

10 Things to Do to Support Children of Incarcerated Parents

1. **Know yourself:** the feelings, experiences and attitudes of those who live with and among children of the incarcerated influence the way children of incarcerated parents feel about themselves.
2. **Check yourself when you make judgments.** Everyone will experience and respond to a child's relationship with an incarcerated parent in their own way. The responses are shaped by experience and opinions and everyone judges sometimes.
3. **Remember** that all children of incarcerated parents mourn the loss in some way, even if they do not live with or have contact with that parent.
4. **Help** children to talk about their feelings by acknowledging the confusion, pain and anger. Waiting for children to bring it up may make the child feel that the adult is uncomfortable with the topic.
5. **Provide** educational materials to caregivers and the community about the dangers of deceiving children about their incarcerated parent's whereabouts and the damaging effects of labeling children of the incarcerated as "just like their parent" or five times more likely to end up in jail than other children.
6. **Form** support groups for children of incarcerated parents.
7. **Promote** inclusion of books and materials about children of incarcerated parents in classrooms and libraries.
8. **Advocate** for training opportunities for teachers and counselors, law enforcement, corrections, health care and child welfare professionals on children of incarcerated parents.
9. **Bring** the topic to the public's attention by suggesting children and families of the incarcerated as a focus for programs and projects for service organizations and communities of faith in your community.
10. **Include** adult children of the incarcerated in planning and leadership roles.

Source: Ann Adalist-Estrin and the Family and Corrections Network. Used with permission.