

SELF – STUDY COURSE

“Providing Services to Children and Families of Incarcerated Parents”

Dee Anna Newell

This self-study course for 2.5 credit hours is based on the following sources:

- **DVD** Dee Anna Newell’s presentation at the 2007 Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect Conference in April 2007, 1 hour 30 minutes in length
- Handouts from Dee Anna Newell, 16 pages
- Post test which requires some personal reflection on how to implement the concepts in this course

The questionnaire/post test on page two of this course is a way to check your understanding and a means for your Family Resource Specialist to assess that you have processed and understood the majority of the information provided. In order to obtain credit for this course, please review the DVD (available online) and give your completed questionnaire/post test (available online or directly from your FRS) to your Family Resource Specialist at your Child and Family Services office. Your FRS will Score the post test and may credit your training record with 2.5 hours.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
Child and Family Services Division Training Unit

Thank you to our valuable resource parents who are dedicated to the care and protection of children.

Post test for "Providing Services to Children and Families of Incarcerated Parents"
Self Study Course
2.5 Hours

Questions for the Resource Parent Training Module

"Providing Services to Children and Families of Incarcerated Parents"

Provide the appropriate answer to the following questions. First try to answer from your understanding of the material before referring back to the DVD and the handouts.

1. Approximately how many children have experienced parental incarceration?

2. Prisoners with regular visits are how many times less likely to re-enter the prison system than those prisoners that do not receive visits?

3. Nationally, what percent of children with incarcerated parents are in foster care?

4. What is described as the strongest predictor of successful re-entry into society after being in the prison system?

5. The Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights says that children have the right to speak with, see, and touch their parent. What action is suggested for this to take place?

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6. Pre-incarceration parental risk factors include?

7. There has been a significant decline in children visiting incarcerated parents over the past decade. What factors is this attributed to?

8. Children of incarcerated parents often have a history of multiple traumatic episodes. Treatment goals include what interventions?

9. "Trauma reactive behaviors" seen in the children of incarcerated parents include?

Please note: If you have topics that you would like to see developed into a self-study course for resource parents, please contact the FRS in your local office.

The 10 million American children who experience parental incarceration deserve beneficial programs and services, period. It is also true, however, that the current political climate invites us to spend the next several years giving extra consideration to developing public education and advocacy efforts that focus on children. Efforts to redress the needs of CIP also have the capacity to carry strategic communications initiatives into contested political space, neutralize opponents and create new allies.

“Mass incarceration is the greatest threat to child well-being in the US today.” That’s what Swedish human rights workers told Liz Gaynes when she and daughter Emani Davis became the first Americans to receive the World’s Children’s Prize, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Articulating mass incarceration in the United States as a matter of child welfare positions prison reformers as children’s defenders and frames for family values.

This issue is about children and children alone. And that fact alone makes campaigning about CIP a powerful force with which to link front-end issues like how and why we incarcerate so many low-risk parents in the first place to back-end concerns like how and why so many people come home from prison still struggling with addiction and with no means by which to house and support their children.

1. Demographics: Who Are the Children of Incarcerated Parents?

- 2.4 million children in the US currently have a parent in prison or jail. This amounts to 1 in 8 African American children and 1 in 33 of all children (Bernstein, 2005).
- More than 7 million, or 1 in 10, American children have a parent who is now under criminal justice supervision (ibid).
- ~~10 million children have had a parent incarcerated at some point in their lives~~ (Wear Simmons, 2000).
- African American children are 9 times more likely than white children to have an incarcerated parent (Krisberg and Engel Temin, 2001).
- The majority (58%) of children with incarcerated parents are under 10 years old and 28% are between 10 and 14 (Reentry Policy Council, 2004). The average age of children with incarcerated parents is 8 (Mumola, 2000).
- Two-thirds of incarcerated parents were employed prior to their imprisonment (Mumola, 2000).
- Approximately 80% of the women incarcerated in California are mothers with an average of two children each. About 7% of the incarcerated women give birth while imprisoned in California (ibid).
- Single mothers are the fastest growing segment of the US prison population (Greenfeld and Snell, 2000 cited in George and LaLonde, 2004).
- Two-thirds of incarcerated women have at least one child under 18 (Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, 2005).

- If the current rate of incarceration of women continues, the number of female prisoners will double every 7 years, and the number of children affected will double every 5 years (George and LaLonde, 2004).
 - Almost 60% of incarcerated parents are held more than 100 miles from home. For federal prisoners, almost 50% are held 500 miles from home (Mumola, 2000).
 - Nearly 90% of children in long-term foster care have a parent who is or has been incarcerated and 10% to 20% of all children entering foster care have an incarcerated parent (Bernstein, 2005).
 - As many as half of the male children of incarcerated parents will end up with criminal convictions. One in 10 of the children of incarcerated people will be incarcerated before they turn 18 (Bernstein, 2005).
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2. Research

Epidemiologist Ernie Drucker describes the state of the research on CIP: “The basic research hasn’t been done. We need to know the ages of the parents, the ages of the children and the ages of the children when the parents were incarcerated.” While much research generalizes about the damage done to CIP, it doesn’t go into the level of specificity that could guide decisions about what kind of service provision to prioritize given funding constraints.

In short, the preponderance of CIP research is academic and comprised of small-scale, local studies based on thin data that are not culled from multiple sources (e.g. corrections and child welfare data bases).

Exceptional are a research project by the University of Chicago’s Susan George and Robert LaLonde and one being conducted by Eric Cadora of the Justice Mapping Project.

George and LaLonde’s important 2004 research links county and administrative data from departments of social welfare, child welfare and criminal justice. Using cross-agency data, they demonstrated that in Illinois from 1990 to 2000, the number of children impacted by incarceration each year increased 20 percent faster than the number of women affected (because of the rate of increase in the number of children per incarcerated mother). George and LaLonde also found that the more children a woman has, the more likely she is to be serving time for a drug offense and the less likely to be incarcerated for a violent offense. Further, given the racial disparity with which women are incarcerated in Illinois, the rate at which African American children were affected increased 25 percent higher from 1990 to 2000 than the rate at which white children were impacted.

George and LaLonde describe that “the greatest technical challenge involved in creating an integrated database is accurately linking the records of individual clients across agencies” (George and LaLonde, 2004). *The problem of multiple agencies which impact the same people’s lives having no ability to communicate with one another, much less coordinate their efforts, is a cross-cutting theme in this report.* Several CIP advocates expressed the need to conduct data matches by which a community could be mapped according to its residents’ overlapping involvement in the child welfare and criminal justice systems.

Cadora is also addressing this challenge. Funded by the Department of Health and Human Services to look at overlaps among departments of corrections (prison and parole), child welfare, foster care and TANF in New York City, Cadora has cross referenced these data bases in order to assess overlaps in geographic areas and communities impacted by multiple government agencies (E. Cadora, interview).

****A next step could be to apply Carol Shapiro's Family Cost Center Model to look at the total taxpayer expense of incarceration measured in terms of additional costs to the social welfare system when a family member is imprisoned. Another possibility is the Osborne Association's Liz Gaynes and Cadora exploring the possibility of using his maps which represent visually the overlap between child welfare and corrections in New York as preparatory public education for launching a New York initiative on the Children of Incarcerated Parents' Bill of Rights.**

Research Most Needed

Consensus exists that this is the central, unanswered research question: "If parents are not incarcerated, will kids necessarily be better off?" ***In other words, can we prove that it is better for children to stay with parents who would otherwise be incarcerated for low-level, non-violent offenses?*** A related question is: "If families are reunited post-incarceration, will kids necessarily be better off?"

Researchers and experts suggest that the field needs longitudinal research that is both qualitative and quantitative and measures real outcomes of CIP programs in light of the structural barriers to their success. Such research would identify which percentage of parents and their children would do better if they stayed home from prison. The research would need to demonstrate how the children would be better served and how this would be cost-effective.

Advocates also need to be able to demonstrate clearly that society will benefit if children remain with low-risk parents who'd receive an alternative to incarceration instead of a prison sentence. It would also be helpful to have research findings that show that children and society are better off if parents who are to be reunited with their children post-incarceration receive parenting support while they are in prison.

The following are additional concerns and needs regarding research on CIP that advocates, experts and researchers consistently raise:

- Related to the research question "Are CIP really better off with their parents?" we have research demonstrating that foster care is atrocious, but no research demonstrating that kids are better off with their non-incarcerated parents than in foster care while their parent is incarcerated.
- In light of budget deficit-inspired attention to criminal justice spending, especially at the state level, we need research that examines the cost of the criminal justice system from the perspective of children.
- As Ernie Drucker points out, we need research that differentiates among subgroups of parents and children. This research could be particularly useful in terms of advocating for sentencing alternatives for certain categories of parental offenders and their children.

3. Organizations with National Reach

While it's useful to dispense technical assistance, strategic advice, knowledge and communications support across state lines, my assessment is that CIP advocacy is most necessary and effective at the local and state levels and should not be nationally directed or determined. The success of advocacy efforts depends on local or state-specific obstacles, opportunities and personalities.

The bulk of this report primarily describes and makes recommendation for local initiatives. A shared view among most of the advocates with whom I spoke is that CIP work is not, by definition, national work and would not benefit from a nationally centralized campaign. They were all open, however, to national clearinghouses providing technical support and cross-pollinating information.

The need is clear for greater levels of technical support and assistance in the areas of cross-system training and integration, program development to support CIP and caregivers and technical assistance in the realms of advocacy and communication.

National entities, especially the Child Welfare League of America and Family and Corrections Network, provide helpful technical support across the country and, with additional resources, could do more. No one organization, however, emerged from my interviews and research as the "one" national entity that is most worthy of a big infusion of support. Several may be worthy of new funding and play important roles:

Child Welfare League of America's Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners (FRCCP)

FRCCP began with a three-year NIC grant which ended in September 2004. While ~~FRCCP is the most visible and far reaching technical support provider, many in the field~~ shared with me their questions about FRCCP's longevity and concerns about its affiliations with the federal government and child welfare.

It's recognized in the field that FRCCP Director Arlene Lee is a huge resource and that services provided by FRCCP, especially its informational materials and trainings, are extremely helpful. FRCCP has a list serve of 370 people and regularly circulates updates about resources and policy change (A. Lee, interview).

While I think that FRCCP does provide important technical assistance at the national level, it doesn't strike me as the right entity to project the voices of children and others impacted by incarceration. Emani Davis expressed to me that she's no longer interested in working with FRCCP. There were no CIP or identifiably young people present at FRCCP's recent conference in Washington, DC.

Lee's idea for involving CIP more centrally in advocacy efforts is for FRCCP to produce a "listening tour" that would be modeled after a recent CWLA tour with LGBT youth. Lee envisions 18 events in 18 months in cities across the country that would establish regional advisory boards of CIP which could advise local child welfare offices and law enforcement.

FRCCP's website provides helpful information and resources but its navigation is embedded within the CWLA website, leaving it with no independent identity (www.cwla.org/programs/).

Family and Corrections Network (FCN)

Like FRCCP, FCN conducts teleconferences to train corrections and child welfare professionals who don't have budgets to travel to trainings. These are useful and the tele-trainings of both FRCCP and FCN should be better publicized and funded to be more broadly available.¹

FCN's website (www.fcnetwork.org) provides a useful listing of resources, events and facts and also serves a membership-drive purpose. The website is fairly rudimentary but claims to draw 150,000 hits a year. FCN is run from Palmyra, Virginia by Jim Mustin who's been with it from the beginning. The twenty year-old FCN solicits members, offering them resources including "The FCN Report" which it describes as "the only national publication devoted to families of prisoners." Liz Gaynes describes FCN as "underutilized" and says that it routinely answers calls from across the country (L. Gaynes, interview).

Brennan Center Research and Advocacy Effort on ASFA

This project is now in its research phase but will, according to Pat Allard, eventually advocate for policy change. The reality is that amending the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) would require a national effort. Phil Genty, Director of the Children and Families Clinic at Columbia Law School, has found a 250 percent increase in appellate cases involving termination of parental rights in the years since AFSA was enacted.

In the first phase of its research and action project, Brennan is studying AFSA in three jurisdictions in order to examine how public defenders are dealing with the termination of parental rights. These jurisdictions are: Cook County, Illinois (CLAIM); Baltimore City and San Francisco (LSPC). Brennan intends the two-year project to convert research into action and Pat Allard explains that the project's development has been informed by what people at the local level say is happening to them and their children.²

¹ FRCCP and FCN are the two organizations which expressed interest in seeing guidelines to know what OSI would consider funding and frustration that it hasn't yet funded in this area. FRCCP and FCN also strike me as the most important resource-providers with national reach, though each organization has certain limitations and drawbacks. Thus your best bet may be developing guidelines and spelling out what you will and won't consider funding.

² More is to come. I couldn't conduct a real interview with Pat Allard until after her conference.

4. Local Advocacy Initiatives Centered on the Children of Incarcerated Parents' Bill of Rights

San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents (SFPIP)

In San Francisco, the coalition that created the Children of Incarcerated Parents' Bill of Rights has underway an initiative to "make the rights a reality." While the Bill of Rights has garnered endorsements and publicity around the country, from national organizations like CWLA to McGruff the Crime Dog (who quotes them in a brochure), the San Francisco initiative is the first attempt in the country to move beyond the level of abstraction and work to put the rights into practice.

The Zellerbach Foundation initially convened systems' representatives and advocates in the Bay Area to produce the Bill of Rights; provided resources for the Bill's distribution and has most recently allocated funds for Nell Bernstein to work half-time for at least a year to coordinate the city- and county-level initiative.

SFPIP has developed a "matrix," a useful and adaptable planning tool that functions, essentially, as an "audit" of how San Francisco City and County laws and practices line up vis a vis the Bill of Rights. As of its February planning meeting, SFPIP's progress toward making the rights a reality in San Francisco is as follows:

1. **Police Protocol:** Public Defender Jeff Adachi has met with SFPD Chief Heather Fong to urge her to mandate that the Police Department institute a protocol that cares for CIP at the time of arrest. SFPIP's hope is that Fong will delegate someone to work with it and the Public Defender's office to develop a police protocol and/or training. Bernstein has contacted the Children's Hospital of Oakland which is developing a training for police on children's mental health needs. They may be interested in collaborating with SFPIP on developing a training. Bernstein is also researching domestic violence protocols used by police across the country to understand how police protocols on this related population were developed and implemented.
2. **Probation:** Adult Probation Director Armando Cervantes will issue a directive to put a family impact statement on pre-sentencing reports. SFPIP will explore other ways to support probation in expanding its work with families such as supporting an effort to reestablish social workers housed in the probation department.
3. **Community Placement:** SFPIP is supporting the development of much-needed mother-child residential programs, including for juveniles, in San Francisco.
4. **Funding Consultant:** SFPIP is exploring bringing in a consultant for public agencies to look at federal and private funding sources to meet the exigencies of the Bill of Rights (e.g. joint case conferencing and social workers on agency staffs). This is something for which SFPIP may seek outside funding.

New York City Initiative on the Bill of Rights, Osborne Association

The Osborne Association (OA) is well-positioned to spearhead a successful “rights to reality” initiative in New York. Other leading re-entry organizations in New York, including the Women’s Prison Association and Family Justice, support the concept of OA taking the initiative and respect its leadership in this arena.

OA pioneered building family connections behind prison walls 20 years ago. Its services today to CIP and families of the incarcerated include a toll-free number for New York families, parenting classes in prisons, a youth leadership and support group and services to re-entering parents. The award of the World’s Children’s Prize for the Rights of the Child to OA’s Liz Gaynes and Emani Davis suggests that OA has already made some traction and gained public attention to the matter of CIP.

More than 100,000 children in New York City have a parent incarcerated (Osborne Association, 2003). A New York initiative would begin with an audit of City and State systems to review all policies, rules and practices in terms of how they interact with CIP. Focus groups and meetings would be conducted with New York CIP in order to craft a Bill of Rights that is locally relevant and resonant and spells out the challenges facing CIP and families and outlines policy recommendations for change in New York.

The roles of other organizations have yet to be determined. Collaborators may include: Family Justice, the John Jay Center on Race Crime and Justice, the John Jay Reentry Institute, Fortune Society and the Citizens Committee on Children, which has a sophisticated approach to public education and advocacy locally.

5. Notable State-Level Efforts

The following is a hybrid listing of interesting work occurring at the state level. Most examples are multidisciplinary service and advocacy projects that have—or attempt to have—statewide impact.

Among the examples below, Arkansas and Washington are the most promising models of advocacy that have, in both states, produced state-level policy change.

Arkansas

Arkansas Voices for the Children Left Behind is a direct services and advocacy organization for grandparents. Arkansas Voices provides services including mentoring, support groups and a toll-free “warm line” (866-9-VOICES) for families impacted by incarceration and is linked, through its founder Dee Ann Newell, to the **Family Matters Program**, a federally-funded demonstration site which organizes its services entirely around the needs, which are dire, of grandparents.

Two-thirds of the children being raised by single grandparents live in poverty (Bernstein, 2005 citing an Urban Institute report, 2001 and Casper and Bryson, 1998). More than 20 states do not have kinship care laws that allow grandparents and other family members to be eligible for foster care support (D. Newell, interview). In 1997, only 200,000 of the 1.8 million children living with relatives received foster care payments and many did not receive services like food stamps and Medicaid.

Nell Bernstein describes the local example set by Arkansas Voices' compelling style of advocacy:

They rallied a crowd of grandmothers and had them pull their grandkids in red wagons to the steps of the Capitol, and managed in 2003 to get legislation passed guaranteeing funding for services to children of prisoners and their families. *Now they are working on a campaign to establish a guardianship subsidy for relatives, so they can receive support without subjecting their grandkids to the vicissitudes of the child welfare system* (Bernstein, 2005).

Newell is also launching an **Evolving Women Project** that will "train women in fine seamstressing and entrepreneurial skills. The goal is for women coming home from prison to earn a living wage instead of ending up working three part-time McDonalds jobs." Newell has had land and a building donated that would allow her to open a six-month reunification center where formerly incarcerated women can live with their children while they also accrue job skills. She is approaching unions in Arkansas which "don't have a problem hiring formerly incarcerated people and need to hire more women" (D. Newell, interview).

****Dee Ann Newell's work with grandmothers and other caregivers in Arkansas could provide a model for work in other states. Initiatives to create state-level policy change for kinship care subsidies and other supports for grandparents—initiatives that could specifically enlist untapped constituencies of elderly people—merit consideration.**

Newell points out that the **AARP** offers resources for grandparent caregivers, many of whom are caring for grandchildren whose parents are currently stationed in Iraq. The **AARP** could be an important ally for grandparents advocating for kinship care allowances and other forms of support.**

Arizona

The Governor recently designated a task force for women leaving prison and their children. The Arizona example underscores the need to be multidisciplinary: Because the initiative was headed by the Department of Corrections, it was limited and did not, for instance, make references to TANF, housing or ASFA. The task force was mostly corrections-related and did not go beyond categorical funding

California

Barry Krisberg with the **National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD)** is developing a statewide initiative to de-incarcerate mothers. California incarcerates 22,000 women, more than any other state. This, Krisberg feels, is the best way to get results for CIP in the state: "Ultimately, children have to be included in the back-end re-entry plan for women as well as the front-end sentencing plan. This would be a 'double-barreled' success and would reduce the most harm done by incarceration and produce the most benefits for public safety" (B. Krisberg, interview).

NCCD's approach will be to say to the public that, according to public safety analysis, most incarcerated mothers don't belong in prison, but are there because of stupid drug laws and bad parole policies. Krisberg believes it is a ripe moment in California because of the current state budget crisis and because a liberal woman is the head of Corrections and Woodford cares about treatment (B. Krisberg, interview).

NCCD and SFPIP have had initial discussions and have expressed interest in collaborating, although it is not yet clear how a collaboration would be operationalized.

Georgia

Founded in 1987, **Aid to Children of Incarcerated Mothers (AIM)** provides services to CIP in Atlanta including visiting programs, mentoring, a Teen Leadership Program, after school programming, summer camp, and consultation to legislators, judges and other professionals on child custody issues. AIM is the fiscal sponsor for Children and Family Networks.

Illinois

Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (CLAIM) is helping steer the **Illinois Task Force for Children of Prisoners, Children of Promise**. CLAIM recently co-sponsored with the state Task Force a training for corrections and child welfare administrators and staff and community-based service providers on responding to the needs and concerns of CIP. The mission of the Task Force is: "Increase awareness of the needs of children of incarcerated parents and advocate for policy change through public, private and community based efforts. Prevent the harm done to children by parental incarceration, and promote healthy relationships between children and their parents" (www.c-l-a-i-m.org).

Massachusetts

The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts-Boston (CWPPP) timed the release of its recent study, "Women in Prison in Massachusetts: Maintaining Family Connections," with Martha Stewart's release from prison. The timing apparently helped generate substantial media coverage of the report's findings and recommendations which include: family-friendly visiting policies, providing transportation for family visits, parenting classes and *preventing the incarceration of nonviolent mothers*.

According to CWPPP, the report "has already increased communication among state agencies, led to calls for better coordination of services and directed a spotlight on the need for reform" (CWPPP, 2005). Local news coverage of the report indicates that the Governor is considering a *\$9 to \$11 million supplemental appropriation* to support "outreach efforts to incarcerated women" (*Daily Free Press*, 3-3-05).

Oregon

The Children's Justice Alliance in Portland was founded by Ben De Haan, formerly the head of Oregon's child welfare department as well as its and corrections department. No one else in the country has headed both systems at the state level and De Haan has become an effective national advocate for CIP and family focused corrections (L. Mellgren, interview), including by consulting for the National Governors Association (A. Jacobs, interview). When De Haan became head of corrections in 1996, his approach of asking and then keeping track of whether or not prisoners had children was considered a novelty in the nation (Bernstein, 2005).

As the result of pressure from children's advocates, Oregon now houses all incarcerated women at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, located within the Portland metropolitan area. Coffee Creek provides Early Head Start and Girl Scouts Beyond Bars programs to mothers and children, who freely engage with their mothers on regular visits. Caregivers receive monthly home visits from Early Head Start staff who coordinate services for children and help families plan for mothers' release.

The family orientation of Oregon's correctional system is exceptional in the country and worthy of emulation by other states (Washington has already replicated parts of Oregon's approach). But Nell Bernstein underscores the paradox of this "best practice":

The laudable enterprise of using incarceration to strengthen family bonds can only be undertaken wholesale because we have separated so many children from the parents who now sit in prison classrooms, nodding solemnly as they are told how much their children need them.

Pennsylvania

The **Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation** recently released the first installment of its six-year report which commenced in 2003 and will end in 2009. Initial findings indicate that 42,000 children, or 15 percent of the children in Allegheny County, have an incarcerated parent. The report highlights that there is no formal tracking of CIP by child welfare agencies or police and points out that incarcerated parents are less likely to recidivate if they maintain a relationship with their families. The report's initial recommendations include allowing parents contact visits with their children, *decreasing the cost of phone calls to family members* and providing counseling to CIP.

Washington

Washington has passed legislation ("The Children of Offenders Act") that mandates that the state develop a plan for meeting the needs of CIP and establishes an interagency task force to develop a statewide plan to do so. The law requires the involvement of Washington state departments of Corrections, Child Welfare, law enforcement and jails, education, probation, parole, public defense and courts, as well as community-based organizations and caregivers.

The law passed as the result of a successful collaboration among the head of the **Washington State Corrections Center for Women (WCCW)**, Belinda Stewart, her public relations director and the head of the Social Work Department of **Pacific Lutheran University (PLU)**, located near WCCW. The women who shaped and championed the legislation are important spokespeople and worthy of emulation, not only for the end result of the policy change they achieved, but also for how to go about getting state legislators and other state officials to take ownership of the need to support CIP.³

The collaboration began because Stewart, who maintained a high level of family-friendly programs at WCCW, saw the need for CIP to be supported statewide and was facing resistance from the state department of health and human services. PLU became involved initially because it places its social work students in field placements at the women's prison. The students, as the result of working at WCCW, saw the need for more supports to be put in place for incarcerated mothers and their children.

After conducting a series of one-on-one meetings with key legislative leaders and heads of state agencies, Stewart, her PR director and the PLU Social Work representative organized a symposium in October 1994 that convened legislators and other elected officials, rallying them to the CIP cause. At the symposium national experts presented the big picture; officials from Oregon described the reforms implemented in their state; and a panel of CIP and caregivers offered perspectives on families' experiences and needs.

³ I recommend that you meet with Belinda Stewart and her PR Director. They gave a very compelling presentation at the CWLA conference and have valuable lessons learned. I have a copy of the slick materials they developed for their meetings with legislators which I'll share with you when we meet.

Stewart says that the symposium brought legislative leaders together and created the space and opportunity for them to take the next, critical step of deciding to pursue policy change. The symposium helped achieve bipartisan support for “The Children of Offenders Act,” which was drafted in December 2004, passed both houses and will soon be signed into law.

****Washington provides an important model of advocacy, spearheaded initially and in part by a corrections official. Unlike the example of reform in Arizona which stayed limited to the department of corrections, in Washington a passionate corrections official helped catalyze reform that was subsequently embraced by the state’s departments of the secretary and of education and was passed by the legislature. Washington illustrates that state-level work is possible when state-level officials are on board, and especially when they are championing the initiative.****

6. Model Programs among Service Providers

While CIP services seem to be popping up all over the country, important questions remain about how these programs are funded; how many children and parents they serve and what long-term effect they’ll have. These questions are beyond the scope of this report.

Nell Bernstein suggests how far we have to go:

Over the past two decades, we have built and filled prisons with single-minded dedication. We have shown no similar commitment to our children. The programs and initiatives profiled [in Bernstein’s book] represent a starting place, but at the moment, they exist in piecemeal form, scattered across the nation, serving a small percentage of the families who need them, and often with no reliable source of funding from one year to the next (Bernstein, 2005).

Visiting Programs

While they are service-oriented in nature, visiting programs can serve as a direct route to reform and often come as the result of advocacy targeting reluctant prison bureaucracies that don’t provide family-friendly visiting.

While research indicates that prison visits are the most essential factor in determining whether or not a family will stay together post-incarceration (Finney Hairston, 2002), in 2003 the Supreme Court upheld a Michigan decision that imposed severe limits on prison visits, making CIP’s ability to see their parents more a function of the parent’s relative privilege, as interpreted by the prison, than a right of the child’s.

Prisons across the country disallow too many visits for specious reasons; make visiting parents and family members unnecessarily invasive and difficult (e.g. strip-searching babies and setting visiting hours during the school day) and create burdensome rules that interfere with family visits (e.g. terminating the visit because someone requests to use the restroom). In prisons where family-friendly visiting programs have not been intentionally created, advocates emphasize the need to monitor prisons and to hold them accountable for facilitating CIP's visits with their parents.

The Children of Incarcerated Parents Program (CHIPP) is housed within the NYC Administration for Children's Service's Division of Foster Care and Preventive Services. Created in 2000, CHIPP offers services including locating and tracking parents within the criminal justice system or youth who are incarcerated in the adult system; parent-child and sibling visits at Rikers Island every Tuesday as well as case conferences at Rikers; visits and case conferences at state and federal prisons within the tri-state area; help in facilitating phone calls between incarcerated parents and their children, especially for the purposes of developing permanency plans and facilitating parent participation in family team conferences. CHIPP also trains ACS and agency staff and foster parents on how to support CIP.

New York State Social Services Law mandates monthly visits between children and their incarcerated parents and requires that child welfare agencies must make "diligent efforts" to facilitate such visits. Visitation grew all the more critical with the passage of the ASFA because visits can facilitate incarcerated parents' involvement in permanency planning, without which reunification becomes less likely.

CHIPP distributes a brochure for incarcerated parents called "Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind: Important Information for Incarcerated Parents Whose Children are in Foster Care" that details parents' rights and responsibilities vis a vis their children while they are incarcerated.

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) is a mother-child visiting program run in partnership between local Girl Scout troops and correctional institutions. GSBB combines community-based Girl Scout meetings and mentoring with meetings in prison facilities. Maryland, Florida, Ohio and Arizona were the first states to implement GSBB (www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/sp_family_gsbb.htm):

- Maryland was the demonstration site for the program and began in 1992. The local Girl Scouts work with the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women and serve more than 30 girls and their mothers. The troop and their mothers meet biweekly at the facility and one Sunday per month, the troop meeting takes place in the community.
- Florida has had GSBB programs in Fort Lauderdale and Tallahassee since 1994. The Tallahassee site has two Girl Scout meetings per month in the facility, as well as four two-hour training sessions on parenting skills for the mothers. This site also has transitional services for the mothers and monitors the in-school progress of the youth participants.

- Ohio was the first site to form a partnership between a prison and transitional facility when it instituted the program in the Ohio Reformatory for Women and the Franklin Pre-Release Facility in 1994.
- Arizona was the first site to operate in a jail setting and also provides parenting classes.
- GSBB has served as a template for other collaborations between youth service organizations and correctional institutions. It has expanded beyond the initial four sites described above and now has over 20 programs in eight states. Girl Scouts created the first partnership with a male prison facility in Ohio.
- A 2005 PBS film, *Troop 1500*, focuses on the GSBB program at Hilltop Prison in Gatesville Prison. Promo material for the film describes GSBB as “the controversial effort by the 90+ year old Girl Scouts Organization” that’s “working to help at-risk young girls deal with their unique circumstances and break the cycle of crime within families” (www.mobilusmedia.com).

8. Tensions and Unanswered Questions in the Field

As is true of any field in which the work is relatively new and monumentally important, unresolved debates persist about the best way to approach advocating on behalf of children whose parents are incarcerated. The following are some of the tensions that emerged from my review of the field:

- **Fathers Vs. Mothers:** Mothers are CIP’s primary caregivers prior to their incarceration and women are the fastest growing segment of the US prison population. Fathers, however, are the quantitatively dominant incarcerated parent. While women’s prison advocates and women’s corrections officials tend to prioritize mothers and communications strategists suggest that mothers are more sympathetic to the public, advocates like Carol Fenneley and Liz Gaynes insist that fathers be prioritized in the work. Otherwise, fathers become invisible as parents. In terms of research, it’s difficult to data match with fathers, therefore most research focuses on mothers.
- **Children Vs. Families:** While CIP advocates maintain that children should be separated out and talked about discretely—such as by promoting the Children of Incarcerated Parents’ Bill of Rights—when advocacy efforts on behalf of CIP reach out to other groups, they may be encouraged to consider the entire family as the unit of analysis. It seems plausible that the “family people” may support the Children’s Bill of Rights. They may also want to talk primarily about the rights of the family.

****A cross-cutting approach may be to advocate for resources for caregivers. Caregivers are the bridge between the child and the incarcerated parent and, along with them, make the family.****

- **Advocacy Vs. Systems Reform:** Will CIP benefit most from an advocacy or from a systems-reform approach? The CIP field is rich in potential in that it invites service providers like Friends Outside, Arkansas Voices and the Osborne Association—agencies with strong ties to public systems—to engage in advocacy. In other words, it invites practitioners to develop advocacy initiatives. Because of their orientation, the practitioners’ advocacy may look a lot like systems reform.

****Throw in some smart communications and campaign strategy and you’ve got the best of both worlds.****

- **Children at Risk Vs. Children of Promise:** At first glance, one of the more convincing arguments for the need to provide resources and services to CIP is the “cycle of crime” message. But many advocates oppose the tendency to lead with these statistics, preferring instead to focus on CIP’s strengths and assets.

Based on a review of the field, it would be interesting to see guidelines that explored the following areas:

- Strategic cross-training opportunities for systems people
- Technical assistance to local CIP organizations
- Grandparent advocacy
- Sentencing reform advocacy the goal of which is ATIs for low-risk parents
- Youth organizing among CIP
- Challenging termination of parental rights by ASFA because of incarceration