violence. Specifically:

1. *Children with incarcerated parents share many of the same risk factors associated with exposure to violence in the community.* Children with incarcerated parents often come from disadvantaged environments and are overrepresented in neighborhoods that are plagued with violence and crime. Stein and colleagues (2003) report that low socioeconomic status, urban, minority youth are substantially more likely to be exposed to community violence. Children from these families are at increased risk for experiencing parental incarceration as well (Wakefield & Wildeman 2011). Wakefield and Wildeman (2011: 807) also suggest “the racial disparity in incarceration coupled with high racial residential segregation also means that imprisonment is concentrated in places.” Unfortunately, the same is true regarding exposure to community violence, as some neighborhoods have vastly higher rates of violent crime. Given the co-morbidity of risk factors for both exposure to community violence and parental incarceration, it seems apparent that children with incarcerated parents are likely exposed to community violence at high levels.

2. *Parental criminal activity that leads to incarceration increases the risk of exposure to violence either through direct victimization or through witnessing violence incidents.* Finkelhor and colleagues (2009) estimate that one in five children suffer some type of maltreatment (excluding sexual abuse) over their lifetimes. They also estimate that nearly 10% of children have witnessed a family assault over the past year (Finkelhor et al. 2009). For some children, these maltreatment events or domestic violence incidents may directly lead to parental incarceration. For others, parental criminal activity may increase the likelihood that a child

directly witnesses violent events or their aftermath. For example, children with parents involved in gang activity may be more likely to witness gun violence or assault as a result of their parents' involvement with the gang. Children whose parents are involved in drugs or drug dealing may be likely to witness violence as a consequence of these activities. Greene and colleagues (2000) reported that in their sample of incarcerated mothers, 55% of the mothers reported that their children witnessed drug or alcohol use. It seems likely that these children would also be exposed to potential consequences of alcohol/drug use, which may include violent incidents. Finally, if the incident leading to the arrest of the parent was violent, there is a reasonably high likelihood that the child would have directly witnessed the incident, as research suggests a substantial number of children with incarcerated parents witness the event precipitating a parent's arrest (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). In short, prior criminal behavior of the incarcerated parent likely exposes the child to additional risk for exposure to violence.

3. *Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to be abused or to witness domestic violence prior to a parent's incarceration.* Even if a parent is not incarcerated because of child abuse, research suggests that abusive parenting is more common among parents who are eventually incarcerated (see Johnson & Waldfogel 2004 for discussion). Both DeHart and Altschuler (2009) and Greene and colleagues (2000) identified abusive parenting (either from the incarcerated mother or by another party) as a particularly common risk factor among children with incarcerated parents. Further, many of the women in these studies (Green et al. reported 70% of women in their sample) indicated that their children witnessed domestic violence incidents in the home prior to their incarceration. As such, children of incarcerated families likely experience abuse or witness domestic violence at higher rates than other populations of children.

4. *The process of parental incarceration likely results in additional traumatic experiences that compound pre-existing trauma associated with exposure to violence.* Parental incarceration itself can be considered a traumatic event. Children may directly witness the precipitating event that results in parental incarceration. Further, the child may directly witness the process of arrest, which may be frightening and confusing depending on the circumstances. Phillips and Zhao (2010) report that children who witness the arrest of a household member report elevated levels of posttraumatic stress symptoms. Events after arrest may also foster additional feelings of anxiety due to uncertainty in the outcome for the affected parent and possible disruption in the living situation of the child. Evidence also suggests that children experience a sense of loss and problems with attachment due to separation from the parent (Poehlmann 2005). We expect that the additional traumas experienced through the process leading to parental incarceration compounds upon pre-existing trauma associated with exposure to violence, potentially leading to worse outcomes for children.

5. *The unstable home environment associated with parental incarceration amplifies the effect of prior traumatic experiences associated with exposure to violence and prevents positive coping.* Parental incarceration represents a substantial disruption in the home environment. For the child to adjust during the period of incarceration, alternative caregiving arrangements must be considered. Gender of the incarcerated parent is an important determinant in alternate care arrangement. For incarcerated fathers, the mother becomes the caregiver. When mothers are incarcerated, grandmothers often assume responsibility for childcare (Mumola 2000). When asked who now cared for their children, more than 84% reported that their children were living with the other parent. About 21% said that grandparents and other relatives were caring for the children, and about 3% reportedly had one or more children living in a foster home, agency, or

institution (Glaze & Maruschak 2008).¹

Murray and Farrington (2005) find that the family environment of children is often dramatically affected by parental incarceration. In their analysis of children in the Cambridge Youth Study, they find that children who experience parental incarceration early in life are more likely to receive inadequate parental monitoring and to be subject to harsh and inconsistent discipline.

Braman's study (2004) underscores the broken links among extended family and friends that result from incarceration and reports on the particular impacts on children. He points out that for children and adults alike, shame and the stigma of imprisonment isolate non-offending family members from friends and co-workers who otherwise would be sources of social, emotional, and even material support. It seems likely that the net effect of family disruption and social isolation resulting from parental incarceration substantially reduces positive coping in response to traumatic events as protective factors such as a stable home environment and strong social relations with others are compromised. As such, for children with incarcerated parents we expect that the impact of exposure to violence to be especially pronounced.

6. *Children with incarcerated parents have increased risk for later bullying and peer victimization.* Children with incarcerated parents experience social stigma (Braman 2004). This social stigma may place children at heightened risk for future bullying and violent victimization from peers. For example, among children of inmates in Miami-Dade County there is anecdotal evidence that they are bullied and teased by children at school. Bullying is particularly noticeable in middle and high schools. These have led to fights, suspensions, and expulsions. Unfortunately, very little systematic, empirical evidence exists that directly assess whether

¹ These add to more than 100% because some prisoners had multiple minor children living with multiple caregivers.

children with incarcerated parents have elevated risks for bullying and peer victimization.

It is important to emphasize that these mechanisms represent hypotheses that have not been sufficiently tested. Given the paucity of research on the link between exposure to violence and parental incarceration, we cannot say for certain which of these mechanisms increase risks for exposure to violence among children with incarcerated parents. We also cannot conclude whether parental incarceration exacerbates prior exposure to violence. This lack of research is troubling as we suspect that children with incarcerated parents represent a critical at-risk group for exposure to violence and that public and private agencies that work with this population would substantially benefit from a better understanding of this link.

Future Research Questions

We have identified a number of critical research questions that should be addressed:

1. To what extent are the prior histories of exposure to violence different for children with parents who are incarcerated compared to those without incarcerated parents?
 - Prior to parental incarceration, are children exposed to more violence either through direct victimization or indirect witnessing of violent incidents compared to the matched sample?
 - Are these differences observed across three domains of family, school, and community violence?
 - Are these children more likely to experience polyvictimization prior to parental incarceration?
2. To what extent does parental incarceration amplify the symptomatology associated with exposure to violence?
 - Do children with incarcerated parents experience higher levels of traumatic symptoms and other behavioral issues compared to controls?
 - To what degree are children exposed to increased trauma associated with parental incarceration?
 - To what extent can these higher levels of behavioral symptoms be attributed to the traumatic experiences associated with parental incarceration after controlling for prior exposure to violence?
3. Does the risk of exposure to violence increase after parental incarceration?
 - Do children experience higher levels of victimization through bullying at school after parental incarceration?

- Does the risk of violent victimization in the household increase after parental incarceration?

4. To what degree does the combination of exposure to violence and parental incarceration exacerbate short-term negative outcomes for children?

- Are children with an incarcerated parent and a history of exposure to violence more likely to experience school failure and drop out?
- Are these children more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system?
- Are they more likely to experience behavioral problems at home or at school?

Research has shown that early exposure to violence has a significant impact on a child's behavior and ability to learn and develop coping strategies. Exposure to violence is associated with future criminality, failure in school, mental health issues, and drug abuse. Children of incarcerated parents are an at-risk population that may be exposed to violence at higher rates than the general population. We suspect that children of inmates have a heightened risk for multiple violent victimizations and exposures to violent incidents over the life course and that they face heightened risks for negative outcomes. We know a handful of things about children of incarcerated parents and the interplay with exposure to violence, but we need to know much more.

We recommend research that focuses on exposure to violence among children with incarcerated parents to clarify issues that have been raised, but not entirely answered by our predecessors. Research could provide criminal justice policymakers, social service workers, and families with an incarcerated parent answers about these children that could lead to increased preventive measures at different times in a child's life cycle, provide more specific information about the children themselves and their relationships with parents and caregivers, and perhaps, shape their lives for better purposes.

Through this research, it may be possible to find the direct roles that exposure to violence and parental incarceration play in predicting antisocial behavior in children. This, in turn, could

determine the services that are needed to specifically mitigate these problems. Preventive measures could be taken to assist children of inmates and their caregivers. These research findings could assist other programs that work with children of incarcerated parents.

The study also has ramifications for reentry programs. We know very little about the dynamics between a child, the caregiver, and the returning-to-the-community parent. What happens if children witnessed domestic violence, an arrest, or other violence caused by the returning parent and still recall the traumatic events? Should the parent be re-united with the family? If yes, then acting on that knowledge could lead to assistance for the children and parent from social services.

These are the types of evidence-based research findings that would assist social service agencies, departments of correction, and non-profits that deal with children and violence and children of inmates.

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Appendix

The Service Network for Children of Inmates in Miami-Dade County

This section describes a program that assists children of incarcerated parents in South Florida: The Service Network for Children of Inmates.

The Context

Solomon and Uchida (2007) estimated that in Miami-Dade County, 15,300 children had parents incarcerated in local jails and state prisons based on data provided by the Florida Department of Corrections (FLDOC) and extrapolations from the national data. FLDOC estimated that 8,200 of the state's inmates were from Miami-Dade County: 7,888 (96%) males and 312 (4%) females. National estimates indicated that 44% of male and 64% of female inmates were parents.

Solomon and Uchida (2007) estimated that about 3,500 of the males and 200 of the females from Miami-Dade County who are now in state prisons are likely to have children. Within the jail system, Miami-Dade correctional facilities house approximately 7,000 inmates who are awaiting trial or serving sentences of 364 days or less. This is the 6th largest jail system in the United States. JSS conservatively estimated that 55% of jail inmates have children, with an average of 2.0 children per parent. Using these estimates, 3,850 parents with more than 7,700 children are incarcerated in the county jail.

The Service Network

Justice & Security Strategies, Inc. (JSS) led a collaboration to obtain funding from the Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County to focus on children of incarcerated parents. JSS works with eight community/ faith-based organizations in a collaborative called, The Service Network for Children of Inmates (COI). Since 2007 the Service Network has:

- Developed systematic processes to receive referrals from the community, local law enforcement, Miami-Dade County Jail, and Florida Department of Corrections facilities.
- Proactively located children to ensure they are safe and with a responsible adult caregiver
- Provided services to reduce risks for anti-social behaviors, facilitate family stabilization, and improve developmental progress
- Created opportunities to allow for stronger bonds and attachment between children and incarcerated parent, where appropriate, and
- Raised community knowledge of the consequences of incarceration on children.

The Service Network not only serves children with an incarcerated parent, but also provides services to an incarcerated grandparent or older sibling *if they are the primary caregiver*. The population includes children from infant to 18 years. Children are accepted from all addresses in Miami-Dade County.

The Service Network includes eight community/faith-based organizations and two professional organizations. Specifically, the partners are Trinity Church, Hosanna Foundation, Hope of Miami, AGAPE Ministries, Christian Family Worship Center, Silent Victims of Crime, ArtSpring, Netstring and Digital Storyline. These organizations are located throughout Miami-Dade County and, together, provide access to a racially and geographically diverse population. The first five organizations serve as Care Coordination Centers where children and caregivers meet with a social or caseworker to discuss basic needs, health concerns, and ways in which the Centers can assist in improving the lives of the children.

Working with Children of Inmates

Children are referred to the Centers in a number of ways. One way is through the Miami-Dade County Jail where a JSS employee works 30 hours per week as a Corrections Liaison. In addition, the Corrections Liaison conducts a similar outreach to 10 Florida Department of Corrections facilities, which house the majority of inmates sentenced in Miami-Dade County. Over 90% of the children participating in the Network services are referred by incarcerated parents and caregivers. Other referrals come from community-based after-school programs,

Miami-Dade Schools, the Miami Police Department, and through a telephone hotline, web-email link, and walk-ins to the Care Coordination Centers.

Once a referral is made, the Service Network then engages in an investigative process to physically locate the child. In cases of referrals from school, social services, criminal justice, or public providers or walk-ins, the Service Network typically has a viable way to contact the caregiver without expending many resources. In cases of referral from inmates from jail or prison, the Service Network expends considerable effort at attempting to locate the child. Care coordinators engage in a careful process of calling the last known contact phone number, conducting a home visit to the last known address, and interviewing neighbors, or others to attempt to determine if the child is in the custody of a responsible adult.

In 2008, as part of this effort to locate the child or caregiver, the Service Network began offering family stabilization and/or bonding services to build trust with the caregiver and child.

These services include:

- Hosting support groups for small groups of children to help them understand their feelings and come-to-terms with the realities of parental incarceration. During these sessions, letter-writing or drawing are used.
- Separately hosting support groups for caregivers to build a sense of community and share how they are resolving problems specific to their situation, such as obtaining birth certificates for children left in their care, managing school routines, etc.
- Coordinating quarterly bus trips to 10 correctional facilities and the jail facility. The bus trips are used to provide support to existing clients and to engage new clients.
- Coordinating weekly video-visitation sessions; these sessions use videoconference technologies to maintain more frequent contact and to provide for less costly, less invasive and less frightening contact between the child and incarcerated parent.

Through these efforts, the Service Network provides immediate communication, bonding, wellness and crisis/basic services and engages the child and caregiver for longer term services.

Care coordination services represent the development of a longer term relationship focused more directly on improving emotional, behavioral, attachment and school outcomes.

Number of Children in the Program

From February 1, 2008 to March 31, 2012, the Service Network has received over 3,200 referrals. Of these, over 2,200 children were identified and contacted. For each of these children the Service Network has their names, gender, date of birth, race/ethnicity, country of origin, school identification number, grade, health insurance status, disability information, and parent's names. The Service Network has additional information for 1,400 of these children residing in over 600 families who participated in a Network Services. Approximately 1,100 have received care coordination services and currently 600 are participating in ongoing care coordination services. Approximately 700 participated in bonding activities with over 300 participating each quarter in prison and jail visits. In total, each month, an average of 50 new children are referred to the Network, and about 20 express interest and begin participating in the care coordination and/or bonding services. Also, over 70 incarcerated parents of almost 150 children in the program have been subsequently released from prison. Even after the parent's release, almost 60 children and their families have remained active in the Service Network, receiving services and assistance from the Network during re-entry.

At intake, children and caregivers are asked a about the family structure (e.g., who does the child live with?), and the name of the incarcerated parent. Once the child is in the program, the care coordinator conducts an assessment of basic needs of the family (food, housing, counseling, clothing, employment, government assistance, etc.). Risk assessments, based on instruments previously validated by researchers and provided by the Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, are conducted by age group (0-3 years, 4-12 years, and 13-17 years); for those seeking counseling services, psychosocial assessments based on Medicaid mental health protocols are conducted. Care coordinators also keep records of

every contact and visit and the types of services provided. These data and narrative case notes are entered into the Family-Oriented Coordination User System (FOCUS).²

FOCUS is a secure, relational database that captures information about the child, caregiver, and incarcerated parent and how they are linked together into sometimes complex family groups. For example the system tracks the child's relationship to the caregiver, e.g. son/daughter, grandchild, nephew/niece, cousin, stepchild, foster child, etc. The system also tracks the child's relationship to the inmate(s). Finally, the system links the children as "siblings" in two ways: 1) all the children associated with a given caregiver which is important for multiple inmates caregiver families, e.g. a grandmother raising children for two or more of her incarcerated children; and 2) all the children associated with a given inmate, allowing for tracking step siblings.

Detailed information in the system includes the child's date of birth, gender, race, ethnicity, home address, languages spoken, special medical needs, disabilities, mental health needs, health insurance, delinquency, dependency status school and grade, and church contact if available. The system captures the last four digits of child's social security number and their school identification number, supporting the ability to link other data to the FOCUS data as available. The system also tracks referrals for services made for the child, case notes, and social contacts with the family. With respect to caregivers, the system tracks the caregivers address and relationships to the child and the inmate as well as marital status. It also allows for tracking the difference between the caregiver that the child resides with and the assigned legal guardian, as sometimes they are not the same person.

² Care coordinators follow a strict protocol to insure that children and their caregivers understand that information is confidential. Consent forms are signed by children and caregivers and on file at the Care Coordination Centers.

Information in the system on the inmates includes the inmate number, name, last known correctional facility, release date and relationship to the child. The inclusion of the inmate number allows for a linkage to the Department of Correction database (described below) which further allows for a linkage to criminal history, court system data and disciplinary reports (DRs) filed for the incarcerated parent. The Network also uses FOCUS to maintain all information about prison/jail visits. Survey data collected during the visits from all participants (caregivers, incarcerated parents, and children) are also entered into FOCUS.