

Interim Study 15-61
On High Rates of
Female Incarceration in Oklahoma



**IMPACT OF INCARCERATION
ON CHILDREN**

BY

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Family Policy Institute of Oklahoma



- Non-profit, Non-partisan Research and Education Organization
- Mission:
 - + Protect Families
 - + Strengthen Communities

Strong Families = Building Block for Thriving Communities



Why should the Legislature focus on the impact of incarceration on Oklahoma's children?

- Strong families are the building blocks for healthy and vibrant communities.



Strong Families = Building Block for Thriving Communities



- Strong families provide Oklahoma's children the optimal opportunity for success and well-being
- Reduce costs to the taxpayer

Strong Families = Building Block for Thriving Communities



- 2 of the key factors for child well-being and success
 1. Stability
 2. Family Structure

Strong Families = Building Block for Thriving Communities



1. Stability

★ Routine

★ Family Traditions/Activities

★ Faith/Religious Practice



Strong Families = Building Block for Thriving Communities



2. Family Structure

- ★ Child raised by married birth parents (generally)
- ★ Measurably better rankings in all categories
- ★ Society's least restrictive means for healthy child development

Strong Families = Building Block for Thriving Communities



- 2 of the key factors for child well-being and success
 1. Stability
 2. Family Structure
- Unfortunately, the data reveals that Oklahoma's children of incarcerated parents do not have stability and often come from fragmented families

Challenges for Children of Incarcerated Parents



- Trauma from loss of a parent
- Often the loss is sudden giving the child no chance to prepare for the loss and the resulting changes
- Added emotional trauma if child sees parent arrested and taken away

Challenges for Children of Incarcerated Parents



- Continual worry and anxiety about the parent
- Financial hardship and poverty
- Parent could be long distance away



Challenges for Children of Incarcerated Parents



- Shame and embarrassment
- Guilt
- Isolation and internalization leading to anger
- Developmental delays as emotional survival/coping takes over

Challenges for Children of Incarcerated Parents



- Increased likelihood of multiple negative social indicators including:
 - ▶▶ Juvenile Delinquency/Incarceration
 - ▶▶ Long-term Poverty
 - ▶▶ Reduced Educational Success or Dropping Out
 - ▶▶ Earlier Sexual Onset/Teen Pregnancy
 - ▶▶ Substance Abuse/Mental Illness
 - ▶▶ Victim of Domestic Violence

On Any Given Day in Oklahoma...



- 2,400 children have a mom in prison they lived with prior to incarceration
- 10,200 have a dad in prison they lived with prior to incarceration
- Parental incarceration likely only increases dysfunction already present in child's life

Imperative for Action



- Even a *modest* improvement in marriage and family stability in OK could
 - ↑ Improve child well-being and success
 - ↑ Substantially reduce government costs while improving the economy

Possible Solutions: Legislative & Judicial



- Incentivize successful completion of parenting and relationship skills training while incarcerated
- Increase opportunities for positive parent-child interactions during incarceration, prior to and following release
- Consider distance of incarcerated parent from children in sentencing and increase focus on community sentencing

Possible Solutions: Legislative & Judicial



- Develop assessment of children's needs prior to release & identify community resources
- Explore other programs where substance abuse treatment occurs in a family-centered context including residential
 - ⇒ Children will need services anyway
 - ⇒ Positive family relationships contribute to reduced recidivism

Possible Solutions: Community



- Be Prepared. Reentry *will happen* in your community for the vast majority of offenders.
- Improve community resources focused on education and training for strengthening marriages and families.
- Increase engagement from the faith community.

Possible Solutions: Community

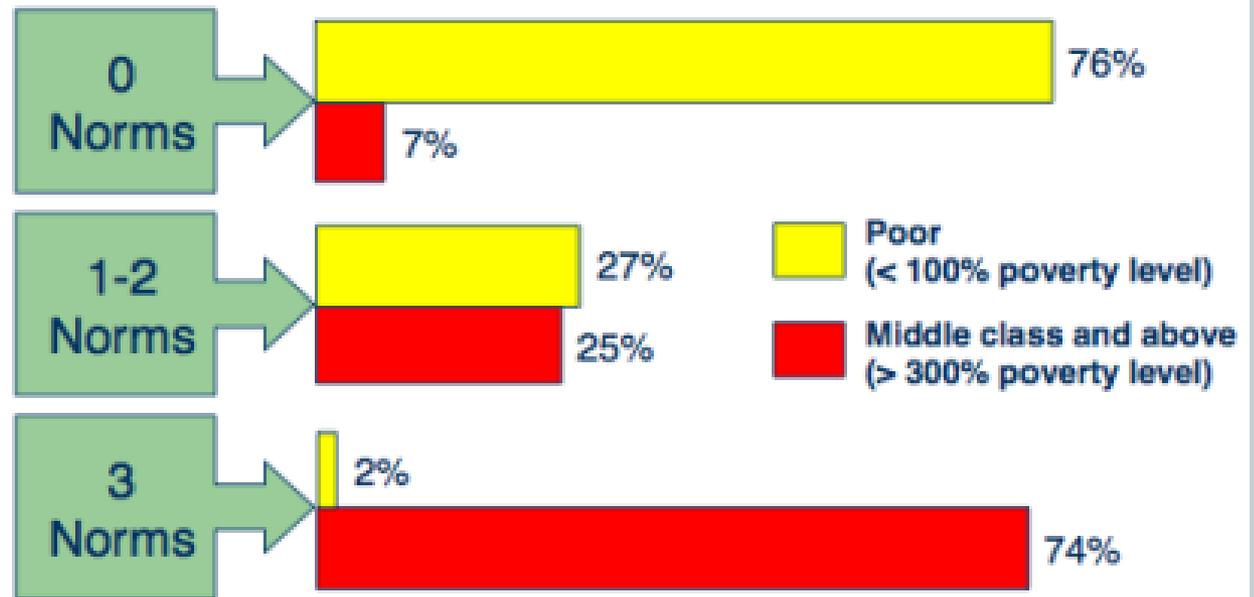


- Brookings Institution: Success Sequence

Income Class, by Adherence to Social Norms, 2007

The Three Norms

- Complete high school
- Work full time
- Wait until age 21 and marry before children



Reasons for Hope



- ReMerge and Women in Recovery teach us it can work
- Innovative ideas like The Messages Project and Angel Tree

For More Information Contact:



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