Children of Incarcerated Parents (COIP)
What You Need to Know

Strengthening Families Training Institute
Boise
March 2013
Today’s Agenda

• Welcome & Introductions
• Overview of Project
• Facts
• Past Accomplishments & Future Plans
• Summary & Questions
What is COIP?  
(Children of Incarcerated Parents)

COIP is a subcommittee to the Idaho Criminal Justice Commission

The committee is charged with improving the lives of children whose parent or parents are incarcerated — and developing public policy that helps us reach that goal.
The committee is made up of 15 people representing:

- Idaho Department of Correction
- Idaho Department of Health & Welfare
- Ada County Sheriff
- Catholic Charities
- Casey Family Foundation
- Idaho Family Advocates
- Boise Rescue Mission
- Easter Seals/Goodwill
- Idaho Attorney General
- Idaho Department of Education
- Idaho State University

The committee is charged with improving the lives of children whose parent or parents are incarcerated — and developing public policy that helps us reach that goal.
The Foundation of Our Work

According to the Children’s Defense Fund, children are ten times more apt to commit a violent crime if there are six or more of the following risk factors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Health Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Timely and Quality Mental Health Services</td>
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<td>Low Birth Weight</td>
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<td>Abuse/Neglect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster Care Placement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor School Quality/Low Achievement</td>
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<td>Juvenile Justice System Involvement</td>
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<td>Children of Color</td>
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The Facts

About 1.5 million children nationwide have parents behind bars on any one day*

An estimated 10 million more have parents who have been imprisoned at some point during the child’s life*

75 percent of women in prison are mothers, typically of two or three children*

Annie E Casey Foundation – “Family to Family, Tools for Rebuilding Foster Care”, 2008
The Facts

Children of offenders are five times more likely than their peers to end up in prison*

One in 10 will be incarcerated before reaching adulthood*

The number of women incarcerated has increased threefold in the last 10 years – convicted in large part for non-violent drug crimes*

*Annie E Casey Foundation – “Family to Family, Tools for Rebuilding Foster Care”, 2008
America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline

The Cradle to Prison Pipeline is:

A loud siren of alarm and wake up call to action to every parent, faith community, public policy, political and cultural leader, child and family serving agency and citizen.

An urgent national crisis at the intersection of poverty and race with tens of thousands of children and teens sucked into the Pipeline each year.

Not an act of God or inevitable; it is a series of human choices at each stage of our children’s development.
Idaho’s Story

374 inmates surveyed at IDOC
176 had children under 18 years

50 Females → 126 Males → Combined for 350 children
50 percent of the women were employed at the time of their arrest making an average of $8.81 per hour.

77 percent were living with their children at the time of arrest.

88 percent plan to live with their children upon release.

Average age at the time of the birth of first child was 20 (youngest was 14).
48 percent of the men were employed at the time of their arrest making an average of $11.57 per hour.

64 percent were living with their children at the time of arrest.

96 percent plan to live with their children upon release.

Average age at the time of the birth of first child was 22 (youngest was 14).
Custody Status of Children

- 55% Mother
- 25% Father
- 12% Adopted
- 6% Relative Care
- 1% State Care
- 1% No Response
# Age Range of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children Thirteen to Seventeen Years</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Eleven - Twelve Years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Six - Ten Years</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Three - Five Years</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Zero - Two Years</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35</td>
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</table>
Idaho’s Drug Endangered Children

73 percent of the mothers said they had used alcohol and/or drugs while pregnant
Children’s Risk Factors

We measured the following risk factors:

- Poverty Status
- Family Structure
- Low Birth Weight
- Abuse or Neglect
- Foster Care Placement
- Ethnicity
- Juvenile Justice System Involvement

We were unable to determine lack of health care, lack of timely mental health care, poor school quality/low achievement.
Children’s Risk Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At least 1</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Five</th>
<th>Six</th>
<th>Seven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>290</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Results

What we learned:

- The top three risk factors facing the children in our survey were poverty, family structure and ethnicity.
- Substance abuse continues to be a major contributor to our prison population.
- More than two-thirds of mothers reported using alcohol or drugs while pregnant.
Supporting Data
Child Poverty

According to the Annie E. Casey 2009 Kids Count:

18 percent of Idaho’s children live in poverty ranking 23rd in the nation for child poverty

47 percent of children lived in low-income families (income below 200 percent of poverty level)
Current Efforts to Support Children

- Teacher’s Toolkit
- Idaho Kincare Project
- Kincare Website (2-1-1 Idaho Careline)
- Communication Group
- ICJC Sub-committee
- Guiding Principles adopted by ICJC
- Action Plan
- Families & Friends Handbook
- School Pilot
A pilot program is underway at two elementary schools: one in the Boise District and another in the Vallivue District.

The pilot is directed at one-on-one counseling for children identified as having a parent in long term incarceration (6 mos. or more).

Goal is to improve attendance, academics and behavior.
School Pilot

Children are 8-11 years of age.

Voluntary. Parents signed off on participation.

Surveys were conducted with children, parents and teachers at the beginning of each pilot. Surveys focused on attendance, academics and behavior.

Re-surveys will be conducted at the end of the school year to measure progress.
School Pilot

12 lunch-hour sessions in each school term.

Conducted as though the kids are in a club.

Clubs ARE NOT identified with any name that suggests prison or incarceration.

The common thread? I’m not alone!
Parents Behind Bars:
Children of Incarcerated Family Members
Answers to children’s difficult questions. An educator and caregiver’s toolkit to Idaho’s criminal justice system.
The COIP Toolkit/Family Guide

It is a simple, easy to use guide for children whose parent(s) has been incarcerated.

It provides basic questions a child might ask.

It provides honest answers to children about what has happened.

It's free and can be found on the internet at: Idaho CareLine 2-1-1 or [http://www.211.idaho.gov/](http://www.211.idaho.gov/)

Click on the Strengthening Idaho Youth box.
What Can You Do?

Support the work of COIP

Use the Family Guide or Toolkit
- Web address: http://www.211.idaho.gov/

Make the guide available to families

Tell your SRO’s

Victim/Witness Coordinators

Help us spread the word

Give us your ideas
Right or wrong – children love their parents

Almost all offenders return to their communities and the majority regain custody or attempt to engage in a relationship with their children

Action must be taken to break the generational cycle of incarceration

The stigma of incarceration is profound to both the child and the parent
In Closing...

Children and their incarcerated parents become clients of separate public agencies, often at odds and seldom partners in addressing the family’s need for rebuilding and reunification. We should understand, as clearly and as deeply as we can, that the collateral damage of our war on crime and drugs is our most vulnerable children. These children lie at the intersection of educational, social service, correctional, family service and other agencies. Coordinated, specialized, and targeted intervention can break the cycle of generational imprisonment, but not without leadership and not without commitment.
Questions?

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Resources

Children’s Defense Fund – America’s Cradle to Prison Pipeline (www.childrensdefense.org)

The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan (www.cdc.gov/injury)