

Parenting Connection

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Seven Out of Ten? Not Even Close

It has been widely claimed in the media and professional publications that children with incarcerated parents (CIP) are six times more likely than other children to become justice-involved and that seven out of ten CIP will become justice-involved. Articles in this newsletter have been guilty of repeating these claims.

A report from Central Connecticut State University, authored by James M. Conway, Ph.D. and Edward T. Jones, delves into these undocumented claims and highlights the importance of accuracy in the use of this data without documentary evidence. These undocumented claims are important because they have been used to justify public policy and they are potentially stigmatizing to CIP.

In *A Review of Research on the Likelihood of Children with Incarcerated Parents Becoming Justice-Involved*, the authors reviewed six sources of the “seven out of ten” claim and found that the true mean of the estimates across the studies was slightly more than three out of ten (32.8%). For the claim that CIP were six times as likely more likely than non-CIP to become justice-involved, they found on average CIP were about three times as likely as non-CIP to become justice-involved. Of the three studies employing control variables, in only one of them were the results consistent with the idea that parental incarceration may be the cause of elevated justice-involvement in CIP.

Much of the public policy attention regarding children with incarcerated parents (CIP) has focused on an issue that is important but also potentially stigmatizing – the possibility that CIP will themselves become incarcerated. Because the “six times more likely” and “seven out of ten” claims are unsupported by the data and potentially stigmatizing, the authors argue that these claims must be abandoned.

When quoted in the literature, the “seven out of ten” and “six times more likely” claims often cite as their source the U.S. Senate Report 106-404 (2000) which stated: “Statistics show that children of prisoners are six times more likely than other children to be incarcerated at some point in their lives. The Department of Justice has ignored the fact that 70% of children of prisoners will become involved with the nation’s prison
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system.” The senate report provided no supporting evidence or citation for these figures, yet has itself been cited as an authoritative source.

Two other government reports have made the “six times more likely” claim. Both reports cited Barnhill and Dressel (1991) as their source, but Barnhill and Dressel did not actually study the justice-involvement rates of CIP.

If the claims are incorrect and overstate the risk of intergenerational incarceration, it is important that they stop being used. In addition to being potentially misleading, the claims may also be stigmatizing to CIP.

Stigma and the Effect of Claims about CIP

Conway and Jones argue that the substantial stigma associated with having an incarcerated parent derives in part from a belief that CIP are likely to become justice-involved, and that the “six times more likely” and “seven out of ten” claims about CIP exacerbate the stigma. This stigma may affect decisions made about CIP in the justice system. A comparison of records of juvenile court cases found that children with an incarcerated father were more likely to receive an out-of-home placement than were other children, even when other variables such as family dysfunction and the child’s prior referrals to juvenile court were taken into account. Several studies indicate that CIP are labeled, associated with negative attributes, and devalued.

Ann Adalist-Estrin, Director of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, claims that while the “seven out of ten” and “six times more likely” have been intended to draw attention to the plight of CIP and to advocate for resources and services, they may in fact be promoting stigmatization.

Purpose of the Review and Research Questions

Conway and Jones focused on three research questions: 1) What is the likelihood (i.e., the percentage) of CIP becoming justice-involved? 2) How much higher (if at all) is the likelihood of CIP vs. other children becoming justice-involved? 3) If there is a difference in the likelihood of justice-involvement for CIP vs. other children, does evidence suggest that the parental incarceration is potentially the cause of the difference? In answering this question the authors considered whether controlling for other factors that may correlate with parental incarceration, such as socio-economic status, could explain the difference in justice-involvement.

Likelihood of CIP Becoming Justice-Involved

Conway and Jones’ review of relevant research regarding the likelihood of CIP becoming justice-involved clearly showed that not one of the studies reviewed had estimates that even approached 70% (the “7 out of 10” claim). The highest was 43.1% and all other estimates were below 35% percent. They calculated the mean of the percentages was 32.8%, or slightly more than three out of ten CIP may become justice-involved – much lower than the common “seven out of ten” claim.

Comparing CIP and Non-CIP on the Likelihood of Becoming Justice-Involved

When comparing the likelihood was of CIP vs. non-CIP becoming justice-involved, Conway and Jones found that CIP chances for justice-involvement for CIP was 32.8%, compared to a matched group of non-CIP rate of 10.6%. Although the review does indicate an elevated level of justice-involvement for CIP, the ratio of the two populations was 3.1 – not even approaching the “six times more likely” claim.

Parental Incarceration as a Potential Cause of CIP Justice-Involvement

Given the fairly consistent (though smaller than frequently claimed) difference in justice-involvement between CIP and non-CIP, parental incarceration might be the cause, Conway and Jones could not be certain about a cause-and-effect relationship. They found only three of the studies to review that used



control variables. The evidence was mixed – one found a significant difference showing that parental incarceration was a cause of increased risk and the other two could not show a statistically significant difference. To make a definitive conclusion, research fully controlling for variables at the community level as well as the individual child level is needed.

Recommendations

The authors recognize that while a public awareness campaign regarding supporting CIP is needed, the challenge is to increase support for CIP without using harmful messages. A different way to argue for the urgency of attention to CIP is to focus on emerging research indicating other potential negative outcomes including mental health issues, internalizing emotions, externalizing behaviors and physical health problems.

According to Adalist-Estrin, service providers with a belief in the “six times more likely” claim may unintentionally convey their negative expectations to CIP.

Conway and Jones believe it is important for all those who provide services to CIP be educated about the likelihood of their justice-involvement as well as other outcomes. Providers could then be more sensitive to the needs and issues specific to CIP, and could avoid conveying negative expectations or judgments of the child’s family. They also believe that other professionals such as teachers and those working in the justice system should be educated to be aware of how parental incarceration affects children.

If you are interested in reading the entire report, *A Review of Research on the Likelihood of Children with Incarcerated Parents Becoming Justice-Involved*, the complete document may be found at: http://www.ctcip.org/app/download/8947957/CIP_Seven_Out_of_Ten_Not_Even_Close.pdf.

Children of Incarcerated Parents Attend Washington State DOC Summer Camp

Twenty-two children arrived at a remote wooded camp this week with a secret they’re often afraid to tell others. A casual visitor wouldn’t notice. The children were laughing and smiling as they kayaked, swam and did normal kid stuff at Camp Lyle McLeod, located by an isolated lake near Belfair State Park.

“It’s fun here,” said Cody, an 11-year-old from Kent. “I like boating and archery and arts and crafts.” He’s like most boys his age – except that he has a parent in prison.

That was true for all the children, ages 8 to 12, who hung out with Cody this week, at the first summer camp ever held by the state Department of Corrections (DOC) for the children of incarcerated parents. The department, in partnership with the Girl Scouts of Western Washington, hosted the Kids United By Incarceration, KUBI, camp from June 17–19 to provide a fun experience the kids might not otherwise have the opportunity enjoy – and to do so with peers facing the same struggles.

“A lot these kids will not say their parents are in prison because they’re afraid of what other kids will think of them,” said Bea Giron, a specialist with DOC’s family services unit. “Here, these kids are openly speaking of it.”

She said a group of girls came up to her on Thursday and asked what KUBI, the logo stenciled on blue sweat shirts given to the children, meant. “I said ‘did you know every single child in here has a parent in prison?’ They were like ‘no,’” Giron said.

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She asked the kids if any of them would raise their hand in a group, if someone wanted to know if they had a parent in prison. One girl said she would not. "I asked why and she said, 'because they'd think I'm a killer,'" Giron said. "These children have this stigma behind them."

DOC employees acted as counselors for the children, staying with them in yurts at the camp, helping them with activities and broaching the sometimes difficult conversations about having a parent in prison.

Giron hopes the camp will also help dispel misconceptions the children may have about DOC employees. "I let them know that we all work for the Department of Corrections and we all work in one capacity or another to take care of their parents," she said. "I think it will help as they get older because in the environment a lot of these kids come from, corrections employees are viewed as bad, 'they'll catch you doing bad things and lock you up.'"

Giron came up with the idea of hosting a camp, solely for children who have parents in prison. She's not aware of any other state with a similar program.

Notices were posted at all 12 Washington state prisons, urging offenders to send in applications for their children. Offenders at 10 facilities sent in 89 applications, however many of the children were unable to attend for a variety of reasons, including illness and difficulty arranging transportation. In the end, 22 children arrived at the camp by bus at about noon on Wednesday.

Funding for the camp comes from offenders and their families through the Offender Betterment Fund. No tax dollars were used. The projected cost of the camp, not including donations, is about \$6,000. While this year's KUBI camp was a pilot, it was so successful that DOC has already decided to hold another camp next summer, and the Girls Scouts have signed a contract to hold the camp yearly.

Children interviewed at the camp all said they were enjoying the stay and hoped to return if the camp is held again.

Cody on Thursday afternoon was hanging out with 9 year-olds Tucker and Roman by the lake. They were all laughing and sharing their experiences. "I like archery because they taught you how to shoot a real live bow at a target. And we never have before," Cody said.

"This morning we saw a snake this long," Tucker, said excitedly, holding hands apart, "and I almost caught it."

"My favorite thing was kayaking," Roman said. "You can go really far places in the water."

Jody Becker-Green, who oversees DOC's family services unit, said her biggest hope for the camp was to give kids a normal childhood experience. "If they go home and say that they had a good time, then I think for me that would be hitting the ball out of the park," she said.

Press Release – Washington State DOC Communications – June 19, 2015

Updated Handbooks Available

The parenting handbooks published by the Correctional Education Association-Wisconsin have been recently updated and are available on the CEA-Wisconsin website. Go to www.ceawisconsin.org to access the Reaching Out: A Handbook for Parents Incarcerated in Wisconsin, Reaching In: A Handbook for the Families of Parents Incarcerated in Wisconsin, and Prison Parenting Programs: Resources for Parenting Instructors.



KMCI's FLORR Program Receives Read to Lead Grant

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers awarded Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution (KMCI) a \$3,000 Read to Lead Grant to support the For Love of Reading Relationships Program (FLORR). KMCI was one of six recipients selected from a pool of 126 applicants to receive the Read to Lead Grants and it was the only DOC facility honored.

Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, DOC Secretary Ed Wall, and Donna Hejtmanek presented the Read to Lead Grant to KMCI's For Love of Reading Relationships Program during an informal ceremony at KMCI on May 27, 2015.

The Read to Lead Development Fund is "part of a comprehensive effort to make sure that Wisconsin students gain one of the most crucial life skills necessary for future success: the ability to read." For Wisconsin, the Read to Lead program "is a commitment to improving literacy within our state," said Governor Walker. He stated the grant recipients will "continue the mission of this program by focusing on the development of critical reading skills, while serving diverse populations."

The For Love of Reading Relationships Program at KMCI assists dads who want to read to their children. Incarcerated fathers participating in the program record themselves reading children's books on DVD to send home to their children, along with the book being read.

The FLORR Program teaches fathers how to read to children and select good children's literature. FLORR works with dads on reading readiness and oral language skills that will help their children be more successful in school. The fathers also learn methods to help them stay in touch with their children. The program culminates with the fathers recording a 20 minute reading of a book they mail to their children.

The FLORR program is valuable to both the child and the father. The child benefits from a better bond with the parent. Likewise, the fathers benefit from the same positive experiences when they have strong bonds with their families which ultimately lead to a more successful reentry as studies have shown.

Mary Pohlman, co-facilitator of FLORR, says the program's purpose is "to promote the love of reading between a parent and their child, teach parents how to promote oral language skills development in their children, and assist parents in teaching school readiness skills."

David Prochnow, KMCI's Education Director, said the grant will provide "more resources, in the form of books, for our inmate dads to use to maintain and develop relationships with their kids." Because of the award, Prochnow added KMCI is able to "continue and grow the program at the institutional level."

Pohlman said, "Our dads have reported that the children become very excited about seeing and hearing their parent. Dads also report that their children read along with dad or ask for a trip to the library."

Prochnow said linking imprisoned fathers to their home "is an absolute necessity for successful reintegration." He stressed the importance of fathers connecting with their children, "I believe in the idea that it takes a community to raise a child, and this program fosters that relationship with dads and their kids, which is especially strained due to incarceration. We need dads to stay involved."

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Right Path Program Helps Students Pursue their Dreams

The challenges to at-risk children of incarcerated parents are great.

- 67% of inmates in American state prisons did not complete high school
- 73% of Milwaukee residents without a high school diploma live in poverty
- 39% of Milwaukee public high school students drop out
- The number of children across the country with a parent or guardian in prison has increased 80% since 1990
- 1 in 28 children in the U.S. has a parent behind bars

Having a parent in prison does not have to lock up a child's dreams. Children of incarcerated parents may be eligible for a \$1,000 or \$5,000 scholarship to help them obtain a high school credential and vocational skills that will set them on a new course.

Through a collaborative effort of the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), the MATC Foundation and the Creative Corrections Education Foundation (CCEF), the Right Path Program was created to break the cycle of "generational incarceration."

The Right Path Program provides young adults, 18-25, who have dropped out of high school and have a parent or guardian incarcerated or on parole/probation with the opportunity to earn a high school credential, gain job skills, and embark on a career pathway. The program was conceived and developed by corrections and education professions who understand the seriousness of generational incarceration and the need to address it.

The Right Path Program enables qualified students to enroll in MATC's Adult High School or GED/HSED program at no cost. Students take at least one occupational course each year to provide job skills and begin a career pathway. While attending, students receive books, tuition, fees and a small monthly stipend as long as they are making academic progress and remain free of criminal behavior. Once their credential is earned, they may continue their education at MATC or another institution of higher learning. The hope is that through education, the students will find themselves in a better place and make better choices in their lives.

Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Have a parent/guardian who is currently or has been incarcerated or on parole/probation
- Have not completed high school or a GED/HSED program
- Be between the ages of 18-25
- Have been out of school or a GED/HSED program for at least four months
- Must meet minimum academic level as determined by the pre-testing process

Participating students will receive:

- Testing and placement services
- Tuition, books and fees funded
- Bi-weekly stipends, based on class schedule
- At least one occupational course during the school year
- Public transportation
- Access to MATC resources such as Life Skills, Career Advising, Tutoring, Workshops, Academic Support Centers, and Library



Participating students will be expected to:

- Attend 100% of classes
- Show progress toward completion of designated program
- Meet with program staff to review progress
- Complete the necessary paperwork to remain in program
- Remain free of criminal behavior
- Abide by the MATC Student Code of Conduct
- Complete classwork as required by teachers
- Participate in program-related activities as scheduled

More Right Path Program information is at:

www.creativecorrectionseducationfoundation.org or www.matc.edu/precollege/index.cfm

Or contact:

Marty Ordinans, Program Administrator

mordinans@creativecorrectionalfoundation.org

414-465-9538

Milwaukee's DAD Project Engages Fathers in Home Visiting

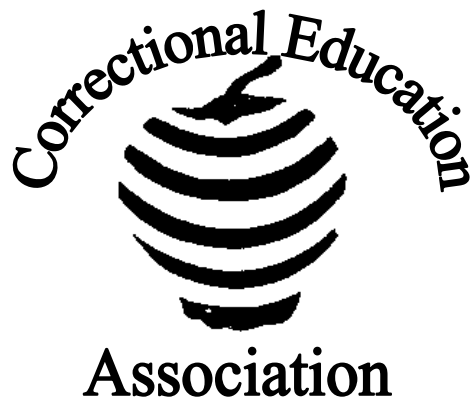
Meaningful father involvement is essential for children. Research has shown that father involvement positively correlates with children's secure attachment, social and emotional development, cognitive development, and quality of life. Furthermore, father's positive influences during children's early years also improve children's odds against later incarceration, teen pregnancy, low educational attainment, crime, and substance abuse. Father involvement also positively impacts mothers by reducing stress and depression levels. In addition, when fathers are involved early in pregnancy, women are more likely to receive first trimester prenatal care and reduce smoking. For these reasons and more, the City of Milwaukee Health Department developed and implemented the Direct Assistance for Dads (DAD) Project, an intensive home visiting program for expectant and parenting fathers. Fathers who have recently been released from incarceration are one of the DAD Project's target populations. Implementation of the DAD Project began in fall of 2013 and client enrollment began in March of 2014. The program has four home visitors, called Father Involvement Specialists, who maintain caseloads of approximately 20 fathers each.

The goals of the DAD Project are to positively impact infant mortality, improve birth outcomes, and strengthen African American families and communities by strengthening father involvement in their children's and partner's lives. Fathers of any age are eligible to participate in this voluntary program if they live in the city of Milwaukee and are either expecting a child or have a child under the age of 18 months. The project utilizes two curricula: the evidence-based *Parents as Teachers* child development and parenting curriculum and the *24/7 Dad*, a comprehensive fatherhood curriculum developed by the National Fatherhood Initiative. Father Involvement Specialists partner with fathers to complete individualized, strengths-based care plans and track progress towards participant-driven goals. Case management services include mental health screenings; referrals for mental health consultation, education, employment, financial and legal services; and access to health services. The Fatherhood Involvement Specialists provide fatherhood coaching and support fathers in co-parenting with their child's mother. Services are intended to improve parenting skills, increase awareness of child development, and improve relationships with their partner and children.

For more information about the DAD Project, contact Darcy DuBois, DAD Project Director, City of Milwaukee Health Department at dduboi@milwaukee.gov.



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Editor's Message:

Data can be a powerful tool when increasing public awareness of the challenges faced by children of incarcerated parents, advocating for resources for these children and justifying changes in public policy. But as emphasized in the cover article in this newsletter, the use of unfounded claims may have the unintentional effect of further stigmatizing an already stigmatized group.

Because of the complex nature of factors influencing the likelihood of children of incarcerated parents becoming justice-involved, it is important not to jump to the conclusion that parental incarceration is the primary factor in a cause and effect relationship.

When researching the likelihood of children of incarcerated parents becoming justice-involved, it is difficult, if not impossible, to control for other variables that may be as important as parental incarceration. Other potential causes may be things correlated with incarceration in general. Children of incarcerated parents may tend to live in neighborhoods that are in low socio-economic development and are heavily policed. These factors need to be examined in any research regarding the impact of parental incarceration on the children.

Jerry

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