

# RELEASE

*News related to Connecticut's formerly incarcerated citizens and the organizations that serve them*



## FOCUS ON

*children of  
incarcerated parents*



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# *welcome to* **RELEASE**

Welcome to the first edition of Release, a publication devoted to collecting stories about citizens with criminal histories and the organizations that serve them. Produced by the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) and created by students from Central Connecticut State University, the newsletter provides profiles, general features, interviews, videos, informative graphs and more. Our goal: to empower ex-offenders and to educate the larger Connecticut community on what it can do to stem recidivism. Release covers employment, housing, education, children of incarcerated parents and other subject areas that relate to building a productive life with a criminal history. For your free subscription to Release, which will be distributed online on a monthly basis and also published in print on a quarterly basis, please register at [www.releasenews.org](http://www.releasenews.org).

# Breaking the CHAIN

*Supporting Families with Incarcerated Relatives*

By Jesse Duthrie

The aroma of cheese pizza fills the air and an acoustic version of Boyz II Men's "End of the Road" plays over a speaker from the back of the room. A man sits down with a slice, takes off his hat, and begins to pray. People come in one by one and, skipping formalities, hug each other and welcome one another to the group.

Once everybody has taken a piece of pizza and filled their cups with soda, Giselle Jacobs starts the group with a warm welcome. Since there are several newcomers to the "Breaking the Cycle" support group, she gives a brief history of her work. In the spring

and summer of 2010, community dialogues were held at the Hartford Public Library. A range of Hartford citizens attended the dialogues; from state representatives and city officials to formerly incarcerated persons and law enforcement officials, a diverse crowd voiced their concerns on issues related to children of incarcerated parents and the criminal justice system.

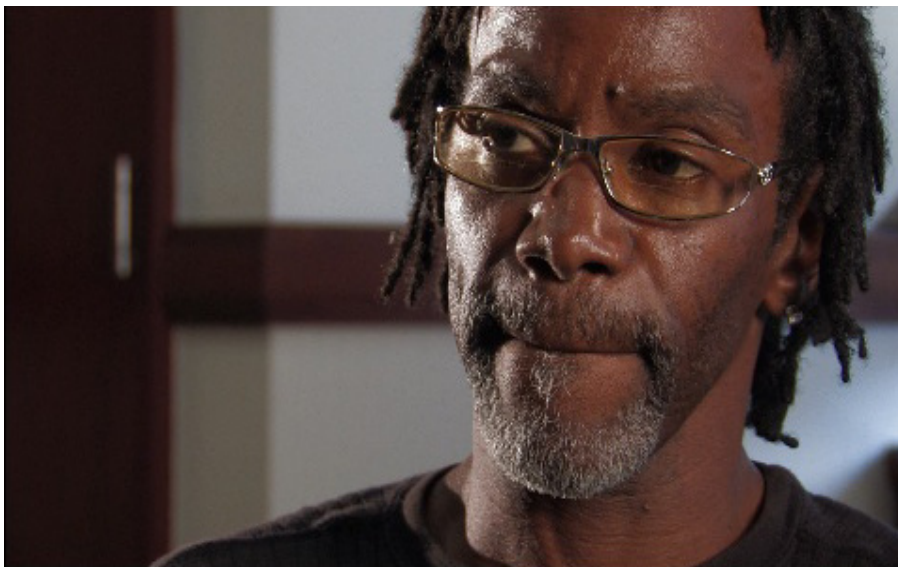
Out of these discussions came an action forum that targeted specific issues pertaining to children of incarcerated parents, which, in turn, eventually led to the creation of the group, "Breaking the Cycle." It started

in Giselle's home, but by June 2011, they found a centralized meeting space at North Star Center for Human Development.

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***"There must be urgency in breaking the chain. If there is no strategy in breaking the chain, there will not be change."***  
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Affected by the incarceration of her own parents, Giselle says, "Since day one, I've wanted to volunteer." She's been a pivotal figure since the startup. During the meetings she moderates the group, keeps the dialogue open, and leads the topics of discussion. Once she has introduced herself, she directs the man sitting next to her to tell his story.

Tommy grew up with incarcerated parents, and after drug use and illegal activity, ended up incarcerated. After years of recidivism, it's his goal to be there for his children. As he says, "My kids need to gravitate towards me, rather than to the streets." He makes clear that he understands one of the



JUNIUS WAVERLY LEWIS SR. IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF "BREAKING THE CYCLE" SUPPORT GROUP

greatest problems for children with incarcerated parents is their inability to understand the situation they are placed in.

Each person in the circle shares his or her background. After awhile, the stories start to show common themes. All but one of the people sitting in the circle has been incarcerated. Greg, a 49-year-old stepfather, had been in and out of prison for 15 years. Now his wife is in jail and he is responsible for taking care of his stepchildren while she's away. He explains that the children are upset, and they don't understand their mother's situation.

Dialogue continues this way for another half hour. One woman's mother, father, and grandmother had been incarcerated. Another man had 12 convictions under his belt. But as the group's discussion moves

Giselle has to calm the nerves of the group that, for twenty minutes, has ranted on about the substandard conditions of prisoner reentry. She introduces Julius, who goes by the nickname "Wave." A thoughtful and well-spoken man, he begins by explaining his history and purpose for attending the group. He shares that, "There must be urgency in breaking the chain. If there is no strategy in breaking the chain, there will not be change."

As similar as each person's stories may seem, it's the slight differences that make "Breaking the Cycle" a worthwhile group. In these differences people can see how their own issues relate to those around them. They can receive advice, admit wrongdoing, or simply broach issues they've never spoken of before.

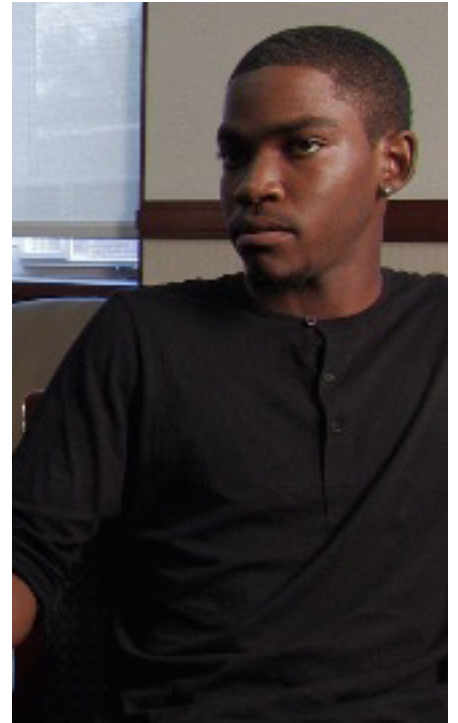
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***"It's the slight differences that make  
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forward with regards to children of incarcerated parents, a larger dialogue starts to take place. It is a dialogue that is familiar, from Bridgeport to New London to Hartford and back: the system is broken. People begin to grow frustrated or angry when they speak about not being able to find work or housing after incarceration.

Wave's son, Wave Jr., sits quietly beside him. Eventually Giselle convinces the younger Wave to open up. He shares that he's never been in jail, never wants to go to jail and has come to the group to "learn how to stay out of incarceration."



JUNIUS WAVERLY LEWIS JR. ATTENDS THE SUPPORT GROUP ALONG WITH HIS FATHER

The room, like that of a Baptist church, fills up with people's verbal appraisal of what Wave Jr. has just said.

"Amen's and "That's right!"

# Born Behind BARS

*An Infant's Journey to Freedom*

By Casey Coughlin



BABY GABRIELLA SLEEPS IN HER MOTHER'S ARMS AT ONE WEEK OLD

The baby carrier sits on the floor encircled by a flock of women. The one-week-old absentmindedly sleeps. Her olive skin and light brown peach-fuzz hair complete the classic baby girl picture. The women all yearn to hold her; every wrinkle of the nose and pucker of the lips sends the assemblage into a round of girlish giggles. Her mother stands amongst the crowd answering all the excited questions in a single stringed response. “Yes, only one week old, Gabriella, thanks, no those are her father’s ears! Six pounds

four ounces, perfect size I know, thank you...” The scene is typical of any new addition; however, for Gabriella the welcome home party is far from ordinary.

“I keep her for three months, which is an absolute blessing, but then I have to give her up,” she tells Vice President of Community Solutions, Terri Willams.

Michelle isn’t surrounded by family, old friends or neighbors. Her immediate family, including her other

four-year-old daughter, are over eight hours away in Baltimore, Maryland. She is in a halfway house in Hartford, Connecticut and up until a few days before she gave birth, she and the unborn baby lived incarcerated.

“I was, I guess, in a time of debt and needed money pretty bad. So a friend of mine told me that somebody would pay me pretty good money to traffic drugs. So that’s what I did, and I got caught by the border patrol.”

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***“My mother said,  
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Struggling with the financial responsibility of raising her four-year-old daughter on her own, Michelle made the fateful decision to cross the Mexican/U.S. border in possession. She was working and occasionally receiving child support from her ex-



husband but was still struggling to keep the family financially afloat. “My mother said, ‘Why didn’t you just come to me for help?’ and I should have. I kick myself in the butt everyday for not setting my pride aside.” She later reveals that she and her mother have struggled with an estranged relationship throughout most of Michelle’s life. Sentenced to 41 months in a federal prison in West Virginia, she entered into her federal prison sentence a month into her second trimester.

The Federal Mothers and Infants Nurturing Together (MINT) program is a way for pregnant women to spend a few essential months with their new babies. Only available in a few states, eligible women are three months away from their birth date and have less than five more years to serve on their sentence. They are transferred to a community release program or halfway house, often far away from family, to give birth and raise their child for the first three months before returning to prison. Connecticut is one of seven MINT Programs in the country.

Before this program was created, expectant mothers had a harsher reality to face. Given only a few days in the hospital, they would be immediately separated from their infants, who were placed either with family or foster care, and sent straight back to prison.

When asked to compare her first pregnancy with her current Michelle



MICHELLE DISCUSSES HER TIME WITH HER DAUGHTER IN THE MINT PROGRAM

answers vaguely. “It was definitely easier with my four-year-old because I wasn’t hiking hills everyday in the mountains and I wasn’t working. I was working up until I came here. It was a lot harder because they don’t look at you any different when you’re pregnant because you’re not disabled so you still have to work.” She craved ice cream. Nine months pregnant, Michelle made the long drive from West Virginia to Connecticut, in the back of inmate transport van. Three short days later, in the middle of a heat wave, she became the proud mother of a baby girl.

A week later the two are happily the center of the flock of women. Michelle’s room stands out amongst the overall neutrality of the house, covered in an almost too bright coat

of yellow paint. As a federal MINT inmate she gets her own room on the first floor of the house away from all the other state DOC women. Her bed is covered in newly washed baby outfits ready to be folded and put away. Boxes of diapers stand stacked high in the far corner. She is a confident mother, moving Gabrielle from carrier on the floor to her chest without stirring the sleeping child.

When Michelle was in the hospital her mother and four-year-old daughter made the day trip to meet the new member of the family. Michelle is prideful as she describes her daughter’s interaction with her new baby sister and confides that she is happy her daughter is still too young to really understand why she is away at “school” with a new baby.



When asked about how her daughter handled her going from primary caregiver to absent parent Michelle seems optimistic. "At first she dealt with it bad- her father (Michelle's ex-husband) wasn't really around too much, so it wasn't like leaving me to be with a total stranger, just someone she didn't know that well, but she's a lot better now." She continues to reveal a little bit of the guilt she feels being able to be with only one of her daughters. "It was kind of sad because it was like I was leaving one [daughter], but she's handling it well. She doesn't know per say what's going on. She thinks she is just visiting her dad and visiting her grandmother."

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***"That separation anxiety is going to be something else because right now I am so attached to her and she's so very attached to me so it's going to be really hard emotionally when I have to eventually say goodbye."***

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Her newborn daughter, Gabriella, will stay with Michelle's mother until her sentence is over. When asked about the whereabouts of Gabriella's father, Michelle answers sarcastically, "Your guess is as good as mine."

The one catch to the MINT program is the inmate must be able to provide fully for the infant for the entire three months. For most women, financial instability was the reason they committed a crime in the first place. Providing means everything from diapers and wipes to medical costs. Federal Prison's put everyone medically able to work every day and in return compensate them 10-20 cents an hour. If Michelle is making 20 cents/hr and works full time every week she is incarcerated she would have left the prison with \$160. On average her baby would go through 840 diapers in her first three months. Using an average brand, her baby would require over \$200 in diapers alone. She is already at least \$40 short, not counting any other necessities if she has no other financial support Michelle is extremely lucky to have a mother who is willing to help provide for the newborn, but not every woman is as fortunate.

Times are pleasant now, but Michelle is all too aware of the reality she must face in 12 short weeks. "If I didn't have her, doing my time would be a lot easier, because I keep her for three months then I have to give her up. So that's like really, really, really hard to deal with emotionally, then having to go back to prison that's a really big deal. That separation anxiety is going to be something else because right now I am so attached to her and she's very attached to me so it's going to be really hard emotionally when I have to eventually say goodbye."

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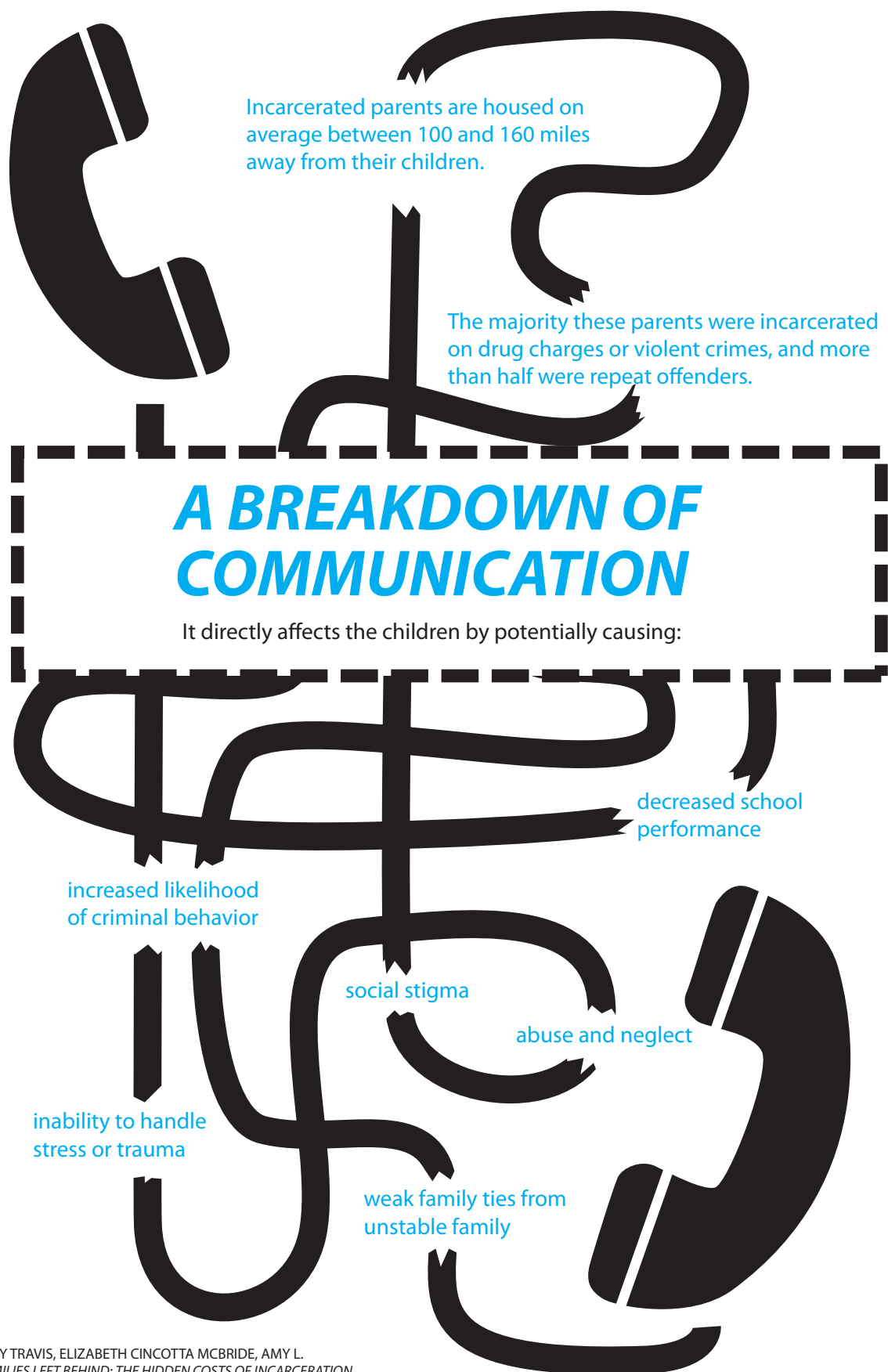
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Incarcerated parents are housed on average between 100 and 160 miles away from their children.

The majority these parents were incarcerated on drug charges or violent crimes, and more than half were repeat offenders.

## ***A BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATION***

It directly affects the children by potentially causing:

increased likelihood of criminal behavior

inability to handle stress or trauma

social stigma

weak family ties from unstable family

abuse and neglect

decreased school performance

SOURCE: JEREMY TRAVIS, ELIZABETH CINCOTTA MCBRIDE, AMY L. SOLOMON, *FAMILIES LEFT BEHIND: THE HIDDEN COSTS OF INCARCERATION AND REENTRY* (URBAN INSTITUTE JUSTICE POLICY CENTER 2005.)

# *Being Firm on the* “SOFT SIDE” OF CRIME

*Following Families in Crisis  
Over the Last 30 Years*

By Jesse Duthrie



SUSAN QUINLAN, DIRECTOR OF FAMILIES IN CRISIS

From 1980 to 1990 the “problem” with drugs became the “war on drugs,” which led to a record level increase in the prison population in Connecticut. The state earned the dubious distinction of being one of five that spent more on its prison population than on education. Sue Quinlan, a former social worker at the Hartford Police Department and director of a halfway house, stepped into this explosive situation as the new director of Families in Crisis (FIC). At the time, any sort of outreach

to families and communities was perceived as a “soft” solution to the hard problem of finding and locking up the worst offenders.

No one is ignoring the “soft side” of the increase in crime and arrests now. After three decades of inflated incarceration rates, Connecticut recognized the significance of issues that were once deemed less important.

Connecticut during the 1980’s was a tumultuous period of incarceration. From the Bridgeport to Hartford to New Haven, cities saturated correctional facilities as an alarming amount of men and women were being thrust into prisons.

It was a crime epidemic unfamiliar in Connecticut’s history. The state’s “tough on crime” policy led to stricter law enforcement, more prisons, and more tax payers dollars to pay for multimillion dollar spending to keep the incarceration system moving.

In 1988, after 8 years of working for the state, Sue Quinlan became the director of Families in Crisis. FIC’s objective was to help at-risk children, incarcerated members, and family members work together to strengthen

the family unit; in turn, this could lower crime rates and help reduce recidivism. Sue’s appointed duty was to reach out and support families dealing with incarcerated members.

At the time Families in Crisis did not have a strong backing and its significance was hardly understood. The state’s tough on crime policy lead to higher rates of incarceration, however social programs targeted at community support were largely ignored or uncared for.

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***“When I first started  
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The incarceration burst from the 1980’s through the early 2000’s inflated the prisoner population to over 19,000 members. Sue recalls that slowly Families in Crisis started to be taken more seriously. After three decades of inflated incarceration rates, state have recognized the significance

of issues that were once deemed less important. Sue Quinlan recalls, “When I first started doing this work nobody knew who we were and what we did and we really had a hard time fitting in because we were considered almost the softer side of corrections and that people thought it was a great thing to help families but not necessarily a critical thing.”

The attitudes towards the family unit and the effect of an incarcerated member had changed. Academic research was conducted and patterns emerged between children of incarcerated parents and the potentiality of the children’s own incarceration. The changing perspectives of these issues resonated throughout the state and allowed Families in Crisis to make strides in advancing their programs.



***“After three decades of inflated incarceration rates, state have recognized the significance of issues that were once deemed less important”***



By the late 1990’s Sue Quinlan was working diligently to increase her agencies services and expand to new cities. Originally located in downtown Hartford, Families in Crisis extended their programs to New Haven,

Bridgeport, and Waterbury. The expansion, as well as the creation of other social support groups throughout the state targeted in areas like employment and housing for ex-offenders, showed a new adversarial stance against incarceration in the state by addressing what was once deemed the “soft side” of crime.



Now, in 2011, the number of incarcerated citizens has reduced to the low 17,000’s. Targeting areas such as employment, housing, and families with incarcerated members have proven to reduce recidivism.

Helping families of incarcerated members is understood among state officials as a serious target for reducing crime and slowing down the rates of recidivism. When asked what motivated Sue through all these years, she responds, “The opportunity to ‘walk with the giants.’ I think there are many people in Connecticut the legislative level, administrative level, and even in the non-profit community who are very bright, competent people who are very much committed to creating an effective and humane criminal justice system.”

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# Kids in the SHADOWS

A Q&A with Ann Adalist-Estrin  
Director of BRIDGES

By Casey Coughlin

*Ann Adalist-Estrin is the author of the Children of Prisoners Library as well as co-author of Responding to Children and Families of Prisoners: A Community Guide. She currently works for the Family and Corrections Network in Palmyra, Virginia, as a program consultant. As a child and family therapist with more than 30 years of experience, Adalist-Estrin has conducted more than 30,000 interviews with children of incarcerated parents. She was also the Founder and Director of Incarcerated Parents and Their Children- Consulting Services. For more information on Ann Adalist-Estrin and her work visit [www.fcnetwork.org](http://www.fcnetwork.org).*



**COUGHLIN:** What effects have you seen on children who have visited their parent in jail in relation to the visitation policies?

**ESTRIN:** Visiting parents in prison has three aspects to it. One is the normal childhood development aspect where the child is just a child who is

going to spend time with a parent they don't usually get to spend time with. In every other of those circumstances there are wonderful moments and then there are times when the feelings are charged.

Children of incarcerated parents are no different than other kids on that baseline.

The second aspect is specific and unique emotions and reactions to having a parent in prison; lack of trust, issues related to lying, the stigma, shame, and questions about the crime. So this second part is more about supporting the caregiver in being able to prepare the child for a visit and also help process the visit afterwards. The little bit of research we have indicates that visits can be hurtful if it is followed by a lot of high intensity distress. So in this second stage there is a lot of advocacy work in helping provide support for caregivers and helping to prepare the incarcerated parent themselves.

The third aspect of visiting is the fact that it is a prison. Kids having to deal with going through metal detectors, being searched and sitting in metal chairs facing their parent, only being allowed to shake hands or give a brief

cursorily hello hug. Not being allowed to act in any way normal makes it very much different than other kids visiting in other situations. In this aspect



***“But the mass incarceration issues in the U.S. are not going away. What the normalizing does is it makes children feel like they are not alone.”***



the criminal justice system could provide better visiting environments, provide parenting classes that help the incarcerated parent, and provide materials that get sent home to the care giver.

**COUGHLIN:** What sort of misconceptions do you feel the public has of children of incarcerated parents?

**ESTRIN:** A lot of intervention strategies are predicated on these notions that these kids are more likely than their peers to go to prison or jail. We don't have any accurate



research that says that. We know they are at risk for mental health issues, school difficulties, and trauma related behavioral patterns. So sometimes that can result in kids being involved in the criminal justice system. But to just say they are four of five times more likely than their peers to go to prison or jail

in their lives, but they need more. [...see Brea's Story on page 13](#)

**COUGHLIN:** Is there something else that the community could be doing to support the population that is effected?



CASEY COUGHLIN SITS WITH ANN ADALIST-ESTRIN DURING HER VISIT AT CCSU

is saying something very different. It's interpreted by most people as they [the children] are following their parent's footsteps or that there is something inherent that put them at risk and of course none of it is true.

It lends people to think that these are kids that are better off without their parents; we don't know that to be true at all. In fact, what we do know is that most of these kids have caring adults

**ESTRIN:** Schools come to mind because teachers, districts and counselors can be incredibly helpful with the right kind of training and support. Teachers could do things like put it into the discussions. When you say things like 'some of you have parents who are in the military and some of you have parents that live far away and some of you might even have parents that are in prison or jail,' it normalizes the situation.

We will have resistance to that from some well meaning advocates. The resistance being if we normalize it, kids will start thinking there is nothing wrong with going to prison. I challenge that all the time because that was the thinking about divorce, nobody wanted to talk about it because they thought it might go away. But the mass incarceration issues in the U.S. are not going away. What the normalizing does is it makes children feel like they are not alone. [...see Edwin's Story on page 14](#)

**COUGHLIN:** What do you think policy makers should know or be more focused in regards to this population?

**ESTRIN:** There are three times when the government separates children from parents. One is for abuse and neglect; all the states have guidelines on providing information to the foster parent or the kinship caregiver and to the biological parent. Information about attachment, child development and how to support this child through the process of separation is available. The second time the government separates is for military service. Department of defense has a whole array of materials that they send about maintaining the attachment and staying connected. And the third time the government separates kids and parents is through incarceration. There is no system in the government that sends anything to anybody. There is no uniform recommendation. So, the first policy should be to immediately look at which division

of government could be responsible just for providing information.

**COUGHLIN:** What progressive policies have you seen throughout the country that you would like to see consistently in every state?

of the arrest and still not violate the child's right to not be traumatized. I have heard stories about law enforcement badgering children about where their parents are or where their parents have been or the names of parent's friends. Ripping open beloved stuffed animals in front

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***“Until we can set the stage nationally for this to be an issue that is less stigmatizing we are not doing our job. They are not going to come forward if that means being labeled. Those are the types of things that are keeping kids in the shadows.”***

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**ESTRIN:** New York is a beacon for a lot of policy. They have programs in their prisons that focus on parenting and great visiting programs. The state departments talk to each other. There are also mechanisms that are in place that help incarcerated parents understand their rights. New York also had a children's cabinet that spearheaded a new report just published on Children of Incarcerated Parents that makes all kinds of state recommendations.

**COUGHLIN:** What is one of the most damaging policies/practices that you have seen or heard of in the country that you would like to see changed?

**ESTRIN:** One is arresting parents in front of children. I think in most circumstances officers can keep everybody safe, maintain the integrity

of the children looking for drugs. Things that I don't think are necessary. ...see “M's” Story on page 15

**COUGHLIN:** If you could express one opinion or one fact that gets overlooked by the general majority what would that be?

**ESTRIN:** There is likely to be a very large number of children that are suffering silently. They are probably doing okay in school, not causing any problems and they are just out there trying to struggle with this alone. Until we can set the stage nationally for this to be an issue that is less stigmatizing we are not doing our job. They are not going to come forward if that means being labeled. Those are the types of things that are keeping kids in the shadows. I want us to always remember the ones that we don't know about.

## BREA'S STORY

“My father was incarcerated when I was at the age of five and I still remember it like it was yesterday.”

Brea was raised in Bridgeport, Connecticut and is a proud “daddy's girl.” She admits to having an estranged relationship with her mother and definitely feels closer to her father. “Me and my dad had a really close relationship and when he left it really affected me a lot because I'm not really close to my mom.”

Brea remembers as a young child going to visit her father in jail, for the first year he had no contact visits where she could only see him through glass and talk to him on a phone. Around the same time as her father was incarcerated, Brea started having trouble in school. Behaviorally she would act out when her father was away. It got to be so bad that it looked like she might not graduate high school, but fortunately for Brea's education her father got released in time to support her and help her find success again in school.

“The best thing was having my dad around when I graduated eighth grade, high school and hopefully he will be around when I graduate college.”

Brea struggles with trusting her father again after she felt such abandonment as a child. After his first sentence Brea's father was released and returned home, promising Brea he would never leave her again. “To this day it still hurts me





BREA, AN INCOMING FRESHMAN AT CCSU

because he told me he would never leave me; he got out four and a half years later and went back [to prison] two months later.”

Brea recounts the day she knew her father was going to break his promise. She was in fourth grade and refused to go to school that day because they knew he was going to get picked up. She now regrets the traumatizing experience of seeing her father leave, “I should have gone to school that day because seeing my dad leave really, really hurt me.”

Currently, Brea is still torn between adoring her father and resenting him for breaking her trust. What she desires most of all is for him to admit what he did to break the law and be completely honest with her. “He doesn’t want to tell me because he thinks it will hurt me, but I already know, it’s just the

fact that he won’t tell me. He’s still my best friend, but there is still a little side of me that- still can’t- I forgave him for what he did but I still won’t fully forgive him until he tells me why.”

As for keeping future promises Brea can only hope for the best. “I hope he keeps his promise this time and doesn’t go back, it scares me. I want to succeed in college because it will make him happy.”

### EDWIN’S STORY

Tall, lean and slightly anxious, the only thing that separates him from his peers is his gaze. Dark, almond shaped eyes evaluate and then drink in the new scenes around him. In his eighteen years of life, from the streets of Hartford to his overcrowded home packed with siblings and cousins, Edwin has seen more than most. In second grade he lost his best friend

and father to the Department of Corrections. The local news headlined his father’s crime and Edwin soon found himself being identified by his father’s crime.

“When he got locked up it was on the news, and that affected me in many ways. Where ever I would walk, ‘Hey! You’re this guy’s son’ and it just put a negative image to me. I used to break down all the time. Just because my father made mistakes you know, it’s not me. I didn’t make those same mistakes.”

Edwin hasn’t seen his father since he was eight. Opting out of metal detectors and strict visitation rules the two have kept in contact over the past decade the old fashion way: letter writing.

He respects his mother more than any other person in the world saying, “If it wasn’t for my mother, honestly I wouldn’t be here right now. She took



EDWIN SHARES HIS STORY WITH OTHERS DURING THE INTERVIEW

care of me, my brothers, my sisters, my cousins and my other cousins from DCF.” Edwin admits that his past does hold him back sometimes, “it holds me back once and awhile, when I do write him it brings back so many memories and when I do sit down and think it just hits me that he’s not there.”

But the negative doesn’t stop him from drawing on the positive influences his father had on him as a young child. His father introduced him to running and track is still a sport that Edwin likes to compete in. He shows his maturity when he says he’s going to hold off jumping into CCSU’s track team, “I am going to try and keep my grades up first and then join.”

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## M’S STORY

M felt more comfortable sharing his story anonymously, raised in Stanford he was extremely close to his dad until age eight. He cracks a smile while describing his father as a huge kid. M’s own personality resembles the opposite. Mature, humble and cautious he seems to assess everything and everyone carefully before making a decision. He chooses his words deliberately.

“I was with my dad when he got taken away for good. He fled the state and we went to North Carolina. Nobody knew where I was so they said I was kidnapped because my mom had full custody of me. The next day the cops show up and I don’t know what they said to him but they told me there were

just going to ask him a few questions. They even let him sit in the front of the car so I guess it didn’t look like he was getting arrested in front of me. At that point I knew he wasn’t coming back for some reason.”

The police did end up arresting M’s dad that day. The police had to also question him to confirm if they could charge his dad with kidnapping. Twelve hours away he had to wait for his mother to drive down and get him. That was the last time he ever saw his father.

He stayed in touch with his father for a few years by writing letters, but eventually M grew to resent his father and stopped responding. “You can tell jail has a huge impact on people because I have all the letters he sent me and there is a drastic change from the letters he first sent me until now.”

As M continued to mature throughout his teenage years he grew increasingly bitter towards his father. “Him getting arrested I still feel like I don’t know half of me. I kind of have hatred for him a little, because I had to find out how to be a man on my own. My mom has her own problems so she wasn’t there for me emotionally so I had to raise myself.”

If there is any positive outcome to M’s turbulent relationship with his father it is the drive he now feels to do better. “Him going to jail showed me what kind of a person I don’t want to amount to.”

# *release news* **STAFF**

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