

# DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

## Video: *Supporting Youth with Incarcerated Parents*

[HTTP://www.YOUTH.gov/COIP](http://www.youth.gov/COIP)



### WHO CAN USE THIS GUIDE?

This discussion guide is designed for social workers who may come in contact with children of incarcerated parents. It is intended for the larger world of social work, including those who work in clinical settings, community and faith based organizations, child welfare, juvenile justice, adult corrections, schools, etc.

This guide was developed to accompany the video, ***Supporting Youth with Incarcerated Parents: For Social Workers***, created by American Institutes for Research (AIR) for the Federal Interagency Council on Crime Prevention and Improving Reentry and youth.gov to highlight issues affecting youth who have or have had an incarcerated parent. Content for the video builds on learning from previous work, including a **youth listening session** about the needs of youth with an incarcerated parent and their families and the effects of incarceration on everyday life.

Content for the video was informed by focus group phone calls with youth, social workers, and experts who work with youth experiencing hardships due to having an incarcerated parent. AIR partnered with Echoes of Incarceration and Osborne Association of New York to record the featured youth, social workers, and experts.

In an effort to extend this learning opportunity, we have developed a list of discussion questions to foster positive conversations. These conversations are intended to expand awareness and understanding of the needs of children and youth with incarcerated parents, expand on best practices to better address their needs, and explore ways to promote improved outcomes for these youth.

### ACTIVITY IDEAS

**Option One:** The discussion questions can be reviewed and deliberated as a large group, or the staff could be divided into smaller groups. In smaller groups, each group or table could take a different question to discuss then share their conversation with the larger group promoting peer-to-peer learning.

**Option Two:** The learning opportunity can be extended over several meetings, allowing one question to be studied in depth by staff each month. Using the additional resources found on page 2, administrators/staff may want to extend this learning through the promotion of individual and group reading activities.



## PLANNING TIPS

- Decide who will facilitate the conversation.
- Ideally, the chosen facilitator should review the discussion prompts and additional resources (included below) ahead of time and consider adjusting them to meet their setting and audience needs.
- Plan for participants to watch the full video (approximately 25 minutes long).
- Allow about 30 minutes to discuss the prompts. If the group is larger than 10 people, consider breaking into small groups.
- The facilitator may need to answer general questions about the video content prior to discussion prompts.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Increase awareness and understanding of the experiences and issues faced by youth with incarcerated parents.
2. Identify appropriate practices and strategies that may benefit youth with incarcerated parents and address the issues they face (e.g., trust, abandonment, guilt, stigma, secrecy, relational struggles, understanding the justice system, as well as strengths such as resiliency and ability to forgive).
3. Highlight the role of trauma and trauma-informed practices and strategies for addressing the needs of youth with incarcerated parents.
4. Identify ideas for potential advocacy for practice and policy change within your organization that may impact youth with incarcerated parents.
5. Identify ways to promote positive outcomes for youth whose parents are absent due to incarceration.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXTEND THE LEARNING

Federal Youth Topic on Children of Incarcerated Parents: <https://youth.gov/coip>

- Video Vignettes (Four youth share their experiences with having an incarcerated parent): <https://youth.gov/coip/video>
- Youth Tip Sheet (Advice for youth from youth): <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents/listening-sessions/tip-sheet-for-youth-coip>
- Mentor Tip Sheet (How mentors can contribute to positive outcomes): <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents/federal-tools-resources/tip-sheet-mentors>
- Provider Tip Sheet (Advice for service providers from youth): <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents/listening-sessions/tip-sheet-for-providers-coip>
- Infographic (Facts and statistics showing the impact of incarceration): [https://youth.gov/sites/default/files/COIPInfographic\\_508.pdf](https://youth.gov/sites/default/files/COIPInfographic_508.pdf)

Felitti et al. (1998). Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245-258.

National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated: <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/>

Osborne Association: Programs and Services for Families Affected by the Justice System: <http://www.osborneny.org/>

Poehlmann, J., & Eddy, J. M. (2013). *Relationship processes and resilience in children with incarcerated parents*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership: Bill of Rights: <http://www.sfcipp.org/download-the-bill-of-rights-1>

youth.gov: Webinar on Trauma-Informed Approaches (Experts and youth discuss the importance of trauma-informed care): <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health/trauma-informed-approaches>



## DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Identify two or more facts or data points that you learned through viewing this video. Did any of these surprise you? Were any particularly meaningful to you? Did any change your outlook about your role?

**Remember:** 2.7 million young people have an incarcerated parent. That is the equivalent of 1 in 28 youth.

2. How might you adjust your workplace environment or share information to help youth with incarcerated parents know they are not alone? Name 3 to 5 specific activities that may help increase awareness among youth and staff that there are youth in the community with an incarcerated parent.

**Remember:** Youth with incarcerated parents often feel alone or that they are the only one with an incarcerated parent. Balance support without “outing” youth who do not want it to be known.

3. Regardless of where you work, you have the capacity to be influential in altering policy and practices to better address the needs of youth with incarcerated parents. Identify 3 or 4 policies or practices in your workplace that might be reconsidered or added in order to be more inclusive of these youth. Share examples of language choices that are effective and inclusive of youth with an incarcerated parent.

**Remember:** *YOU* can be a powerful and trusted adult for youth with an incarcerated parent.

4. Knowing a youth may have visited a parent at a facility recently, how can you help manage his or her feelings and behaviors as he or she adjusts and transitions back into a familiar routine?

**Remember:** The youth may be dealing with the many feelings that come after a visit, including the pain of leaving a parent behind. Try to empathize and provide extra support of the parent-child relationship in the days that follow a visit as well as throughout the year.

5. In your role, if you learn that there is a youth whose parent is absent from the home due to incarceration, what are some **trauma-informed\*** approaches, supports, or strategies you might use to promote positive interactions and outcomes with the 1) youth, and 2) youth’s caregiver?

**Remember:** Approaches may differ depending on each staff person’s role in the organization.

\* A program, organization, or system that is **trauma-informed** realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization. (Source: [SAMHSA](#))

### Trauma Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). [SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Author.

DeCandia, C. J., & Guarino, K. (2015). Trauma-informed care: An ecological response. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*.

**Refer to page two for additional resources focusing on supporting youth with an incarcerated parent.**