

# Parenting Connection

Correctional Education Association—Wisconsin

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## POPS Battles the “Pain of the Prison System”

On June 1, 2019, POPS the Club held a book launch for its new anthology, We Got Game: The Sixth POPS Anthology.

POPS the Club is a Los Angeles-based organization formed to battle against the stigma of incarceration and to create a safe space for students with an incarcerated family member. POPS, short for “pain of the prison system,” was launched in February 2013 by editor and author Amy Friedman and her husband Dennis Danziger, a novelist and playwright.

POPS started at Venice High School and has spread to eight high schools in the Los Angeles area. Since its inception, the various clubs have affected an estimated 350 to 400 students. The number of POPS volunteers has grown to about 60. Pilot clubs are forming in New York City, Harrisburg, Baltimore and Atlanta.

POPS the Club seeks to transform shame and stigma into hope and healing for teens who are struggling with the Pain of the Prison System. In weekly club meetings, young people with loved ones in prison, jail and detention centers discover they are not alone. In the sacred space that is a POPS club meeting, members create community, share their stories, and to listen others. They break bread, make art, write, engage in mindfulness exercises, invite guest speakers and publish and perform stories and poems.

Most students who attend POPS the Club meetings have dealt, or are dealing with, the incarceration of a parent, sibling, other family member, or a friend. Some have themselves experienced incarceration.

The POPS curriculum focuses on self-expression (writing, drawing, photography, performance); self-healing (mindfulness); and community engagement (sharing questions and concerns, listening to speakers, speaking to middle schoolers, forums and others).

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Friedman and Danziger based the club on three basic rules.

- No one could be sent to POPS by a counselor, parent or teacher. Members were to attend meetings of their own volition
- Since the club was scheduled to meet at lunchtime, POPS would always provide food, which they saw as symbolic of breaking bread and breaking down barriers
- The club was open to anyone with any sort of connection to incarceration, whether they had a loved one inside or had been locked up themselves

“The issues, the stigmatization, the silence faced by these children tied to the prison system can have profound effects on them,” Friedman said. The POPS curriculum is specifically designed to disrupt those stigmas and silences. In addition to the writing, mindfulness exercises, and experiments with various art forms, there are guest speakers. Some come to share information about scholarship opportunities and post-graduation programs to jumpstart the students to their next levels of schooling or the professional world. Other visitors, who have done their own time in California state prisons, come to talk with insight and eloquence about their painful past experiences

Every club is run by a group of volunteers that includes a teacher or school-based sponsor, community-based volunteers and guest speakers. Every club “has its own personality,” Friedman says. Some may lean mostly toward writing exercises, while other clubs may spend a higher percentage of time with talk and personal sharing during the meetings.

Over time, Friedman and Danziger realized that some kids were ready to have their stories heard by others outside the POPS world, and that they should be heard. The two began publishing an annual anthology of the students’ writing and artwork. Each volume is launched complete with a launch party, and each POPS anthology features startlingly moving tales of deep reflection and heartbreak.

“Once these kids are able to write their stories, it just opens something up in them,” Danziger said. “You cannot read this book straight through ... you read four or five pages ... you’re done and you wipe your eyes.” It is powerful, he said, to give the POPS kids an “opportunity to stop hiding.”

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POPS the Club relies on grants and donations to support initiatives. Actor/social activist Tim Robbins has always kept incarceration central to the company's artistic mission. POPS the Club has conducted a successful Global Giving micro-project fund raiser and was awarded a mini-grant by the California Mental Health Services Authority.

Your donations can help POPS to publish their anthologies; to design and distribute these books; to provide lunch for each club; to train volunteers and teachers; and to develop their curriculum and create events to feature their students. You can donate by going to their website, <https://popstheclub.networkforgood.com/>.

## Tell Us About Your Program

One of the goals of the Correctional Education Association is to provide a vehicle for communication among educators who are developing programs for incarcerated parents in correctional facilities or for their families in the community. You are invited to share your ideas by contributing an article for a future issue of this newsletter.

Here are some suggestions for articles:

- Share a creative lesson plan that you use in your Parenting Class
- Compile a list of books and videos you use in your program
- Describe how your parent/child book project works
- Describe a training workshop that you found useful
- Describe how you involve community organizations in your program
- Describe how you have made your institution more family-friendly

Email your articles to [JerryBednarowski@new.rr.com](mailto:JerryBednarowski@new.rr.com)

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## Technology Grant Helps Keep Families Connected While a Parent Is Jailed

On April 25, 2019, New York State Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) joined leaders from the Osborne Association and Community Health Center of Buffalo to announce a \$180,000 grant to bring Osborne Association's FamilyWorks Program to Buffalo to allow families to visit with incarcerated loved ones via video.

The new program will offer community outreach, training, and technical assistance to Buffalo agencies, and free, clinically-supported video-visiting to children of incarcerated parents. The program will build on the Osborne Association's longstanding services for children and families, utilizing existing technology and scheduling infrastructure that have been developed over the past two decades in partnership with the state. The groundbreaking program will allow families to visit with their incarcerated loved ones via video at eight prisons.

Technology like FaceTime and Skype will start playing a role in eight prisons, allowing parents who are incarcerated to visit with their children more often. The calls will still be monitored, but the family-friendly center will have living rooms with toys and even the same books so parents and kids can read together.

The family-friendly video-visiting rooms are designed as living room spaces and include toys and books, allowing families to feel comfortable and at home while e-visiting with family members. While the video visits are not meant to replace in-person visits, which are critical for building and maintaining a parent-child bond, they will supplement them and give families additional opportunities to interact with their incarcerated loved ones.

The Osborne Association believes that children of incarcerated adults need tools to express their emotions and to be reassured that they are not going through this traumatic situation alone. The FamilyWorks Buffalo program will build on Osborne's 85-year history working with currently and formerly incarcerated men, women, and children and families affected by incarceration.

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The Osborne Association works in partnership with individuals, families, and communities to create opportunities for people affected by the criminal justice system to further develop their strengths and lead lives of responsibility and contribution. Osborne is known for developing effective programs that offer a broad range of treatment, education, and vocational services to more than 14,000 people each year who have been affected by the criminal justice system, helping them to lead meaningful lives with accountability and self-determination. The organization has a presence in New York City courts, Rikers Island jails, and thirty New York State prisons, as well as community sites in New York City and the Hudson Valley.

In the ceremony announcing the grant, Senator Kennedy said, “The negative impact on the children of incarcerated adults can often be overlooked. It is critical that we do all that we can to ease the stress imposed on children and families affected by incarceration, including by expanding opportunities to communicate in a family-like setting with parents. Children of incarcerated adults should not be written off. They should be given every opportunity to thrive, succeed, and build important familial relationships, and with these tools, they can. I thank the Osborne Association and Community Health Center of Buffalo for their proactive approach.”

“Children—all children—need to know their parents are safe and be able to see, hear, and, whenever possible, touch their moms or dads,” said Liz Gaynes, President and CEO of the Osborne Association. “For the thousands of children in Western NY with incarcerated parents — who are often housed hundreds of miles from home in areas not accessible by public transportation — the cost and distance to visit in person can be far too great. Osborne is pleased to work with Dr. LaVonne Ansari and her team to open this new FamilyWorks site at the Community Health Center of Buffalo. Osborne will offer supportive services and video visiting to maintain and strengthen family connections during incarceration.”

When a parent is sent to jail or prison, the bond with their child is often lost or put in jeopardy. Liz Gaynes asserts that Osborne Association's FamilyWorks Program is designed to help make sure families don't miss out on that precious time. It is an important way to make sure parents and kids have a good relationship, so when parents are released they can start fresh together.

For more information, contact Jonathan Stenger at [jstenger@osborneny.org](mailto:jstenger@osborneny.org) or 347-306-0853.

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## Sesame Street Helps Children Cope with a Parent's Incarceration

The incarceration of a loved one can be overwhelming for both children and caregivers. Because of the feeling of stigma, it takes special effort to start important conversations and answer kids' questions.

The Sesame Street Workshop has created a series of videos, articles and printables to help parents comfort children and guide them through difficult moments just by talking. The materials are designed to help little ones build the skills they need to tackle any challenge with confidence. Sesame Street believes that with love and support, the family can cope with the challenges of incarceration together.

The tools Sesame Street provides for parents and caregivers are available in English and Spanish and are targeted for use with children ages 3-8.

Here are some of the Sesame Street Workshop materials that may be downloaded:

### Videos

- What Is Incarceration?
- Visiting a Parent in Prison
- You're Not Alone
- Talking about Feelings

### Articles

- Ask Me Anything
- Something to Count On
- Little Children, Big Feelings
- Staying Connected

### Printables

- Sticking to Routines
- Talk Together, Read Together
- In My Family Storybook
- Singing During Prison Visits

### Interactives

- Art Maker; Draw It Out!



In My Family storybook

Check it out at <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/incarceration/>

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## Information Gateway Provides Resources to Promote Reunification

Child Welfare Information Gateway promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families by connecting child welfare, adoption, and related professionals as well as the public to information, resources, and tools covering topics on child welfare, child abuse and neglect, out-of-home care, adoption, and more.

A service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Child Welfare Information Gateway provides access to print and electronic publications, websites, databases, and online learning tools for improving child welfare practice, including resources that can be shared with families.

One of the resource collections, *Reunification and Visits with Parents Who Are Incarcerated*, provides strategies and best practices for promoting reunification and supporting visits between incarcerated parents and their children.

The Child Welfare Information Gateway recognizes that parents who are incarcerated face a unique set of challenges, because they must work within and across both the child welfare and corrections systems. They may experience difficulties in meeting case plan requirements such as regular visiting with their children or completing parent education within the timeframe established by child welfare and by Federal regulations such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

To address these needs, the Information Gateway has assembled the resources on the next three pages that may be accessed at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/reunification/incarcerated/>.

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## **Child and Family Visitation Best Practice Guide**

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Outlines visitation guidelines and recommendations for children and families visiting a parent in prison or jail. The document includes information on the benefits of visitation for families, best practices for visiting, who should be included in visits, frequency of visitation, and more.

## **Children's Contact With Incarcerated Parents: Summary and Recommendations**

Julie Poehlmann-Tynan, In *Children's Contact with Incarcerated Parents: Implications for Policy and Intervention*

Discusses important considerations when examining parent-child contact in prisons and jails and offers suggestions relating to changes in policies, procedures, and practices that may improve the experience for parents and children.

## **The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated**

Offers information and resources for service providers and families that focus on supporting children and families of incarcerated persons.

## **Parent-Child Visiting Practices in Prisons and Jails: A Synthesis of Research and Practice**

The Urban Institute

Describes what is known about parent-child visiting practices in prisons and jails and identifies best practices according to recent literature and subject matter experts. The report also offers recommendations to advance research and practice in this area.

## **Reentry Mythbusters**

Federal Interagency Reentry Council

Provides information about federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated persons and their families on topics such as, public housing, employment, parental rights, and voting rights.

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## **Supporting Fathers and Families Impacted by Incarceration (Webinar)**

National Responsible Father Clearinghouse

Offers tips on how fatherhood programs can work to improve outcomes for incarcerated fathers and their children/families, and provides examples of programs that are helping fathers as they return to their communities after incarceration. The website includes links to webinar slides, a transcript, and additional related files.

## **Tip Sheet for Incarcerated Parents: Planning for a Visit from Your Child/Children**

Youth.gov

Provides information on security, how to interact, questions to ask, ways to engage other than talking, things to consider after a visit, and more when incarcerated parents are planning a visit from their child. Also available is a tip sheet for prison/ jail staff and volunteers on how to support families and children who are visiting a parent in prison or jail.

## **Toolkit for Developing Family-Focused Jail Programs**

The Urban Institute

Highlights successful family-focused jail programs and provides recommendations on how to develop them. The programs include components such as parenting classes, parent-child contact visits, and phone calls during which parents are coached by staff members on how to best connect with their children. Family-focused jail programs can help minimize the trauma these children face.

## **Video Visiting in Corrections: Benefits, Limitations, and Implementation Considerations**

U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections

Discusses video visitation programs within prisons and jails and includes a section on video visits for children. The guide provides information about benefits and challenges of video visiting and describes best practices and recommendations for the future.

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## Visiting Mom: A Pilot Evaluation of a Prison-Based Visiting Program Serving Incarcerated Mothers and Their Minor Children

Schubert, Duininck, and Shlafer, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*

Describes an evaluation of a prison visitation program, Extended Visiting, for incarcerated mothers and their children. Participating mothers identified benefits including maintaining a relationship with their children, physical contact, motivation, and personal growth. Caregivers also appreciated the program.

## When a Parent is Incarcerated: A Primer for Social Workers and Foster Parents

Fostering Perspectives

Provides information for social workers and foster parents on how to maintain a relationship when parents are in jail or prison. The website includes information on visiting and tips for how to make visitation with incarcerated parents as successful as possible.

## Working With the Correctional System and Incarcerated Parents (Podcast)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau

Presents a podcast that describes the working relationship between the child welfare system and those in jail or prison. The podcast includes discussion on what to know when sending correspondence to someone who is incarcerated, how to coordinate parent-child visits, and more.

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Child Welfare Information Gateway website. At the top, there are logos for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, and Children's Bureau. Below these is the main logo for the Child Welfare Information Gateway, which includes the tagline "PROTECTING CHILDREN • STRENGTHENING FAMILIES". To the right of the logo are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, along with a search icon and a shopping cart icon. A navigation menu is located below the logo, with options for HOME, TOPICS, PUBLICATIONS, LIBRARY, STATE RESOURCES, MORE TOOLS & RESOURCES, and NEWS & EVENTS. The main content area features a large image of a young girl smiling and holding up a shoe. Below the image is a breadcrumb trail: HOME > TOPICS > ACHIEVING & MAINTAINING PERMANENCY > REUNIFYING FAMILIES > REUNIFICATION AND VISITS WITH PARENTS WHO ARE INCARCERATED. The article title "Reunification and Visits With Parents Who Are Incarcerated" is displayed in a large font. Below the title is a short introductory paragraph. To the right of the paragraph is a "Spotlight On" box with the text "Children of Incarcerated Parents" and "Youth.gov".

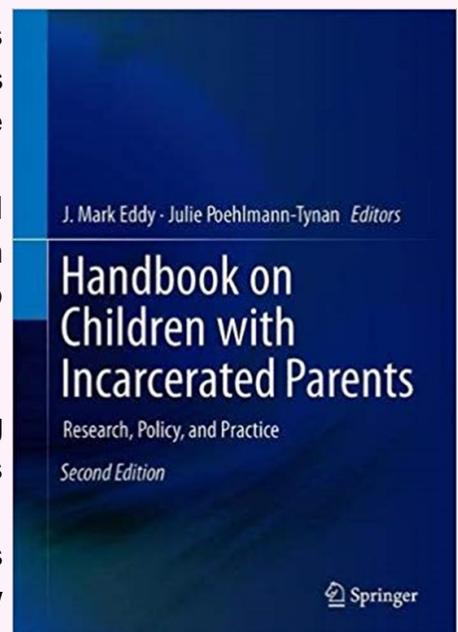
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## New Handbook on Children with Incarcerated Parents Released

The second edition of the *Handbook on Children with Incarcerated Parents* edited by J. Mark Eddy and Julie Poehlmann-Tynan comes out in August 2019.

The handbook examines family life, health, and educational issues that often arise for the millions of children in the United States whose parents are in prison or jail. It details how these youth are more likely to exhibit behavior problems such as aggression, substance abuse, learning difficulties, mental health concerns, and physical health issues. It also examines resilience and how children and families thrive even in the face of multiple challenges related to parental incarceration.

Chapters integrate diverse, interdisciplinary, and rapidly expanding literature and synthesize rigorous scholarship to address the needs of children from multiple perspectives, including child welfare, education, health care, mental health, law enforcement, corrections and law. The handbook concludes with a chapter that explores new directions in research, policy, and practice to improve the life chances of children with incarcerated parents.



Topics featured in this handbook include:

- Findings from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study
- How parental incarceration contributes to racial and ethnic disparities and inequality
- Parent-child visits when parents are incarcerated in prison or jail
- Approaches to empowering incarcerated parents of color and their families
- International advances for incarcerated parents and their children

The second edition of the *Handbook on Children with Incarcerated Parents* is an essential reference for researchers, professors, clinicians/practitioners, and graduate students across developmental psychology, criminology, sociology, law, psychiatry, social work, public health, human development, and family studies.

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## Editor's Message

In addition to publishing this bi-monthly newsletter, the CEA-Wisconsin publishes two handbooks – one for incarcerated parents and their families and the other for those who provide education and services for them.

*Prison Parenting Programs: Resources for Parenting Instructors in Prisons and Jails* has been expanded in June 2019. It now contains 123 entries on programs and resources for incarcerated parents and their families. This directory has been created to help correctional educators and community agencies enhance existing or create new parenting programs in correctional facilities and the community.

*Prison Parenting Programs* is a "living document." This means information will continue to be added to the handbook as relevant programs and resources are identified. Updates or additions to the listings in the directory are always welcome. If you have information that you feel should be included in either of the handbooks, email [jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com](mailto:jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com).

*Prison Parenting Programs* is designed to improve communication and cooperation and among those engaged in providing parenting programs in a variety of correctional settings and the community and to encourage the development of new programming opportunities. The hope is to create a professional network not only for the instructors of parenting classes, but also for the supervisors of children of incarcerated parent programs, coordinators of parent/child reading projects, and organizers of support groups.

The *Reaching Beyond Bars: A Handbook for Parents Incarcerated in Wisconsin and their Families* was also updated in June 2019. It contains 36 pages of information and advice for incarcerated parents.

Being in prison does not end a parent's duties, nor does it end all of the rewards. Being away does make it much harder to stay connected to the children. *Reaching Beyond Bars* was created to help incarcerated parents be more involved in their children's lives. It seeks to help the parent and child's caregiver to "reach beyond bars" to strengthen the bonds that keep the family together.

Those who work with incarcerated parents and their families are welcome to print the handbooks or any sections of them for use with their clients. As the handbooks are continually updated, they will be posted on the [www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org), [www.ceanational.org](http://www.ceanational.org) and [www.fairshake.net](http://www.fairshake.net) websites.

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