

Parental Incarceration

The Impact on Children and Youth



The saying is all too familiar: Do the crime, do the time. But in America's age of mass incarceration, millions of children are suffering the consequences of their parents' sentences.

-Annie E. Casey Foundation, *A Shared Sentence*

Children of Incarcerated Parents

Child Trend's estimates over **5 million U.S. children** have had an incarcerated parent.

Kids Count data from 2011-12 determined **189,000** children in Georgia had incarcerated parents during that time.

The Disproportional Effect

African-American children are **twice as likely** to have incarcerated parents. Children in lower income households and/ or living in rural areas are also more likely to have an incarcerated parent.

The Impact on Children

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are significantly linked to suicide attempts throughout the lifespan and with an **earlier age at first suicide attempt**.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Include:

- o Physical abuse
- o Sexual abuse
- o Emotional abuse
- o Physical neglect
- o Emotional neglect
- o Intimate partner violence
- o Mother treated violently
- o Substance misuse within household
- o Household mental illness
- o Parental separation or divorce
- o **Incarcerated household member**

Viewing the list of ACEs above, it is easy to see that **multiple ACEs** may be associated with parental incarceration.

- Children with incarcerated parents, on average, have an **ACE score almost 4 times higher** than children whose parents haven't.
- People who had incarcerated parents as children were **3 times more likely to attempt suicide**

Research in Prevention

The risk of adult and childhood/adolescent suicide attempts could be **reduced by 70%- 80%** in the absence of one or more ACEs. For professionals, providing care that is informed by and responsive to the realities of trauma and its aftermath is important to children suffering parental incarceration.

Choi, N. G., Dinitto, D. M., Marti, C. N., & Segal, S. P. (2017). Adverse childhood experiences and suicide attempts among those with mental and substance use disorders. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 69, 252-262.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2016). *A Shared Sentence*, the devastating toll of parental incarceration on kids, families and communities. Kids Count: April 2016 Policy Report. Available at <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-asharedsentence-2016.pdf>

Murphey, D., Cooper P.M. (2015) *Parents Behind Bars: What Happens to Their Children?*. Child Trend's

Persyn, M. K. (2017). *Mass Incarceration and Child Trauma*. *Poverty & Race*, 25(3), 7-10.

Call 1-800-715-4225

or

Text GA to 741741

A free, 24/7 line for people in crisis

For more information and support on suicide prevention go to mygcal.com

For non-crisis support in GA call
1-800-CHILDREN (244-5373)