

# FAMILY FRIENDLY JAIL INITIATIVE

Annual Report: Year 6 - July 2023-June 2024

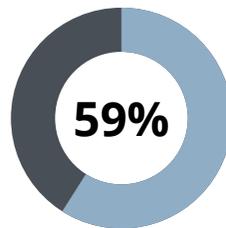
**The goal:** to promote the well-being of children of incarcerated parents by addressing changes within policies, systems, and environments that result in more responsiveness to children's needs.

## THE NEED:

Parental incarceration can be difficult for a child. When a parent goes to jail, the child may experience challenges in family relationships, at school and in their community. The stigma of having an incarcerated parent can affect mental health and social interactions. Family Friendly Jail Initiative (FFJI) strives to support children and parents in this stressful situation to build connections and resiliency to overcome generational cycles of incarceration.

## THE PROGRAM:

- Family Friendly Visits
- Parent Education sessions in the jail & community using *Parenting Inside Out* and *Circle of Security* curricula
- Family Community Liaison
- Program participant library and book studies
- Resources for caregivers and children
- Environmental changes in the lobby & visiting room
- Recordable children's books and stuffies for children of incarcerated parents



of the 227 inmates screenings for FFJI, 127 indicated they had minor children.

representing **264** children under 18.

## Year Six highlights:

The Family Friendly Jail initiative expanded with the support of a grant from the Minnesota Department of Health. This year saw changes in the Parent Educator position, Jail Programmer and the addition of a Family Community Liaison. Referrals increased from school district and community partners this year as the FCL connected with families in need of support. A holiday gift giving project took place for children impacted by incarceration. A texter was added in the jail to provide communication for parent and child at no cost to parent education participants. And incarcerated parents graduated from the Parenting Inside Out program.

MN School Survey data shows **22.5% of Carlton City** of 8th, 9th & 11th graders have/had a parent in prison or jail.\*

Parental incarceration rates are higher in rural areas with roughly **1 in 5 rural youth** reporting parental incarceration vs. **1 in 10 urban youth.**

Youth exposed to parental incarceration experience **3 times** as many ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES.

If parental incarceration were a chronic health condition, it would be the **2nd most prevalent** in the U.S. for children under 18 - just behind asthma.

## FAMILY FRIENDLY VISITS:

Supporting the parent-child relationship is a key strategy for fostering resilience in children affected by incarceration and contact visits are an important tool in that. **Sixteen** Family Friendly Visits were held during this program year, 4 of which were contact visits for 2 families. Special hours for child visits eliminate the potential for children to be exposed to inappropriate input of other visitors. Multiple children/siblings meet with the incarcerated parent at one time, keeping families intact. And young children don't have to wait alone for their turn to visit. The caregiver accompanying the child(ren) does not participate in the visit; all communication is child-focused. **NEXT STEPS:** The new Justice Center includes a designated Family Friendly Visiting room with a separate entrance, child-friendly environment and resources and toys to support the parent-child bond. We anticipate this will increase Family Friendly Visits in number and quality.

# FAMILY FRIENDLY JAIL INITIATIVE:

statistics year 6

## Year Six:

### FAMILY/COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

The FFJI Family Community Liaison continued to serve families by connecting children and caregivers to community services and supports. Services were expanded in April of 2024 with the addition of a staff focused on youth impacted by incarceration: **7 families** and **26 children** received support. The FCL worked in collaboration with schools and other agencies in connecting families to services in their community such as housing and utility assistance, food and travel resources, Wellness Kits and educational experiences for kids, etc. The FCL was also certified as a PIO Parent Education Coach. **NEXT STEPS:** A support group for children of incarcerated parents is to begin in the 24-25 school year for interested districts. County staff receive training in the curriculum Joining Forces, for grades K-12 and will facilitate talks and projects to promote connection and support.



"...thank you for helping me from by showing that I can break the cycle and also teaching me very important skill and coping tools to apply into my parenting but I can also apply them to my life." - PIO Graduate, JD

### PIO Graduation:

**Four** incarcerated participants graduated from the Parenting Inside Out parent education program, completing 12 sessions and 24 hours of skill building and learning. Through role-playing, assignments and group discussion, graduates learned about child development, constructive communication, positive discipline and other topics to build healthy relationships.

### PEOPLE SERVED BY FFJI: YEAR 6

Family Friendly Visits **16**  
Contact visits **4**

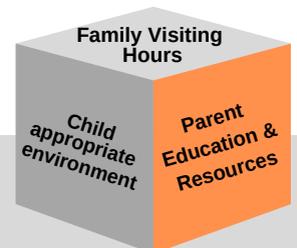
Parent Education Sessions **100 in person**  
Parent Ed participants **56 in person**  
Male **25**  
Female **31**

Children <17 yrs old represented **129**

Family Community Liaison caseload **7 families**  
Children represented **26**

### PARENT EDUCATION:

The Parent Education program, supported by the Carlton School District, served **56** incarcerated people, representing **129** children. A Parent Educator conducted sessions twice a week with the support of the Family Community Liaison. Study guides were provided for books from the parent library to make independent learning accessible as well. **Four** participants completed the 12 sessions of PIO and graduated from the program. **NEXT STEPS:** A Parenting Inside Out Parent Education community group is planned for the upcoming year to support caregivers in the community. Parent Education will resume in the new Justice Center with upgraded spaces for group work. The Justice Involved Female unit will also have Parent Education classes available.



### Stuff the Cell Project:

The Sheriff's Department and Jail staff headed up the first annual Stuff the Cell Holiday Gift program in collaboration with the Community and Family Initiatives Department. Generous donations provided **15 families** and **39 children** impacted by incarceration with gifts and helped to bring some cheer to families throughout the county.

## FFJI staff are trained in two parenting curricula

FFJI staff are trained as coaches and facilitators of two parenting curricula, Circle of Security and Parenting Inside Out.

The Circle of Security® Parenting™ program is an 8-week program based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. The Circle of Security is a visual map of attachment. Using the COSP™ model, trained FFJI facilitators work with incarcerated parents and caregivers of children impacted by incarceration to help them to:

- Understand their child's emotional world by learning to read emotional needs
- Support their child's ability to successfully manage emotions
- Enhance the development of their child's self esteem
- Help parents and caregivers promote security with the children in their lives

The Parenting Inside Out® program is a 12-session, evidence-based program developed for criminal justice involved parents. It gives parents and caregivers tools to use healthy, pro-social skills to interact with children, partners, co-parents, officials, friends, and family. Through interactive coaching, role-plays, journaling and discussion, participants expand their understanding of child development, learn how to problem-solve, explore new ways to nurture and encourage your child, and use non-violent discipline to guide children and build healthy relationships.. \12 Lessons:

- Getting Acquainted
- Effective Speaking Skills
- Effective Listening Skills Effective
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Bonding Through Play and Reading
- The Child's Job and the Parent's Job
- Nurturing Your Child's Temperament
- Structure Through Family Routine
- Directions and Encouragement
- Rules, Rewards and Consequences
- Timeout and Privilege Removal
- Going Home: Your Children and You

**Parent incarceration dramatically increases risks of poor school attendance, school discipline problems, lower grades, school disconnection, substance use, and mental health problems. Supporting the parent-child relationship is a key strategy for fostering resilience in children affected by incarceration.**

### FFJI BY THE NUMBERS:

Intake into the program is a two step process:

**227** initial screening forms were completed to determine eligibility for *FFJI*:

- **77** or **36%** indicated that they had a parent incarcerated during their childhood
- Of those that identified the school district attended by the child, **63 attended Carlton County schools.**

As many incarcerated individuals have brief jail stays, those eligible for programming are often released before completing the intake process and before services are accessed, thus the number of intakes differ from the number participating.



## COLLABORATION IS KEY:

Carlton County Sheriff's Office; Carlton School District & ECFE Program; United Way of Carlton County; Carlton Area Lion's Club; Carlton County Children's & Family Mental Health Services Collaborative; Carlton Public Library; Carlton County Children and Family Initiatives Dept.; CHILD Network; School Districts of Carlton County: Esko, Cloquet, Wrenshall, Carlton, Cromwell-Wright, Moose Lake, Fond du Lac Ojibwe; MN Dept. of Correction - CIP Program; University of MN-Dept. of Pediatrics; MN Dept. of Health; US Dept. of Justice



# Family Friendly Jail Initiative: changes to policy & environment

Developed with the guidance of the University of MN & Mn Dept. of Health FFJI began in 2017 with data informing changes to better serve children, families and caregivers impacted by incarceration. Changes include:

## 1 CHILD-FRIENDLY VISITING

Visiting hours and a one-person-at-a-time limit during visits were previously obstacles to families. There are now special hours for child visits, eliminating the potential for children to be exposed to inappropriate input of other visitors. Multiple children can now meet with the parent at one time. This keeps families intact and young children don't have to wait alone for their turn to visit. The caregiver accompanying the child does not participate in the Family-Friendly visit; all communication is child focused.

## 2 CHILD-FRIENDLY LOBBY

Children's furniture, artwork and books were added to the waiting area. This eliminates some of the fear children may feel and makes the visit more manageable to accompanying caregivers.

## 3 ACES TRAINING FOR JAIL STAFF

Training on Adverse Childhood Experiences supports jail staff in understanding the impact of stress on children's development. This knowledge is used to help reduce the stress on children and works to end the cycle of trauma.

## 4 PARENT EDUCATION

A trained facilitator conducts sessions twice a week with incarcerated parents. *Parenting Inside Out (PIO)* and *Circle of Security®* curricula are used to support parenting skills and connection to children in their lives. *PIO* lessons are also available on video for independent study. Participants complete a needs assessment with study and activities then based on responses and interests identified. Participation in Parent Education is a prerequisite for family-friendly visits.

## 5 CHILDREN/FAMILY RESOURCES

Resources are available to caregivers and children and include information on how to talk to kids about incarceration; a guide to visiting jail with children; children's books addressing incarceration/loss; connection to local resources and supports; *Wellness Kits* for all ages; recordable books/stuffies for incarcerated parents to give their children. Resource brochures were added to the jail lobby.

## 6 ACCOUNTABILITY

To participate in the program and gain FFV time with their children, inmates must be in good standing and free of violations while in jail. They complete assignments to reflect on the visit and their relationship with their child to demonstrate engagement with the program.

## 7 BOOKS FOR SHARING

Two baskets containing the same child-oriented books are made available on each side of the glass divider in the visiting area: one basket for inmates and the other for visiting children. Parents can then read with their children, promoting literacy and positive interaction.

## 8 CONTACT VISITS

For incarcerated parents that put in the work of parent education, contact visits may be allowed. This can be very important in strengthening the connection between child and parent and reducing the stress of separation.

## 9 PARENT LIBRARY

The incarcerated parent library was established with study guides to go along with a number of books. Inmates complete reflection questions on the reading and receive feedback from program staff. Books by Native American authors were added to the parent library and to the children's books made available to visiting families.

## 10 FAMILY COMMUNITY LIAISON

The Liaison supports attachment of children and parents DURING & AFTER incarceration and assists with: visits to jail including transportation; connection to resources and public assistance; supports school/caregiver/parent communication including online meetings for conferences, etc.; assists with parent education sessions in the jail and in the community.

"I need to be a better person for my kids. This is a wonderful program. I learn about my kids and myself."

-incarcerated father of 2