



## Center for Family Policy and Research

University of Missouri

## Programs for the Re-entry of Incarcerated Individuals & the Children of Incarcerated Parents in Missouri

Having a criminal record can prevent returning individuals from obtaining employment, housing, higher education, and credit, and these barriers can undermine their intentions to turn their lives around. Given that over half of all prisoners in Missouri are parents, it is crucial to consider the impact of parent incarceration on their children. This document provides a summary of programs available to assist incarcerated individuals and their children along with recommendations to support families affected by incarceration.

*“We need to provide a path for returning citizens and their families to become productive members of our communities.”* –Julie Kempker, Missouri Probation & Parole Chief State Supervisor

### State and National Offender Demographics

- In 2015, there were more than 30,000 incarcerated offenders in Missouri. The majority were White (63%), male (90%), and between 30 and 44 years old (43%).
- Blacks and Hispanics are over-represented in prison. Although Blacks and Hispanics represent approximately 30% of the national population, they comprise over 50% of the incarcerated population.
- Over 50% of incarcerated offenders in the nation have mental health problems, while approximately 70% were regular drug users.
- More than half of fathers in state prison report being the primary breadwinner for their family. The probability that a family will experience poverty increases by nearly 40% while a father is incarcerated.

### Children of Incarcerated Parents

- Over half of all prisoners in the U.S. are parents. From 1991-2007, the number of children with a mother in prison increased 131%, while the number with a father in prison increased 77%.
- More than 5 million children have a parent who has been incarcerated, and rates of parental incarceration are 2 to 7 times higher for Black and Hispanic children compared to White children.
- Based on self-report data, 20,744 inmates in Missouri have children, and 47,612 children are dependents of these inmates. However, it is estimated that approximately 100,000 children in Missouri have an incarcerated parent or caretaker.

### Factors that Affect Recidivism in Missouri

- *Mental Health Issues:* 57% of offenders with serious mental health problems return to prison within 5 years of release.
- *Substance Abuse:* 59% of those returning to prisons are for drug offenses, and 92% of those returning to prisons required substance abuse treatment.
- *Employment:* 72% of offenders who have never had full-time employment return to prison within 2 years, compared to only 27% of offenders who have had full-time employment.
- *Education:* 48% of offenders who leave prison without a GED or high school diploma return within 2 years, compared to 37% of offenders who obtain a GED in prison.

### The Missouri Reentry Process (MRP)

The MRP is an interagency, state-wide effort to reduce recidivism by providing the resources and tools needed for a successful reintegration into the community. The MRP model simplifies the process through which individuals obtain services via strategic collaborations between state and local agencies to integrate policies and services that

facilitate the transition process. Currently, 26 MRP Community Teams—composed of community organizations, local and state agencies, local law enforcement, judiciary representatives, local businesses, treatment providers, victims, and ex-offenders with their families—work together to identify and prioritize the needs of former offenders and to foster collaborations. The annual Missouri Reentry Conference also aims to encourage collaborations by bringing together agencies and community partners from across the state.

### **Programs that Assist Incarcerated Individuals to Prepare for Reentry**

Currently, Missouri offers more than 200 reentry programs ranging from parenting classes to vocational training and substance abuse treatment. The core reentry programs include *Pathway to Change*, *Impact of Crime on Victims*, anger management, and parenting classes.

### **Programs that Assist Children, Parents, and Families Affected by Incarceration in Missouri**

<i>Building Strong Families</i> (BSF)	<i>Parents as Teachers</i> (PAT)	<i>4-H Life</i>
<i>InsideOut Dads</i>	<i>PATCH</i>	<i>Amachi Missouri</i>
<i>Girl Scouts Behind Bars</i>	<i>StoryLink Program</i>	

### ***An Example of a Successful Mentoring Program for Children of Incarcerated Individuals***

*Amachi Missouri* takes a holistic approach to assisting children and families of incarcerated parents during the period of transition when parents are released from prison. *Amachi Missouri* provides a one-to-one mentoring program in which children are paired with positive adult role models who provide tailored support, guidance, and encouragement. *Amachi Missouri* has demonstrated positive impacts on children's behavioral, socioemotional, and academic outcomes. Of the children participating in *Amachi Missouri* during the 2014-2015 school year:

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| • 69% reported feeling socially accepted              | • 71% reported feeling a sense of academic competency   |
| • 90% reported avoiding risky behaviors               | • 70% missed less than 10 days of school                |
| • 95% reported a sense of parental trust              | • 88% had less than 4 discipline referrals              |
| • 74% reported having positive education expectations | • 79% in reading and 78% in math had a C grade or above |

### **Recommendations**

In a recent policy report, the Annie E. Casey Foundation made three recommendations for supporting incarcerated individuals, their families, and their children while imprisoned and during the reentry process. These include:

- Guaranteeing that children are being supported both while their parents are incarcerated and after their return.
- Connecting formerly incarcerated parents to pathways to employment in the community upon reentry.
- Building up communities, especially those disproportionately affected by incarceration and poverty, to encourage family stability and provide opportunities for success.

Educational interventions can break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration by improving future employment opportunities and reducing the susceptibility to engage in risky behaviors associated with crime. The Obama administration has recognized the value of early childhood education by expanding access to high-quality preschool through Head Start and Early Head Start programs. However, more targeted efforts are needed to ensure that children of incarcerated parents have access to high-quality education.

### **For More Detailed Information:**

Hines, L., & Martinez, M. M. (2016, June). Missouri Programs for Children of Incarcerated Parents. The Family and Community Trust (FACT)—Missouri KIDS COUNT. Available at: <http://mokidscount.org/stories/missouri-programs-children-incarcerated-parents/>

Martinez, M. M., Hines, L., & Kauffman, M. (2016, April). Missouri Reentry Process: Finding the Right Path for Returning Citizens. The Family and Community Trust (FACT)—Missouri KIDS COUNT. Available at: <http://mokidscount.org/missouri-reentry-process-finding-the-right-path-for-returning-citizens/>

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2016, April). A Shared Sentence. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

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The Center for Family Policy & Research is housed in the Department of Human Development and Family Science at the University of Missouri. The center serves as a resource for the development of effective public policies relating to all children, families, and communities.

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