



Summary of Listening Session with Youth Who Have or Have Had Incarcerated Parents

Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP)

American Institutes for Research

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Introduction

Children of incarcerated parents are an often hidden and underserved population. On behalf of the Federal Interagency Reentry Council (FIRC) subcommittee on Children of Incarcerated Parents (COIP) and the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP), the American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted a listening session with youth who have or have had incarcerated parents. AIR worked with the National Resource Center for Children and Families of the Incarcerated (NRCCFI) to recruit a diverse group of youth from across the country who gathered in Washington, D.C., on June 28-29, 2016, for a listening session to discuss their experiences as children of incarcerated parents. We brought together youth with lived experience as children with an incarcerated parent to learn about their unique needs, observations, and suggestions for how to improve services and programs designed for them. This is a summary of the discussions that occurred over the course of the two days.



Having a parent in prison can have an impact on a child's mental health, social behavior, and educational prospects.¹ The emotional trauma that may occur and the practical difficulties of a disrupted family life can be compounded by the social stigma that youth may face as a result of having a parent in prison or jail.² Youth who have an incarcerated parent may experience financial hardship that results from the loss of that parent's income.³ Further, some incarcerated parents face termination of parental rights because their children have been in the foster care system beyond the time allowed by law.⁴ These youth require support from local, state, and federal systems to meet their needs.

Youth who have incarcerated parents may also face a number of other challenging circumstances. They may have experienced trauma related to their parent's arrest or experiences leading up to it.⁵ Youth with incarcerated parents may also be more likely to have faced other adverse childhood experiences, including witnessing violence in their communities or directly in their household or exposure to drug and alcohol abuse.⁶

Youth have valuable ideas for improving policy and practice that support children of incarcerated parents drawn from their own experiences. Adults who work with youth or for youth in various capacities can make a positive difference in the lives of youth who have or have had an incarcerated parent. Policy makers, teachers, mentors, and youth organization staff can help youth tap into their inner strength and resiliency. This document summarizes the feedback youth had for policy makers and practitioners when

¹ La Vigne, Davies, & Brazzell, 2008

² La Vigne et al., 2008

³ General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2011

⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), 2011

⁵ La Vigne et al., 2008

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2013; Phillips & Gleeson, 200

they had the opportunity to share their experiences at the listening session in Washington, D.C. in June 2016.

On day one of the listening session, the 19 young people from different backgrounds and with varying experiences shared their thoughts with each other during a day of facilitated small group discussion. On day two, they presented their ideas for how to improve the supports and systems that affect youth and families of the incarcerated in front of an audience from Federal departments and agencies. Topics included challenges and successes with available services; communicating, visiting, and maintaining a relationship with their incarcerated parent; and preparing for their parent’s reentry to the family and community.



The purpose of these discussions was to learn more about the effects of parental incarceration on children, youth, and families. The themes that emerged during these discussions will contribute to the understanding of the needs of children with incarcerated parents and their families and will help inform future work regarding policies and procedures contributing to positive outcomes for children (inclusive of children, youth, and young adults) with an incarcerated parent. Participants’ ideas and feedback from the session were used to inform two tip sheets: [a tip sheet for youth with an incarcerated parent\(s\)](#) and [a tip sheet for service providers who work with them](#).

“We are ready to hear about solutions; not just discuss the problems.”

-W.A., 17 — San Francisco, CA

This summary provides information about the planning and process for the listening session, demographic information on the youth participants, themes heard from the youth regarding their experience with having an incarcerated parent, and ideas for change youth participants made for policy and practice improvement.

Preparation and Process

AIR conducted careful and intentional preparation for more than six months. This included identifying participants (19 youth and 16 chaperones), planning travel/logistics for the participants, providing detailed guidance on strategic sharing to both youth and their chaperones, developing session materials, providing an onsite counselor, coordinating video vignettes, and co-facilitating all sessions at the meeting. Strategic sharing is a process of carefully deciding what to share about one’s personal experience (see page 5 for detailed explanation).

Participants

Recognizing the importance of gaining the perspective of a variety of youth with varying experience, AIR worked with NRCCFI to recruit a diverse group of youth from across the country to learn about the youth’s needs, communication, visitation, services, and supports (see Appendix B for the list of youth-serving organizations that sent youth to participate). Of particular interest was learning how the youth maintain or build relationships with their parent(s) while the parent is incarcerated and how this affects the young person. *Please note: the information gathered during this listening session cannot be considered representative of all youth with incarcerated parents.*

“We are not a statistic!”

-B.A., 22 — Little Rock, AR

Participants in the listening session were youth ages 15-23 with at least one parent who is or has been incarcerated. AIR received consent from each participant’s parent or guardian if the youth was under 18-years-old. The consent form stated that their participation was voluntary and confidential. They positively consented to three separate items: general participation in the meeting, audio taping of the sessions, and photo/video taping of their image during sessions for possible use in products posted on the youth.gov/coip website. Two youth did not consent to photo/videotaping. Four young women consented to provide short “[video vignettes](#)” (see Figure 1) sharing their experiences with having a parent behind bars (see Appendix C for a list of the questions used for these vignettes).

FIGURE 1: VIDEO VIGNETTES — IN THEIR WORDS: 4 YOUNG PEOPLE SHARE EXPERIENCES WITH HAVING AN INCARCERATED PARENT



Listening session participants included 19 youth from organizations in 13 states (see Figure 2). The 13 females and six males had a variety of backgrounds and experiences, including race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, whether they were English-language learners and/or first generation in the United States, geography and sovereign nation status (i.e., regional, urban, suburban, rural, tribal), whether it was their mother and/or father incarcerated, the length of parental incarceration, their age — now and at time of incarceration, whether they lived with or apart from their parent prior to incarceration, their living arrangements during incarceration, their relationship with parents and family, any history of personal or sibling juvenile/criminal justice involvement, communication and visiting schedule with incarcerated parent(s), and distance from where they lived to prison (see Appendix A for an infographic about participant background and demographic data, which is based on responses to a survey administered prior to the listening session).

FIGURE 2: PARTICIPANT LOCATIONS



Source: Locations of organizations that sent youth to listening session (see Appendix B)

Strategic Sharing

Prior to the listening session, AIR and NRCCFI worked with the youth and their trusted adult to prepare them for their visit to Washington, D.C. A trusted adult could be a parent or family member, a mentor, or a staff person from a youth serving organization. Preparation included holding several conference calls to discuss logistics, answer questions, and describe the strategic sharing process. We explained to them how to think through carefully with a trusted adult what they wanted to share publicly about their personal experience and why. We let the youth know that they did not need to answer any questions with which they were not comfortable. To assist with prioritizing the safety and privacy of the youth, we asked that the Federal partners who attended the listening session be careful about what they asked youth to share and consider *why* they were asking each question. We reminded all adults at the session that youth often feel pressured to share their stories, even if doing so is costly to them, but that trusted adults should always prioritize the safety of youth.



We had a trained counselor in attendance at the listening session who was available at any time for youth who needed to talk or process the experience. Several youth availed themselves of the counselor’s services. At the closing of the session, the counselor shared that participants should not be surprised if they experienced a delayed reaction to the public sharing experience and the stories and memories they revealed. She advised the chaperones and trusted adults to check in with the youth in the days immediately following the event.

Facilitation

Three senior AIR staff members and one NRCCFI staff member co-led the sessions, and two AIR staff took notes. Participants were not compensated for their time but had all expenses paid for the trip. The facilitators reminded the participants that they were not required to answer all of the questions and that there were no right or wrong answers. The participants and facilitators sat in an informal circle and everyone had the opportunity to speak as much or as little as they chose.

Participants shared their experiences, offering insights into the challenges they face and ideas for change for improved opportunities and outcomes. It was the impression of the facilitators that participants spoke openly as demonstrated by their willingness to volunteer their time and feedback knowing there was no reward (monetary or otherwise), and the emotion and passion with which they shared their stories without being prompted.

The two-day listening session consisted of a day of facilitated small group discussion, followed by a day of presentation to, and question and answer with, federal guests. AIR also held a separate break-out session on day one for the chaperones who accompanied the youth to D.C. Separate sessions maximized youth voice and allowed the youth to be comfortable speaking openly in their sessions, while also giving the chaperones an opportunity to share the valuable perspective of caregivers or trusted adults (see Appendix C for a full list of questions asked to each group during the listening session).



Session Themes

This section presents the ideas and experiences shared by youth during the listening session. It shares what the youth want policy makers, corrections, and youth-serving programs to know about them. It also shares strategies participants suggested for engaging with youth who have incarcerated parents, strategies for programs trying to reach youth who have an incarcerated parent, and strategies for getting the word out about programs that reach youth like them. All youth who participated in the listening session have reviewed this language and have agreed that this accurately represents their perspective.

What youth with incarcerated parents want you to know about them

- We rely on our own inner strength
- We often grow up too soon taking on responsibilities:
 - *Taking care of younger siblings*
 - *Getting jobs to help with family finances*
 - *Negotiating care such as physical and mental health services*
 - *Navigating systems and avoiding negative attention from child welfare or human services who might take us or our siblings away*
- We face difficulties with the absence of a parent:
 - *Missing big events like holidays and graduation*
 - *Missing small activities like helping with homework and going to sporting events*
 - *Missing everyday opportunities like being a role model*
- We are misjudged by many and negatively judged because of our parent(s) or our parent's actions
- We are sometimes told we will turn out like our parent(s) and we are constantly fighting against and running from that judgment
- We have different experiences than other youth whose parent is absent for another reason like divorce:
 - *Not being able to pick up the phone and talk to our parent any time we want*
 - *Not being able to hug our parent during a visit*
 - *Judged differently*
- We have different experiences even from each other:
 - *Living with our parent or not*
 - *Knowing or having a relationship with our incarcerated parent or not*
 - *Being told the truth about the incarceration or not*
 - *Being involved with child welfare or not*
 - *Being involved with juvenile justice or not*
- We are not different from other youth in that we are young people, too, with the same needs and wants:
 - *To be loved*
 - *To have support*
 - *To be successful*
 - *To have friends*
- We do not have control over the situation which is difficult:
 - *We don't know what to expect with the incarceration process or when visiting our parent in a facility*
 - *We don't know with any certainty when we will be able to talk to or see our parent again*

"The toughest thing [about my father's incarceration] is seeing my mom struggle with money."

-R.K., 17 — Austin, TX

"You become mentally incarcerated with your parent."

-B.A., 22 — Little Rock, AR

"It's hard when you have no one to talk to."

-D.E., 17 — Philadelphia, PA

"Not knowing how long your parent has until you see them again. Anything can happen in prison, you can get killed or hurt really bad. When you see your mom or dad, you look at them like it's your last visit. That's something I feel."

-D.E., 17 — Philadelphia, PA

Youth Ideas for Change

The youth participants offered feedback for policy makers and adults who work with youth who have or have had an incarcerated parent, as well as advice for implementing them.

Strategies for engaging youth who have incarcerated parents

- Get to know us: we are not statistics; we are youth who come from different backgrounds and family circumstances
- See us for who and what we are
- Know yourself: be aware of the assumptions and biases that you may have about us
- Let us know we can trust you. Be reliable and predictable. Listen without judgment
- Respect our right to confidentiality
- Help us to help each other by providing us with opportunities to gather together
- Help us channel our emotions into making a positive change through advocacy
- Honor our inner strength: don't feel sorry for us
- Build trust with caregivers so we stop worrying about upsetting them if we talk to other adults
- Work with caregivers to encourage truth telling about the incarceration

Strategies for providing effective supports and services for children of incarcerated parents

- Provide training and on-going supervision that includes:
 - Accurate statistics about children and families of the incarcerated
 - Strategies for respecting family relationships and circumstances
 - Understanding self-awareness and bias
 - Skills for building trust
 - Strategies for helping children and their parents and caregivers communicate about difficult topics
- Involve youth of incarcerated parents and their families in decisions about programs, policies and practices
- Design programs that train older children of incarcerated parents to be mentors for younger children of incarcerated parents
- Provide college scholarships for children of the incarcerated or assist us in accessing such scholarships when available
- Offer transportation options and coordination to help youth get to visit their incarcerated parent
- Offer family counseling and guidance to youth and their incarcerated parents (this is especially important given the limited opportunity and time for calls and visits)
- Provide relevant and age appropriate guidance on the entire incarceration experience from arrest to reentry including:
 - What families and the incarcerated parent can expect at each stage in the process
 - Help finding job training
 - Help finding stable housing

“It’s important to have a more extensive network of mentors. They really made a difference. When you have an adult figure who is being taken away and punished, you internalize that. You have a mentor, you have someone to look up to, who won’t replace your parents, but who is a resource.”

-G.Z., 23 — Austin, TX

- Offer safe, comfortable ways for youth to share what is happening in their lives, understanding they may have fear about mandatory reporting rules⁷
- Provide information and help for coping with the unpredictable nature of managing relationships with caregivers and following correctional policy as we attempt to connect and communicate with our incarcerated parent

Strategies for making policies and practices more responsive to the needs of children of incarcerated parents

- Corrections staff should receive training that emphasizes:
 - That visits are supposed to be a positive experience for families
 - That respectful treatment and interactions with the family and the incarcerated parent are what is expected by children of incarcerated parents
- When possible given safety and security considerations, courts should sentence and correctional agencies should place incarcerated parents at facilities close to their children and families, as closer proximity increases the chances for opportunities to visit and maintain family relationships
- Correctional policy should promote visitation practices that are child and family friendly and empower parent-child relationships by:
 - Increasing time for visits
 - Providing information to families ahead of time via documents or websites about rules for visiting
 - Informing families when incarcerated parents are moved to another facility
 - Adjusting clothing restrictions to be more reasonable and providing optional changes of clothing
- Correctional facilities should charge reasonable prices for phone calls and allow for longer calls to empower maintenance of parent-child bonds
- Correctional policies and practices should simplify and expedite approval forms when necessary (e.g., when the parent is transferred to a new facility or when names and numbers of potential visitors change)
- Agencies should understand the complexities of collaboration with and between other agencies (such as schools and corrections) because of confidentiality requirements

“The guards make you feel like you’re the prisoner when you go to see your parent.”

-A.N., 21 — New Britain, CT

“Give me straightforward rules/guidelines for what is appropriate to wear and what to bring to see your parent.”

-D.E., 17 — Philadelphia, PA

“The facility is run down and isn’t safe. Just because it’s a prison doesn’t mean it can be unsanitary or unsafe.”

-L.A., 16 — New Hampshire

⁷ All states require that if certain defined persons know or suspect that child abuse is going on, they report the abuse to the authorities. These mandatory reporting laws were instituted to help promote awareness of child abuse and early intervention, if possible. To that effect, the laws make reporting quite straightforward. In most states, reports are anonymous and there is generally no reason to be hesitant about making a report if you genuinely suspect that child abuse is occurring. The laws of most states do not punish people for making a good faith effort to report child abuse. A reporter might, however, be punished if he or she was reporting child abuse without any basis for such a belief, and if the report was motivated entirely by a desire to get the reported person in trouble with the law — known as malice.”

Source: <http://family.findlaw.com/child-abuse/checklist-are-you-a-mandatory-reporter-of-child-abuse.html>

- Schools should allow periodic prison visits as excused absences
- Schools and correctional agencies should collaborate to allow incarcerated parents to participate in school conferences via video or phone when appropriate
- Child welfare agencies should collaborate with correctional agencies to insure on going contact and visits for children in foster care

Strategies for getting the word out about the programs and services that are available to children of incarcerated parents

- Join with youth to create advocacy groups to increase public awareness and promote funding and expansion of services
- Use communication methods like posters and post them everywhere — schools, public libraries, health clinics
- Advertise on websites frequented by youth (such as Pandora and Facebook)
- Use celebrity spokespeople (e.g. musicians and sports figures) who can contribute to reducing stigma and shame
- Create lists of available resources and make them accessible
- Have a social media campaign
- Use public services announcements
- Have mass assemblies at school (like there are for MADD)⁸

⁸Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is a nonprofit organization in the United States and Canada that seeks to stop drunk driving.

Appendix A: Participant background infographic⁹

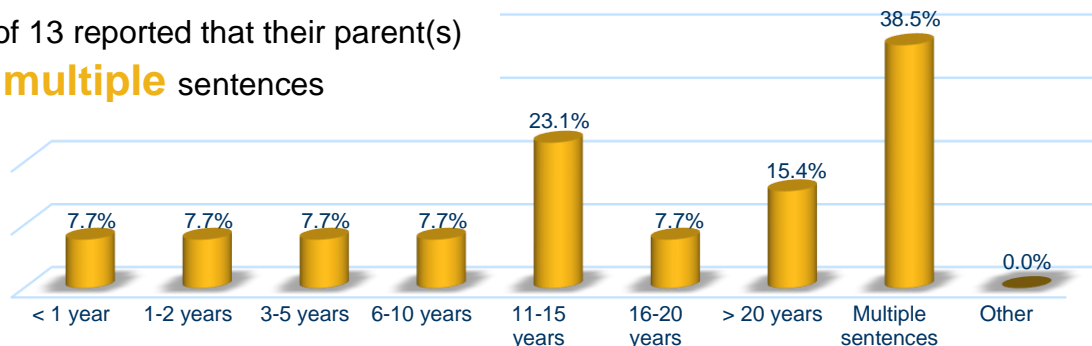
3 reported their **mothers** were incarcerated

8 reported their **fathers** were incarcerated

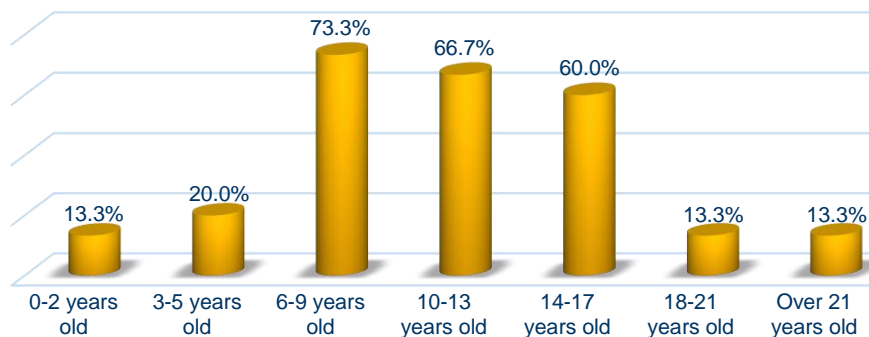
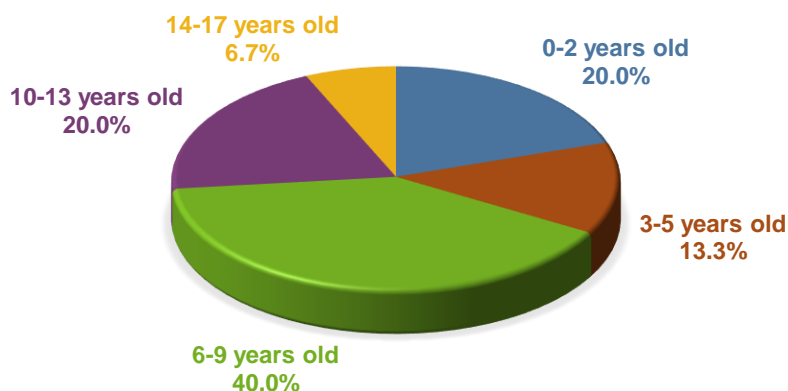
4 reported **both parents** were incarcerated



5 out of 13 reported that their parent(s) served **multiple** sentences



6 out of 15 reported that they were **6-9 years old** at their parent(s)' first incarceration



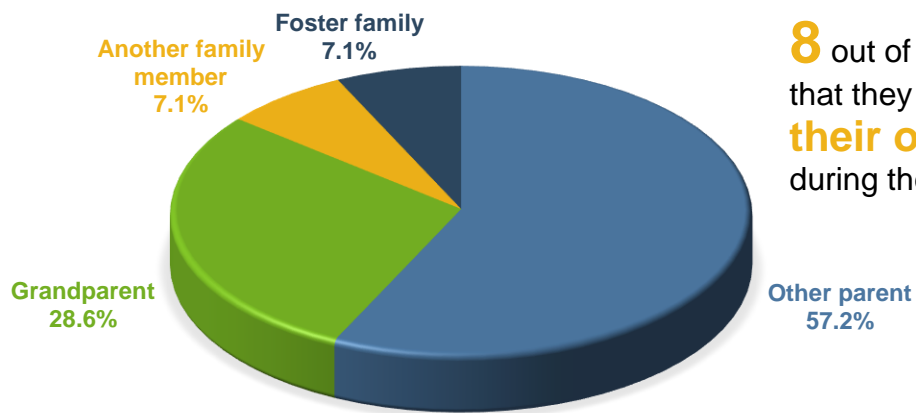
the **majority** reported that they were **6-17 years old** across their parent(s)' sentences

⁹ Data were gathered for the infographic via SurveyMonkey prior to the Listening Session. N for each item may vary because not all participants responded to the survey, nor were they required to answer all questions. See Appendix C for the full list of questions.

8 reported **living with** their parent immediately prior to the incarceration



7 reported **not living with** their parent immediately prior to the incarceration



8 out of 14 reported that they lived with **their other parent** during the incarceration

All **15** youth **have siblings...**

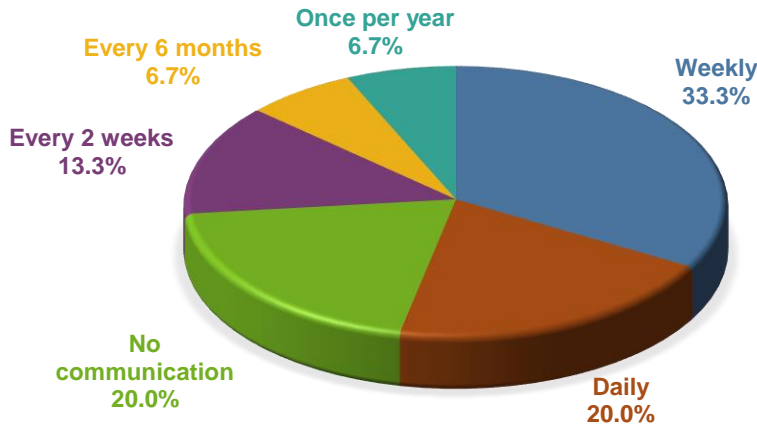
8 reported **negative effects** of incarceration on sibling relationship

- Fighting*
- Drifting apart*
- Being separated*
- Not knowing each other*
- Living with different family members*

5 reported **positive** relationships during parents' incarcerations

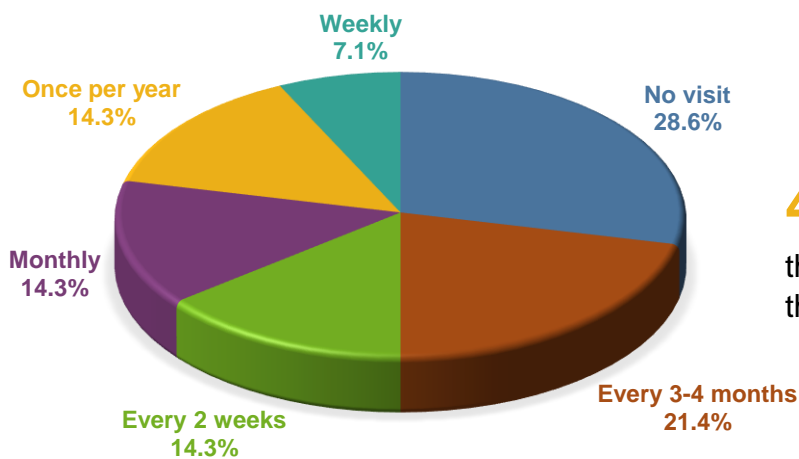
- Sticking together*
- Becoming closer*
- Caring for each other*

5 reported personal or sibling involvement in the **juvenile or criminal justice system**



5 out of 15 reported that they **communicated weekly** with their incarcerated parent(s)

- 6** reported communicating via **letter**
- 3** reported communicating via **phone**
- 3** reported communicating **in person**
- 3** reported communicating via **other methods**
- 3** reported **not** communicating



4 out of 14 reported that they **did not visit** their incarcerated parent(s)

3 reported being **less than 20 miles** from incarcerated parent

2 reported being **21-50 miles** from incarcerated parent

3 reported being **51-100 miles** from incarcerated parent

3 reported being **101-200 miles** from incarcerated parent

3 reported being **more than 200 miles** from incarcerated parent



3 reported being **less than 30 minutes** from incarcerated parent

2 reported being **31-60 minutes** from incarcerated parent

5 reported being **1-2 hours** from incarcerated parent

1 reported being **2-3 hours** from incarcerated parent

3 reported being **more than 3 hours** from incarcerated parent



10 reported using a **car** to travel to incarcerated parent



1 reported using a **bus** to travel to incarcerated parent



2 reported using a **train** to travel to incarcerated parent



OTHER

2 reported using **other means** to travel to incarcerated parent

9 reported **relying on others** for transportation to incarcerated parent



5 reported **not relying on others** for transportation to incarcerated parent

“Sometimes your legal guardian doesn’t want to take you to see your incarcerated parent.”
-A.N., 21 — New Britain, CT

“I think ... the barriers ... kept people from communicating (visiting, age), the finances (phone bills), lack of transportation to visit.”
-W.A., 17 — San Francisco, CA

“Some mentors will drive 50 miles for you to see your parents, there needs to be more of that.”
-D.A., 18 — Portland, OR

5 out of 14 reported availability of **special event days** at their parents’ incarceration facility



5 out of 15 reported access to **community support programs**

LISTENING SESSION QUESTION:

“What services (programs, supports) did you draw upon and what helped you the most?”

“When I was younger I was in centers and Arkansas Voices, but as I got older there was nothing there for us. Once you hit 13 or 14 you have to deal with it on your own. I was with other kids, so it made me feel it wasn’t just me. At the time, the group I was in, everyone’s mom was in the same prison, so that made it easier too.”

-B.A., 22 — Little Rock, AR

“Basketball helped me a lot. My mom liked basketball, and it helped me so much, like I’m doing this for you. Now I’m in Girl Scouts [and] I get to play basketball with my mom and do different activities, like ... draw pictures with her.”

-D.E., 17 — Philadelphia, PA

“I was in the Osborne Association. They organized trips with our parents and there were other kids there. That helped because I thought I was the only kid in the world going through this. Other kids would ask what’s wrong, but I didn’t know if they would use that information against me or judge me.”

-H.A., 16 — New York, NY

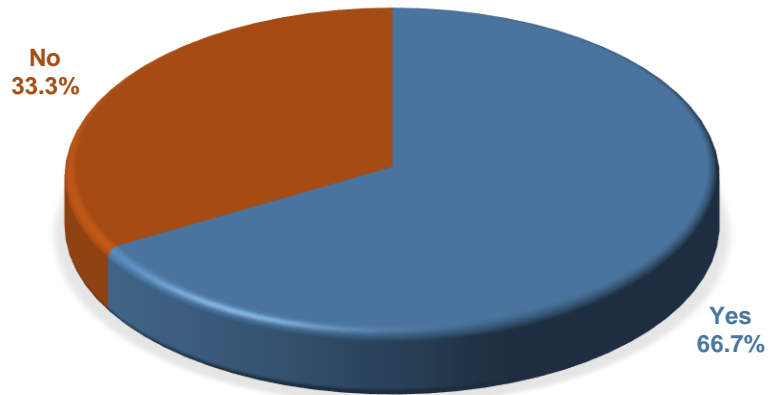
“I turn to my talents. I stopped fighting because that wasn’t giving me anything except suspensions. I’m a poet, well I’m a lot of things, but I turned to writing. I formed public speaking skills, because my goal is to go into prisons to talk to dads.”

-W.A., 17 — San Francisco, CA

“I’m in School Club POPS. It’s writing club where you don’t have to talk about what you’re going through, you can just write. For me it’s better than talking. POPS has been really supportive.”

-A.M., 15 — Los Angeles, CA

10 out of 15 reported having a parent **return** from being incarcerated



LISTENING SESSION QUESTION:

“What are your suggestions for preparing parents and young people for reentry?”

“I was not prepared at all. After he came home after nine years, it felt like we had a stranger at home.”

-A.N., 21 — *New Britain, CT*

“When my dad got out when I was in third grade, he came by my school and I didn’t know. I ran up to him but didn’t want to cry and be made fun of. Nobody understood that I hadn’t seen my dad in years.”

-W.A., 17 — *San Francisco, CA*

“My biggest fear is if my mom does come home, people might try to get revenge on her/harm her. You never know what could happen to them when they are out.”

-D.E., 17 — *Philadelphia, PA*

Appendix B: Organizations represented by the youth participants:

1. Amachi Pittsburgh — Pittsburgh, PA
2. Arkansas Voices — Little Rock, AR
3. Big Brothers Big Sisters — Flagstaff, AZ
4. Central Connecticut State University — New Britain, CT
5. Circles and Ciphers — Chicago, IL
6. Echoes of Incarceration — New York, NY
7. Family and Children’s Services — Tulsa, OK
8. Family Connections — NH
9. Girl Scouts Beyond Bars — Philadelphia, PA
10. Northwest Family Services — Portland, OR
11. Osborne Association — New York City, NY
12. Our Children’s Place of Coastal Horizons Centers — NC
13. POPS (Pain of the Prison System) — Los Angeles, CA
14. Project WHAT (We’re Here and Talking) — San Francisco, CA
15. Seedling Foundation — Austin, TX
16. US Dream Academy — Indianapolis, IN
17. Women in Recovery — Tulsa, OK

Appendix C: Pre-Listening Session Questions

Survey Questions Sent Prior to the Listening Session

These are the questions participants answered via SurveyMonkey prior to attending the listening session.

1. Which of your parents is or has been incarcerated?
 - a. Father
 - b. Mother
 - c. Both father and mother
2. How long is/was their incarceration?
 - a. Less than one year
 - b. One to 2 years
 - c. 3 - 5 years
 - d. 6 - 10 years
 - e. 11 - 15 years
 - f. 16 - 20 years
 - g. Longer than 20 years
3. How old were you when your parent was first incarcerated?
 - a. 0 - 2 years of age
 - b. 3 - 5 years of age
 - c. 6 - 9 years of age
 - d. 10 - 13 years of age
 - e. 14 - 17 years of age
 - f. 18 - 21 years of age
 - g. Over 21 years of age
4. What were your ages during their incarceration? (check as many as needed)
 - a. 0 - 2 years of age
 - b. 3 - 5 years of age
 - c. 6 - 9 years of age
 - d. 10 - 13 years of age
 - e. 14 - 17 years of age
 - f. 18 - 21 years of age
 - g. Over 21 years of age
5. Were you living with your parent before they were incarcerated?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. With whom are you living or did you live during your parent’s incarceration?
 - a. My other parent
 - b. Grandparent
 - c. Another family member other than grandparent
 - d. Foster family
 - e. Other (*Box for response*)
7. Do you have brothers or sisters? If yes, please respond to questions 8, 9, and 10. If no, please skip to question 11.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

8. How was your relationship with them or other family members affected by your parent's incarceration? *(Box for response)*
9. Were you separated from siblings as a result of your parent's incarceration? *(Box for response)*
10. Have your siblings been involved with juvenile justice or criminal justice system? *(Box for response)*
11. How often do/did you communicate with your parent?
- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|--|
| a. Daily | d. Monthly | g. Once per year |
| b. Weekly | e. Every 3 to 4 months | h. No communication while my parent was incarcerated |
| c. Every two weeks | f. Every 6 months | |
12. How do/did you communicate with your parent? (check all that apply)
- | | | |
|-----------|----------|--------------|
| a. Letter | c. Email | e. In person |
| b. Phone | d. Video | |
13. How often do/did you visit your incarcerated parent?
- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|--|
| a. Daily | d. Monthly | g. Once per year |
| b. Weekly | e. Every 3 to 4 months | h. No visit while my parent was incarcerated |
| c. Every two weeks | f. Every 6 months | |
14. How far away is/was your parent?
- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| a. Less than 20 miles | c. 51 to 100 miles | e. More than 200 miles |
| b. 21 to 50 miles | d. 101 to 200 miles | |
15. How long does/did it take to get there to visit your parent?
- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| a. Less than 30 minutes | c. 1 - 2 hours | e. More than 3 hours |
| b. 30 - 60 minutes | d. 2 - 3 hours | |
16. How can/could you get there to visit your parent?
- | | |
|--------|----------|
| a. Car | c. Train |
| b. Bus | d. Walk |
17. Do/did you rely on someone else to help you get there?
- | | |
|--------|-------|
| a. Yes | b. No |
|--------|-------|
18. Are there special event days for families or children at the facilities where your parent is/was incarcerated such as family day, picnics, graduation or honors program? If yes, please explain in the box below. If no, skip to question 19.
- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| a. Yes <i>(Box for response)</i> | b. No |
|----------------------------------|-------|
19. Are/were there support programs in your community that helped you maintain connection with your parent and with coping in general?
- | | |
|--------|-------|
| a. Yes | b. No |
|--------|-------|
20. Have you had a parent return home from being incarcerated?
- | | | |
|--------|-------|------------------------------------|
| a. Yes | b. No | c. My parent is still incarcerated |
|--------|-------|------------------------------------|

Appendix D: Listening Session Questions

Questions for Youth:

These are the questions that the youth participants answered during the listening session.

1. **Personal Experience.**

- How did you find out about your parent’s incarceration? What were you told?
- What was or has been the toughest challenge you have faced having an incarcerated parent?
- What personal strengths do/did you draw upon during your parent’s incarceration?
- Based on your experience, what is the most important thing affecting youth with an incarcerated parent?
- How are/were your needs different from the needs of other youth with an incarcerated parent?
- How are/were your needs different from the needs of other youth with a parent who is absent for other reasons?
- How are/were your needs different from the needs of other youth without an absent parent?
- What are your biggest worries/ concerns?
- What is the most important thing you would say to a friend whose parent was just incarcerated?

2. **Services.**

- How was school for you while your parent was incarcerated? What support or lack of support did teachers or school staff provide?
- At any stage of your experience with having an incarcerated parent, was a child welfare agency involved with your family? What support or lack of support did they provide?
- What services (i.e., programs, supports) did you draw upon and what helped you the most (e.g., after-school programs, boys and girls clubs, or other youth development programs, employment opportunities)?
- How was your health/healthcare/mental healthcare affected by your parent’s incarceration?
- Who was helpful to you and how did they help you (e.g., employer, mentor, relative, family friend; helping with coping, transportation, listening, resources — financial and other)?
- What services (i.e., programs, supports) do you wish had been available to you?

3. **Communication.** Some of you mentioned [letters, phone, email, video] as a mean of communication:

- Does/did this form and frequency of communication work for you? Why?
- If not, how would you change it?

4. **Visitation.** Some of you mentioned visiting [number of times]:

- Is/was visiting important to you? Why?
- Please describe the visits.
Possible probes:
 - *What is/was the security process like?*
 - *Can/could you touch your parent?*
 - *Are/were there child-friendly visitation rooms? (Describe characteristics and what made it so.)*
 - *Are/were there toys and activities you can/could do together?*
- What do/did you enjoy the most about your visits? Why?
- What was your best visit? What made it the best and stand out?
- Have/were the visits ever cancelled? Do you remember why?
- What are/were the most challenging aspects during the visits? Why?
- What would make these visits better?
- How do/did you feel before, during, and after the visits?

5. **Reentry.** Some of you mentioned having had a parent return home after incarceration:

- How did you prepare for their return?

- Did people try to prepare you and your family for your parent’s return?
 - Was it helpful? In what ways was it helpful or not?
 - What was it like when they returned (e.g., family relationships, roles, living situation)? How did your expectations compare with reality?
 - What person or activity or circumstance could have helped you prepare?
6. **Conclusion.**
- If you could make one policy change that would have helped you what would it be?
 - If you could say one thing to the researchers, practitioners, and policy makers here or to the public about having an incarcerated parent what would you say?
 - What didn’t we ask you that we should have?

Questions for Chaperones

These are the questions that the chaperones answered during the listening session.

1. Youth Experiences.

- What role do you play in the life of a child with an incarcerated parent (e.g., parent, sibling, mentor, agency staff)?
- What are the typical ways that the youth and families you are a part of, know, or work with, discuss the incarceration of a family member? How do the children find out? What are they told?
- What is the toughest challenge that the youth or families you are a part of, know, or work with, face due to having an incarcerated parent?
- What personal strengths do you draw upon to support the youth as they cope with having an incarcerated parent?
- Based on your experience, what is the most important thing affecting youth with an incarcerated parent?
- How are their needs different from the needs of other youth with a parent who is absent *for other reasons*?
- How are their needs different from the needs of other youth *without* an absent parent?
- What are your biggest worries or concerns about working with or caring for a youth with an incarcerated parent?
- What is the most important thing you would say to a youth whose parent was just incarcerated?

2. Services.

- Do you know and/or do youth talk about how school is while their parent is incarcerated? What support or lack of support did teachers or school staff provide?
- Do you know and/or do youth say anything about child welfare agency involvement with their family? If so, what do they say? What support or lack of support did child welfare provide?
- Do you know and/or do youth talk about what services (i.e., programs, supports) help them the most (e.g., after-school programs, boys and girls clubs, or other youth development programs, employment opportunities)?
- Do you know how the youth’s health/healthcare/mental healthcare has been affected by their parent’s incarceration?
- Who do youth say have been helpful to them and how did they help (e.g., employer, mentor, relative, family friend; helping with coping, transportation, listening, resources — financial and other)?
- What services (i.e., programs, supports) do you wish were available to these youth?

3. Communicating. Some youth mentioned [letters, phone, email, video] as a means of communication:

- In your opinion, does this form of communication work? Why?
- How are you able to assist the youth with communicating?
- If not, how would you change it?

4. **Visiting.** Some youth mentioned visiting:
 - How do you help prepare youth for visiting their parent?
 - What do you see in their behavior or demeanor before and after the visit?
5. **Reentry.**
 - How do you help prepare youth for their parent’s return?
 - How do you support youth if their parent is serving a very long sentence and will not be returning in the near future?
6. **Adult Experiences.** *Given all that we know about the statistics and about how hard it is to share this story, it is possible that some of you also experienced the incarceration of a parent. “If any of you want to — we would like to hear about your experiences” or “Some of you have shared earlier that you are...”*
 - Are you an adult child of an incarcerated parent?

If yes:

 - Which of your parents is or has been incarcerated (e.g., Mother, Father, Both)?
 - How long is/was their incarceration?
 - How old were you when your parent was first incarcerated? What were your ages during their incarceration?
 - Were you living with your parent before they were incarcerated?
 - With whom did you live during your parent’s incarceration?
 - Do you have brothers or sisters? How was your relationship with them or other family members affected by your parent’s incarceration? Were you separated from siblings as a result of your parent’s incarceration? Have you or your siblings been involved with juvenile justice system?
 - How often did you communicate with your parent (e.g., monthly, weekly, daily)? How (e.g., letters, phone, email, video)?
 - How often did you visit your incarcerated parent?
 - How far away was your parent? How long did it take to get there to visit your parent? How did you get there to visit your parent (e.g., car, bus, train)? Did you rely on someone else to help you get there?
 - Were there special event days at the institution(s) where your parent was incarcerated (e.g., picnics, holiday parties)?
 - Did you have a parent return home from being incarcerated?
 - Do you currently have an incarcerated parent?
7. **Conclusion.**
 - If you could make one policy change that would have helped youth what would it be?
 - If you could say one thing to the researchers, practitioners, and policy makers or to the public about having an incarcerated parent what would you say?
 - What didn’t we ask you that we should have?

Appendix E: Video Vignette Questions

Video Vignettes during Children of Incarcerated Parents Listening Session

*These are questions that the youth who taped a [video vignette](#) answered. Priority questions are **bolded**.*

Opening orientation for interviewees:

Everybody attending this listening session has a parent who is or has been in prison; but each person's story of what it's been like to have an incarcerated parent, is different. We set up these individual conversations so that we could hear a few individual stories in depth. I'd like to hear yours. I'm going to ask you a few questions, but if at any point, you think we're not getting to the most important part of your story, please tell me and we'll shift focus.

- 1) **Can you start at the beginning? Tell us about your whole family you were living with, right before your parent was incarcerated.**
- 2) **How did you learn that your parent was going to be incarcerated? Did anyone help you understand what that would mean for you? What do you remember about your reaction?**
- 3) What kind of contact have you had with your parent who is incarcerated? Did it change over time?
- 4) **How have people close to you responded to the fact that your parent was incarcerated? Have your relationships changed because of your parent being incarcerated?**
- 5) What has been the most challenging part of having your parent be incarcerated? What has helped you the most with that challenge?
- 6) **What would you say to another youth whose parent has just been incarcerated, to encourage them to look for support?**
- 7) **What advice do you wish someone had given you, at any point since you learned your parents was going to be incarcerated?**
- 8) If you could create one perfect service for youth with incarcerated parents, what would it be?