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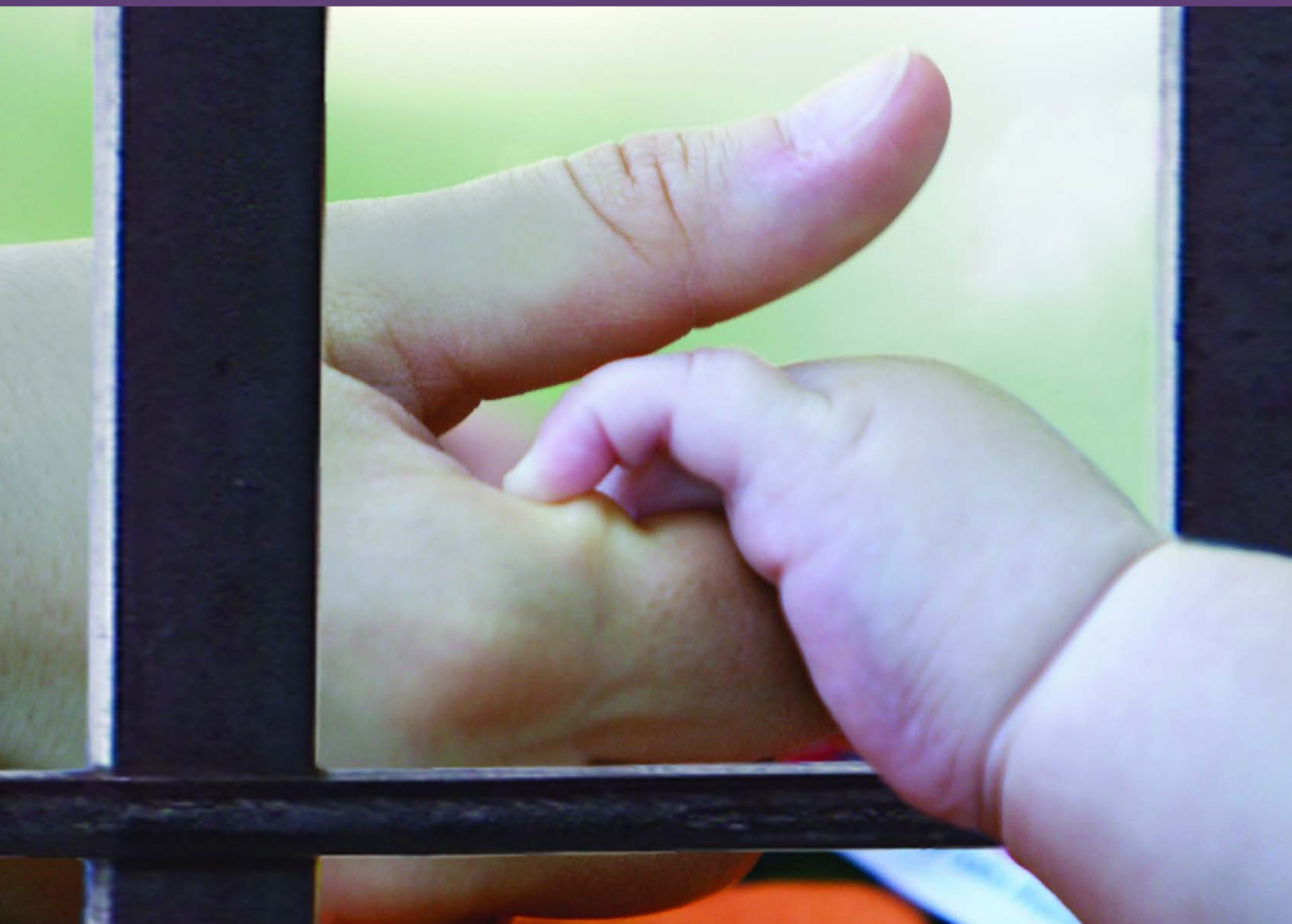
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Research Report

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy • McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies



PARENTING FROM PRISON: *Family Relationships of Incarcerated Women in Massachusetts*

JUNE 2008

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The Center for
**WOMEN IN POLITICS
& PUBLIC POLICY**

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS & PUBLIC POLICY

The mission of the McCormack Graduate School's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston is to promote women's leadership by providing quality education, conducting research that makes a difference in women's lives, and serving as a resource for the empowerment of women from diverse communities across the Commonwealth. Recognizing the talent and potential of women from every community, and guided by the urban mission of an intellectually vibrant and diverse university in the heart of Boston, the Center seeks to expand the involvement of women in politics and their influence on policies that affect them, their families, and their communities. The Center, which was established in 1994 with the support of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators, oversees a Graduate Certificate Program for Women in Politics and Public Policy, and supports other initiatives at the McCormack Graduate School.

ABOUT THE WOMEN IN PRISON PROJECT

Over the past decade, the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy has focused on the needs and experiences of women in the criminal justice system in Massachusetts as one of its key areas of research.

In 2000, the Center published a report entitled, *"Alternatives to Incarceration for Substance-Abusing Female Defendants/Offenders in Massachusetts, 1996-1998."* This report presented an analysis based on data from a sample of female defendants drawn from two district courts. It offered recommendations for court personnel, treatment providers, and policymakers regarding the needs of women who are substance abusers and who have entered the Massachusetts criminal justice system. In 2005, the Center issued a research report entitled, *"Women in Prison in Massachusetts: Maintaining Family Connections."* This project explored the unique needs of incarcerated mothers and their children and the obstacles to maintaining family connections. The report's findings led the Center's researchers to recommend further research to comprehensively explore the topic of maternal incarceration. Subsequently, a study examining the "resources and best practices that develop and strengthen the family connections of women inmates and their children" was funded by the Massachusetts Department of Correction and authorized by the Massachusetts Legislature. This study led to the development of this report, *"Parenting from Prison: Family Relationships of Incarcerated Women in Massachusetts."*

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Julia, a mother of two children, who is serving a two and a half year sentence at MCI-Framingham explained how it's "hard enough being away from them." Julia continued by discussing the importance of having contact with her kids, ages 10 and 7. She said that "seeing each other gives assurances that we are both okay." Julia's story highlights the unique and difficult circumstances women in prison face when separated from their children and families. Her words also speak to the potential for sustaining maternal-child relationships through a period of incarceration.

INTRODUCTION

Historically in the United States, there has been little concern about the needs of incarcerated women and their family members, especially children. This began to change with the tremendous increase in the number of incarcerated women. The rate of women's incarceration increased dramatically during the 1980s and today the number of female inmates continues to rise faster than the number of male inmates. In 1986, 19,812 women were incarcerated in the United States and this number rose in 1991 to 38,796. Today, over 112,000 women are incarcerated in state or federal facilities (Sabol et al., 2007; Snell 1994). While in 1995 women comprised 6.1% of the prison population, women currently make up 7.2% (Sabol et al., 2007).

The effects of female incarceration on family members and the community-at-large are significant. Husbands and partners, children, and extended family members, as well as the community, experience the effects of having women in correctional institutions. The dramatic increase in the number of incarcerated women, especially for drug offenses, means that many more children must live without their mothers for a period of time. A multitude of problems face women during and after their incarceration. Women experience obstacles to obtaining jobs and housing upon release. Moreover, as discussed in this report, children are at higher risk of school-related problems and becoming delinquent.

In 2005, the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston issued a Research Report entitled *Women in Prison in Massachusetts: Maintaining Family Connections* (Kates & Ransford, 2005). This research project was based on the premise that having incarcerated mothers maintain contact with their children is one of the most important factors in the successful rehabilitation of women.

In this 2005 study, we reviewed national and state trends in female incarceration rates, conducted an extensive literature review, developed the Family Connections Framework model, and identified the types of policies and programs that could foster family connections. The report's findings led the Center's researchers to recommend further research.

At a forum where the report was released, invited expert panelists from several Massachusetts agencies discussed

ways to improve the family connections that are often severed due to maternal incarceration. Specific recommendations emphasized the need to expand current data collection procedures to obtain more accurate information about women and children affected by incarceration. Researchers also cited the importance of examining law enforcement and judicial policies and protocols affecting family connections. Recommendations also called for a nationwide overview of innovative practices related to the management of incarcerated mothers and the maintenance of family ties.

The interest generated by this 2005 report led to action by Massachusetts legislators. State Representative Kay Khan requested a research proposal from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy addressing the identified research needs. Representative Khan subsequently sponsored a budget item for the Center to "conduct a comprehensive study of resources and best practices that develop and strengthen the family connections of women inmates and their children." These funds came through the Massachusetts Department of Correction and became available to the Center in December 2005.

In January 2006, the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy established an advisory group to help inform and guide the project. The group was comprised of corrections specialists, academics, and child welfare experts. The researchers met with members of the Advisory Group periodically to update them on the project and to obtain guidance on the study's scope, methodology, and the research proposal. From this advisory group, a Child Welfare subgroup was formed.

This report will review the literature on incarcerated women with a particular emphasis on family relationships, provide an overview of incarcerated women in Massachusetts and their family ties, and specifically focus on mothers' concerns for their children. It will offer a review of "innovative practices" in the field and offer recommendations for improving the care of women in correctional facilities in Massachusetts with regard to women's family connections. The overall goal of the project is to identify existing needs, resources and challenges related to the development and maintenance of contact between incarcerated women in Massachusetts and members of their families, especially children.

Incarcerated Women and Their Children: Problems, Needs, and Opportunities

Today much more is known about the needs of incarcerated men than about incarcerated women. Even less is known about the needs of inmate mothers and their children. It is common knowledge that prisons for women have been modeled on prisons for men, with policies and programs based on the needs of males (Thompson & Loper, 2005; van Wormer & Kaplan, 2006). Some of the major problems unique to women in prison include the loss of children, medical neglect and abuse during incarceration, as well as sexual abuse of inmates related to males guarding females (van Wormer & Kaplan, 2006).

There are also differences in adjustment patterns to prison between women and men. There exist assumptions that women adjust to prison more readily than men and with less violence (Warren et al., 2004). While it is the case that there are lower levels of violence among women, it is not necessarily easier for women to adjust. Importantly, women have greater difficulty adjusting to separation from their children than do men (Warren et al.; 2004; Koban, 1983).

Problems of Incarcerated Mothers

There is wide variability in the parenting ability of mothers in general as well as those who are in prison, making it difficult to generalize about incarcerated mothers (Huebner & Gustafson, 2007). While not generally believed, it is important to recognize that parenting is a learned skill (Kauffman, 2001). In addition, it should be noted that the majority of women are incarcerated for crimes unrelated to parenting (Luke, 2002). Crimes associated with female incarceration are often explained by difficult social and economic conditions; in fact the majority of women in the criminal justice system are poor, single mothers (Moe & Ferraro, 2006).

There is little empirical research on stress of incarcerated mothers, especially stress related to their relationships with their children (Houck & Loper, 2002). While prisons in many countries try to promote parent-child bonds, the United States is the exception (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004). Experts agree that far more can be done to support mother and child relationships in United States correctional facilities (Covington, 2002; Moe & Ferraro, 2006).

It is controversial whether mothers find incarceration more stressful than those women who are not mothers (Houck & Loper, 2002; Tuerk & Loper, 2006). One argument is that women in prison do in fact experience high levels of distress but that studies do not reflect distinctions among women regarding the amount of stress experienced (Poehlmann, 2005a, 2005b; Tuerk & Loper, 2006). Other research supports the view that mothers have been found to experience greater distress than those who are not mothers, especially during the period of initial adjustment. For example, one study of maximum-security female inmates found that those who were mothers experienced more distress (Warren et al., 2004).

Incarcerated mothers face numerous problems and challenges. To begin with, often there is a judgment that incarcerated women are unfit, inadequate, and uncaring mothers (Kauffman, 2001; Teather, Evans & Sims, 1997). This stigma may exacerbate many other problems. Not surprisingly, many incarcerated mothers suffer from low self-esteem (Houck & Loper, 2002; van Wormer & Kaplan, 2006).

There are also a host of difficulties stemming from the fact that incarcerated mothers have lost control regarding the parenting process. When a woman is in prison, she is not in control over contact with her children (Halperin & Harris, 2004). Women may have limited contact and infrequent visits with their children; there may be legal custody issues. The typical incarcerated mother has significant stress and concerns about her children (Houck & Loper, 2002; Warren et al. 2004). For many, it may be a dramatic adjustment from daily life with children to no or infrequent contact. Incarcerated mothers may worry about the quality and type of care their children are receiving as well as reunification with their children. They may also be concerned about having to share the reasons for their incarceration with their children (Houck & Loper, 2002). Regardless of individual circumstances, retaining the status of mother has been found to allow incarcerated women to think about the future and perhaps to parent their children despite the lack of support from the criminal justice system (Moe & Ferraro, 2006).

Increasingly, more attention is being paid to mother-child relationships. This is due to the significant growth in rates of incarcerated women and increased numbers of children who are affected as a result. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 shifted the focus away from family reunification to the safety and health of children with an abuse or neglect history. ASFA requires states to file for legal termination of parental rights for children cared for out of the home for 15 of the previous 22 months (Luke, 2002). ASFA clearly has negative implications for incarcerated women, who on average serve sentences longer than 22 months (Dallaire, 2007; Hagan & Coleman, 2001). Thus, a mother incarcerated for an average length of time loses the right of reunification with her children.

Unfortunately, no federal, state, or local agencies have responsibility for obtaining information about or following children whose mothers are incarcerated. There are no policies to inform law enforcement, courts, or child protection agencies (Dallaire, 2007). The failure of correctional and child welfare bureaucracies to deal with mothers whose children are in foster care compromises the rights of women as parents (Halperin & Harris, 2004). Welfare and correctional institutions are coming to realize the importance of research on understanding the negative consequences for children of incarcerated women (Dallaire, 2007). Clearly, more effort needs to be made to identify and track families with an incarcerated parent (Halperin & Harris, 2004).

Guidelines are also lacking in determining whether it is in the best interests of children to visit incarcerated parents (Greenberg, 2006). Little research attention has been focused on important caregiving concerns regarding what children should and need to be told about the absent parent. These realities must be balanced with visitation guidelines developed by child welfare experts based on the knowledge that regardless of the neglect children may experience at the hands of their mother, there may well be desire for some form of contact. At the same time, of course, it is important to keep in mind that not all women want custody of their children nor is it always in the best interests of children to be reunited with or visit their incarcerated mothers.

Problems of Children of Incarcerated Mothers

Children of incarcerated parents have also received little research attention (Greenberg, 2006; Huebner & Gustafson, 2007). Estimates of children under the age of 18 with incarcerated mothers range from 160,000 to 200,000 (Dallaire, 2007). The report on women in prison issued by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, utilizing 1991 data, found that among male inmates, almost 90 percent of the children lived with their mother (Snell, 1994). For incarcerated mothers, the majority of their children lived with their grandparents. Only about 25 percent of children were living with their father.

In terms of the impact of female versus male incarceration on children, children are five times more likely to have to enter foster care when the mother is incarcerated than when their father is incarcerated (Krisberg & Temin, 2001).

Children of incarcerated mothers continue to have difficulties when they reach adulthood. Certainly, absence of the mother is important, but beyond that, maternal incarceration can have a great impact on these children emotionally (Huebner & Gustafson, 2007). Children of incarcerated mothers and fathers are significantly more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system (Greenberg, 2006; Huebner & Gustafson, 2007; Sharp et al., 1997/1998).

Female Inmate Classification

As indicated above, prison classification of women has been based on classification systems designed for men. Classification refers to a risk and custody assessment of the incarcerated to determine the most appropriate setting for the inmate while in prison. This includes a determination of whether the inmate is prone to violence and likely to try to cause harm to others. Early surveys of female inmate classification reflect a lack of attention to abuse, mental health problems, relationship issues, and parenting issues (Van Voorhis & Presser, 2001). Victimization as a child or adolescent - including sexual assault - is associated with greater problems in prison adjustment (Islam-Zwart & Vik, 2004; Warren et al., 2004). A classification system should reflect the fact that, overall, female offenders are less dangerous than male offenders (Van Voorhis & Presser, 2001). Massachusetts is one of only a few states with a custody classification system specifically for women.

The length of the prison sentence is also related to women's behavior while incarcerated. Those with medium and long-term sentences are more likely to have higher rates of behavioral problems and institutional infractions (Thompson & Loper, 2005). It may be that short-term inmates fear having to serve a longer term if they have behavior problems. One reason that long-term inmates may have behavior problems is because of limited contact with family members, especially children, during the time they serve their sentences (Thompson & Loper, 2005). Long-term inmates may have more anger than those short-term inmates who can look forward to reuniting sooner with their children and families. It is certainly understandable that shorter sentences for women may leave women more hopeful about reunification with family members, especially children. Longer sentences may put family reunification out of reach and can make it even more of a challenge for family members, including children, to maintain relationships with incarcerated women.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study was guided by a number of research questions. The findings presented here are based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered primarily from five sources: (1) Interviews with a random sample (n=48) of sentenced women held at MCI-Framingham, South Middlesex Correctional Center (SMCC), and the Women and Children's Program; (2) Massachusetts Department of Correction key personnel interviews; (3) observations of four mother/child(ren) visits; (4) an inventory of programming offered to women at MCI-Framingham, South Middlesex Correctional Center, and the Women and Children's Program; and (5) Massachusetts Department of Correction demographic and offense data for the interviewed inmates, inmates who refused or were unable to participate, and aggregate data for the sentenced female population in Massachusetts Department of Correction custody.

The questions addressed in this study included:

1. Who are the women currently incarcerated in the correctional institutions under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Correction? What are their demographic characteristics? What are their criminal histories?
2. How many of the women in the study are mothers of children younger than 18 years old and what are the demographics/characteristics of their children? How many of the women in the study gave birth while incarcerated?
3. What is the frequency and nature of contact between incarcerated women and their children and other family members? How do women experience and/or respond to contacts with relatives, including children, while incarcerated? What factors influence the nature and frequency of contact between mothers and children?
4. What kinds of issues and concerns face incarcerated women in Massachusetts, particularly in terms of their roles as parents?
5. What correctional policies and programs promote and enhance connections between incarcerated mothers and their children in Massachusetts? What resources are already in place to facilitate family connections? What changes might allow for increased quantity and/or quality of contact between incarcerated mothers and their children? What programs and practices – currently in place at the Massachusetts Department of Correction and elsewhere – can serve as “innovative practices” for maintaining family connections that benefit incarcerated women and their children and other family members?

It was determined that in order to gather the most information, a mixed-methods approach would yield the most accurate and comprehensive data. Additionally, while the initial version of the project proposal called for a system-wide study of female offenders in Massachusetts and their family connections – including women in county facilities – the scope of the study was limited to state-level facilities and did not include county-level institutions due to methodological considerations. Table 1 shows the data sources utilized for reach of the research questions listed above. The sources for the demographic and socioeconomic data were a combination of information provided by the Massachusetts Department of Correction and in-depth interviews with 48 sentenced inmates – 35 incarcerated at MCI-Framingham, 12 at South Middlesex Correctional Center, and one at the Women and Children's Program.

Data Sources

Data Provided by the Massachusetts Department of Correction

The Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) provided researchers with demographic and criminal history data for the inmates interviewed and for the inmates who elected not to participate in the study. The aggregate data allowed for the testing of sampling bias between the study sample and the population of sentenced female inmates in Massachusetts Department of Correction custody. In addition, DOC provided copies of the visiting records for study participants for the period of March 11, 2006 to October 13, 2007.

Inmate Interviews

In-depth inmate interviews were conducted to enable the researchers to gather information about mother/child relationships, opportunities for contact, and release and reunification plans. These qualitative interviews provided information about the lived experiences of female offenders and their families.

The inmate interview instrument developed was based upon the advisory group's feedback, expertise of the professionals in the Child Welfare Subgroup, and innovative practices in the field. These innovative practices were identified through an extensive literature review of federal, state and local correctional practices and model programs in the United States that address the needs of incarcerated women and their families, particularly the children of incarcerated mothers.

Interviews were conducted with women in Massachusetts Department of Correction custody serving county or state sentences. Researchers interviewed women at the following correctional facilities: MCI-Framingham, which

TABLE 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DATA SOURCES

Research Question	Data Sources
1. Who are the women currently incarcerated in the correctional institutions under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Correction? What are their demographic characteristics? What are their criminal histories?	Aggregate Data from the Department of Correction Inmate Interviews
2. How many of the women in the study are mothers of children younger than 18 years old and what are the demographics/characteristics of their children? How many of the women in the study gave birth while incarcerated?	Inmate Interviews
3. What is the frequency and nature of contact between incarcerated women and their children and other family members? How do women experience and/or respond to contacts with relatives, including children, while incarcerated? What factors influence the nature and frequency of contact between mothers and children?	Inmate Interviews Inmate/Children Visitation Observations Administrator Interviews Department of Correction Inmate Visiting Records
4. What kinds of issues and concerns face incarcerated women in Massachusetts, particularly in terms of their roles as parents?	Inmate Interviews Administrator Interviews
5. What correctional policies and programs promote and enhance connections between incarcerated mothers and their children in Massachusetts? What resources are already in place to facilitate family connections? What changes might allow for increased quantity and/or quality of contact between incarcerated mothers and their children? What programs and practices – currently in place in Massachusetts and elsewhere – can serve as “innovative practices” for maintaining family connections that benefit incarcerated women and their children and other family members?	Program Inventory and Analysis Administrator Interviews Inmate Interviews Literature Review Review of Innovative Practices

holds women serving both state and county sentences; South Middlesex Correctional Center for minimum status and pre-release female inmates; and the Women and Children’s Program, a pre-release, community-based residential treatment program for women in the custody of the Department of Correction who have substance abuse histories and who are pregnant, post-partum or parenting.

With the help of officials at MCI-Framingham, a random sample of the sentenced population was obtained in July 2007. Every tenth name was selected from the daily prison roster. The rationale for the random sample is that we did not know in advance which inmates had children. In order to achieve our goal of 40-45 interviews we requested the selection of 60 names from the roster. If the selected inmate was unavailable for an interview, the next name was used. The Treatment Coordinator then contacted the selected inmates and explained the study to them. If the inmate agreed to participate in the study, the Treatment Coordinator scheduled the interview. All interviews took place between July and September 2007.

Throughout the interview process a total of 65 women were contacted about participating in the study. The result was that, out of the sample, 48 women were interviewed and 17 women were not. Of the 17 women

who were not interviewed, two women did not show up and no explanation was given, eight women were either released or transferred to another facility, and seven women refused. Reasons for refusal included not wanting to leave their work assignment or class, not being interested in participating, or feeling that it would be too painful to discuss their children.

The researchers followed established procedures for the protection of human subjects and the project was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Massachusetts Boston. Approval was also received from the Massachusetts Department of Correction. In accordance with IRB-approved protocol, before each interview began, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to the inmate. The inmate was informed of her rights regarding confidentiality and informed consent and the consent form was signed. The inmate was told that she could refuse to respond to any or all questions and/or stop the interview at any time without any negative consequences to her and that information shared during the interview would be reviewed only by the research team and would not be shared with anyone at the prison. All inmate names in this report are pseudonyms.

Administrator Interviews

Five key female correctional personnel were interviewed regarding their knowledge of and concerns about female inmates and the women's connections to family members during incarceration. The interview guide included questions about the administrator's work history, experience and training, and perceptions of inmate contact with children and family members. The interview guide also addressed the kinds of challenges facing female inmates and the opportunities provided to inmates. Prior to the interviews, the administrators signed a consent form ensuring confidentiality. The correctional experience of these respondents, in settings with male and/or female inmates, ranged from six months to over twenty years.

All five correctional personnel respondents received training specifically geared for working with female inmates. All found training on the specific needs of incarcerated women to be helpful. One respondent teaches a three-day course on the needs of incarcerated women to other staff. The lack of training for staff on the needs of incarcerated women is a national issue cited in the literature (Covington & Bloom, 2006). Thus, training on the needs of incarcerated women in Massachusetts is an area in which the Massachusetts correctional system excels.

Observations of Mother/Child Visitation

Observations of visits between inmates and children were conducted so that researchers could document the range of behaviors and emotions that may arise during family visits. Four observation sessions of family visits were completed: three at MCI-Framingham and one at South Middlesex Correctional Center. Three of these visits occurred during the normal visiting hours and one of these was a previously scheduled Department of Social Services visit. Two researchers trained in observation methods attended these visits and watched the interactions in a discreet manner from a distance. Observations were recorded on the Visiting Observation Guide, which was designed with assistance from members of the Child Welfare Subgroup and from a review of innovative practices for promoting healthy visits between mother and child(ren) in female correctional facilities. Along with noting the dynamics of the visit, the researcher was able to make observations about the visiting area, available materials, food/snacks, and the overall environment.

Program Inventory and Analysis

One of the aims of this study was to document and analyze programs and services available to female offenders in the Massachusetts correctional system that help to promote and enhance connections between incarcerated women, their family members, and their children. As the largest facility for female offenders in the Commonwealth, MCI-Framingham served as the main institution for which program information was collected and analyzed. In order to gain an understanding of what programs are offered to the inmates at MCI-Framingham, researchers developed a program inventory instrument requesting information on the program name, program

type, eligibility criteria, type of personnel/agency offering program, frequency and duration of the program, average attendance and average completion rates. These forms were completed by individuals who administer each program and/or activity.

In addition, researchers utilized official DOC documents such as requests for responses for service contracts, the Department of Correction website, program and treatment brochures and booklets, as well as memoranda of understanding between agencies in order to more fully capture the scope and depth of programming related to family preservation. While reentry programs/services and health services address women's multifaceted needs and concerns, these service components are addressed in the analysis when they relate to the development and/or maintenance of family connections of female offenders.

Literature Review

The literature review informed the overall content of the research study, provided a broader context for understanding the needs of incarcerated women, family members, and children, and served as a basis of comparison with other correctional systems for women. The literature review allowed researchers to gauge the extent to which the issues faced by incarcerated women in Massachusetts are similar to the issues facing incarcerated mothers in other states. Another goal was to identify how contact between incarcerated mothers and their children affect the mother/child relationship and how such relationships may be supported and strengthened. The literature review covered a range of issues directly related to mother-child relations and more broadly addressed the characteristics of incarcerated women, especially mothers, and innovative practices in correctional programming for women to maintain connections with their children.

Sampling

As mentioned earlier, with the random selection procedure employed, a number of women chosen through the selection process did not participate in the study. Some inmates were either unable to or chose not to participate and researchers tested for any possible selection bias that might have occurred during the sampling process. Reasons for not participating included having a class or program that was previously scheduled, having a job assignment, or not being interested in participating. Staff in the Research Department at the Massachusetts Department of Correction provided researchers with demographic and criminal history data on all the inmates in the sampling frame, plus data on the female inmate population in Department of Correction custody on January 1, 2007 for a third comparison. Table 2 provides the results of this comparison.

Participants and non-participants are similar in age at incarceration with the mean age at 33.27 and 36.87, respectively. The same is true for age at the time of the interviews with a 35.92 mean age for participants and 38.47 for non-participants. The similarity between

participants and non-participants is also reflected in the mean number of children for both groups – the mean number of children for participants was 2.1 and 1.9 for non-participants.

However, there were significant differences by race between participants and non-participants. Participants were comprised of 23% Black women, 73% White, and 4% Other. Non-participants included 19% Black women, 75% White, and 6% Other. Non-participants were less likely to be Black, and very slightly more likely to be White than participants. The DOC Black female population closely resembled that of the participants at 21%. Almost one-third (31.3%) of the non-participants were Hispanic compared to only 16.7% of participants. The percent of Hispanic participants is almost identical to the 16% rate of the female prison population (16%). The higher rate of non-participant Hispanics may be due in part to the smaller sample size.

There were notable differences in the maximum and minimum sentences between participants and non-participants: for the maximum sentences, the mean number of sentenced months for the participants was 38.5 and for non-participants it was 25.3. The mean number of minimum sentenced months for the participants was 49.7 and for non-participants it was 38.4.

The numbers discussed here suggest that there are differences between the all three groups in terms of the offenses for which women were sentenced. Participants were more likely to be sentenced for a crime against a person while more non-participants were likely to be sentenced on a drug charge, as were women in the DOC population. None of the participants or non-participants were serving time for an “other” offense compared to 15% of the DOC female population. Of these 15% serving time for an “other offense,” the most common offenses were OUI, prostitution, and other motor vehicle offenses.

Data Limitations

While this mixed-methods study emphasizes interviews as a key data source, it is important to note that the study is based on a relatively small sample size for both the inmate interviews and correctional personnel interviews conducted. Furthermore, only one interview was conducted with an inmate at the Women and Children’s Program and a limited number took place with women at South Middlesex Correctional Center. With only four observations of mother-child visits conducted, observational data provide only a sense of the visiting environment and the kinds of interactions that took place during the four sessions observed.

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF PARTICIPANTS, NON-PARTICIPANTS, AND DOC POPULATION

	Participants N=48	Non- Participants N=15	DOC Population N=633
Average Age at Incarceration			
Minimum Age	19	21	17
Maximum Age	59	56	67
Mean	33.3	36.9	34.4
Average Age			
Minimum Age	22	22	18
Maximum Age	62	57	69
Mean	35.9	38.5	36.2
Race*	%	%	%
Black	22.9	18.8	21.0
White	72.9	75.0	79.0
Other	4.2	6.3	0
Hispanic (may be of any race)	16.7	31.3	16.0
# of Children			
Mean	2.1	1.9	Not Available
Min. Sentence			
Mean *** (months)	49.7	38.4	65.9
Max. Sentence			
Mean** (months)	38.5	25.3	42.6
Offense Type	%	%	%
Person	43.8	13.3	30.0
Drug	31.2	60.0	36.0
Property	22.9	26.7	18.0
Sex	2.1	0	2.0
Other	0	0	15.0

All Data from the Massachusetts Department of Correction, 2007

**Adds up to more than 100% because Hispanics are also reported in other categories*

***Excludes life sentences*

****Excludes life sentences and inmates with no minimum sentence*

The primary focus on MCI-Framingham in this study, particularly in terms of programming, may limit the capacity to be conclusive about Massachusetts Department of Correction institutions, programs, and services geared toward female offenders more generally. Finally, there were a significant number of missing responses for particular questions posed to inmates; this limited the analytic potential of collective responses to several interview questions.

WOMEN IN PRISON: THE UNITED STATES AND MASSACHUSETTS

The National Picture

Over the past few years, prison populations have been steadily increasing in the United States. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, prison populations at both the federal and state level increased by 2.8% from 2005 to 2006. Massachusetts witnessed a similar increase. From 2005 to 2006, there was a 3.1% increase in the total prison population.

The proportion of women in prison populations across the nation has increased even more dramatically than overall prison population increases. In 2006, the number of incarcerated women in the United States increased by 4.5% from the previous year. This is higher than the growth rate of 2.7% for males over the same period. In fact, the annual growth rate for the female offender population in the United States over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005 was just under 4%. In Massachusetts, there was a 3.5% increase in state and federal sentenced women from 2000 to 2005 and an even more dramatic 7.4% increase from 2005 to 2006. (Sabol, Couture & Harrison 2007; U.S. Department of Justice, 2007).

Table 3 provides actual numbers and growth rates for the years mentioned here. In 2004, the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that fewer women (34%) than men (53%) were sentenced for violent crimes in the United States. Women were more likely to be sentenced for property crime than men (31% and 20%, respectively) and for drug crimes (29% and 19%, respectively). All of these numbers speak to the recent influx of women into the correctional system (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005).

TABLE 3: PRISONERS UNDER STATE OR FEDERAL JURISDICTION, BY GENDER, 2000, 2005, AND 2006

Year	Male	Female
2000	1,298,027	93,234
2005	1,420,303	107,626
2006	1,458,363	112,498
Percent Change from 2005-2006	2.7	4.5
Annual Growth rate 2000-2005	1.8	2.9

Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2007

There is much speculation about what is driving the increase of women in the criminal justice system. Potential factors include the increase in mandatory sentencing for drug crimes, resulting in long prison sentences for women (Austin et al., 2007). Poor economic conditions can push women toward crime as they try to provide for their children. Other factors may be the result of attempts to reduce gender bias in the courts. These include man-

datory arrests of both parties in domestic disputes and changing the definition of assault to include less violent offenses (Austin et al., 2007; Hagan & Coleman, 2001).

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, women serving time in prison generally reflect the demographic breakdown of women in the United States. Nationally, in 2006, 48% of women sentenced to more than one year in prison were White, 28% Black, and 17% were Hispanic (Sabol et al.; 2007; U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). Since 2000, the percentage of White females incarcerated nationally has risen from 2.5% in 2000 to 3.1% in 2005 to 3.3% in 2006. The percentage of Hispanic women also steadily increased from 1.0% to 1.1% to 1.2% during the same time period. During this time, the percentage of Black women incarcerated decreased from 2.4% to 2.0% to 1.9%.

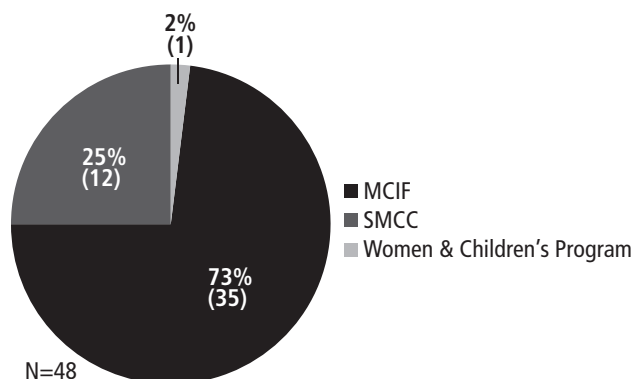
Massachusetts Correctional Facilities for Women

Massachusetts is home to the oldest operational female correctional institution in the United States. MCI-Framingham, located approximately 22 miles from Boston, is a medium security facility that houses women serving state sentences from across the Commonwealth along with women serving county sentences, women awaiting trial from counties without facilities for women and civilly committed women. According to information provided by the Massachusetts Department of Correction, the prison was designed to hold 452 inmates, but on January 1, 2008, the count at the facility was 644.

If eligible, inmates can transfer to South Middlesex Correctional Center, which holds minimum security and pre-release female offenders. South Middlesex Correctional Center helps these offenders transition back into society, allowing eligible inmates to work while participating in programs such as substance abuse treatment. The Women and Children's Program is a pre-release, community-based residential treatment program for women in the custody of the Department of Correction who have substance abuse histories and who are pregnant, postpartum or parenting. Women who are in this program receive substance abuse treatment, parenting classes, and other services while working to transition into the community.

Of the 48 sentenced female inmates interviewed, the vast majority (N=35) were located at MCI-Framingham, 12 at South Middlesex Correctional Center, and one respondent was at the Women and Children's Program in Westborough (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF INTERVIEWS



Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

Table 4 provides an overview of demographic data collected, including racial and ethnic background, educational attainment, age, and marital status. Twenty-one percent of the women interviewed were between 30 and 34-years-old and the average age at incarceration was 33-years-old. Caucasians were the largest racial group at 73%, and Hispanic women comprised 17% of the total number of interview respondents, while 23% were Black.

Forty-four percent of the women interviewed had either completed high school, earned a GED, or attended college. This educational attainment rate is lower than the Department of Correction's reported rate of 52% for sentenced females in January 2007, but is higher than the national rate. On the national level, in 1997, 36% of female state prisoners in the United States had a high school diploma or higher (BJS, 2003) compared to only 32% of men (Greenfield & Snell, 1999).

TABLE 4: INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

Race*	N	%	Age (September 2007)*		
				N	%
Black	11	22.9	22-24 years	8	16.8
White	35	72.9	25-29 years	6	12.5
Other	2	4.2	30-34	10	20.8
Hispanic**	8	16.7	35-39	7	14.6
			40-44	5	10.4
			45-49	7	14.6
			50-64	5	10.4
Education*	N	%	Marital Status***		
				N	%
< 9 th grade	1	2.1	Married	10	20.8
9 th to 11 th	16	33.3	Divorced	9	18.8
12 th or GED	14	29.2	Separated	2	4.2
13/14 years	4	8.3	Widowed	2	4.2
4 years college	1	2.1	Never Married	21	43.8
Master's Degree	2	4.2	Missing	4	8.3
Missing	10	20.8			

N=48

* Data from the Department of Correction, 2007

** Hispanic may be of any race.

*** Data from CWPPP interviews, 2007

Twenty-one percent (N=10) of respondents were married at the time of the interview. As indicated in Table 4, a much higher percentage, 44% (N=21) reported they were never married. This corresponds with national statistics indicating that adult female offenders are more likely than women in the overall population to never have been married (Greenfield & Snell, 1999).

Offense Characteristics and Lengths of Sentences

Fifty percent of the interviewees were serving a county sentence and 50% were serving a state sentence. A county sentence is two and one-half years or less and a state sentence has a minimum and maximum amount of time based on statutory requirements. Forty-four percent of those interviewed were serving time for a crime against a person, 31% for a drug crime, 23% for a property crime, and 2% for a sex crime. In general, women interviewed in this study were serving relatively short-term sentences; the majority of respondents were serving a maximum prison sentence of two years to fewer than three years. Figure 2 and Table 5 provide more detailed breakdowns of offense categories and lengths of prison sentence.

As stated above, the Department of Correction also provides care and custody for female offenders from several counties with no female correctional facilities, including pre-trial detainees and those sentenced. In fact, a significant proportion of the female population in the Department of Correction are either pretrial detainees or serving House of Correction sentences. On January 1, 2007, there were 587 women criminally sentenced in Department of Correction custody. Of these 587 women, 338 were being held on a county sentence compared to 249 women who were being held on a state sentence.

Given that so many women are serving county sentences, it is important to recognize the implications of this situation on efforts to foster the development and maintenance of family relationships of incarcerated women. According to the Department of Correction, 92% of criminally sentenced women released from DOC custody in 2007 were serving county sentences. Seventy-six percent of these women served less than 6 months with 4.7 months the average amount of time served - a relatively short amount of time in order to complete programs integral to positive reentry into the community. Moreover, given the high turnover rate of women held at MCI-Framingham, it may be difficult to ensure that women can take advantage of all programming opportunities available at the facility. In addition, many of these county women may be far from their families and the community to which they will return when released from prison thus making it difficult to build or strengthen family relationships. In fact, in 2004, the Governor's Commission on Corrections Reform called for an examination of the need for a stand-alone correctional facility for women in western Massachusetts, indicating that this will not only help to ease the overcrowding experienced at MCI-Framingham, but "will provide female offenders from the

western counties with better access to local post release programs and services for housing, education, employment, counseling and treatment.”

Similar to the substantial percentage of women serving county sentences who are at Framingham, one half of the women we interviewed were being held on a county sentence. The women in our survey self-reported their last place of residence in the following counties: Worcester (18%), Middlesex (15%), Suffolk (15%), Bristol (12.5%), Norfolk (8%), Hampden (6%) and Plymouth (6%) followed by Barnstable, Berkshire, and Essex at 2% each. The remaining 13% either were from out of state or did not provide their last city/town of residence.

FIGURE 2: OFFENSE CATEGORIES OF INTERVIEWEES

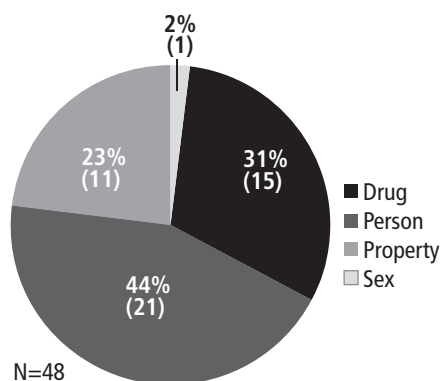


TABLE 5: MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM SENTENCES OF INTERVIEWEES

Minimum Sentence Length	N	%	Maximum Sentence Length	N	%
1 to < 2 Years	1	2.1	< 1 Year	8	16.7
2 to < 3 Years	6	12.5	1 to < 2 Years	9	18.8
3 to < 4 Years	5	10.4	2 to < 3 Years	12	25.0
4 to < 5 Years	4	8.3	3 to < 4 Years	5	10.4
5 to < 6 Years	2	4.2	4 to < 5 Years	1	2.1
7 to < 8 Years	1	2.1	5 to < 6 Years	5	10.4
10 to < 11 Years	1	2.1	6 to < 7 Years	1	2.1
Life	3	6.3	7 to < 8 Years	2	4.2
No minimum	25	52.1	9 to < 10 Years	1	2.1
			10 to < 11 Years	1	2.1
			Life	3	6.3

N= 48, Department of Correction, 2007

INCARCERATED WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILY CONNECTIONS

While the primary focus of this study is on female inmates' connections with their children, incarcerated mothers' contact with family members other than children is important to examine. The literature on incarcerated women suggests that maintaining and fostering familial relations can help women serving time in a number of ways. Having contact with parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, etc. can make the time in prison more bearable and may give inmates hope for the future after prison release (Greenberg, 2006). For some women, maintaining contact with family members may mean access to money for extra personal care and food items that otherwise they would have to go without. The relationship an inmate has with her family can also affect the amount of contact she has or does not have with her children, particularly since family members such as grandparents and spouses often serve as caregivers for the children during incarceration and frequently have custody of the children (Hagan & Coleman, 2001; Houck & Loper, 2002; Sharp et al., 1997/1998).

Contact between inmates and their family and friends can take place in three ways: through actual visits to the prison, through phone calls, and through letter writing. The Department of Correction has established clear policies regarding all of these forms of contact.

Mail is the most accessible form of contact. According to Department of Correction policy, there is no limit placed on the number of letters an inmate can send or receive. In the case of indigent inmates, the Department of Correction allows them to mail three letters per week free of charge and an unlimited number of letters to court officials, also free of charge. In all cases, an inmate must get prior approval to send mail to an inmate at another institution.

TABLE 6: TYPE OF CONTACT WITH FAMILY OTHER THAN CHILDREN IN MA

Any type of Contact	N	%
Yes	42	87.5
No	6	12.5
Visits**		
Yes	31	73.8
No	11	26.2
Phone**		
Yes	37	88.1
No	5	11.9
Mail**		
Yes	39	92.9
No	3	7.1

*N=48 women

**N=42 women who have this type of contact

Telephone contact is more restrictive than mail contact. When the interviews for this study were conducted, all outgoing calls had to be "collect" and no incoming calls to inmates were allowed. According to their website, the Department of Correction has recently implemented a prepaid calling card system whereby friends and relatives can setup an account for an inmate.

Contact with Family Members

The vast majority (almost 88%) of the women interviewed indicated they had some form of contact with family members living in Massachusetts. Mail was the most prevalent form of contact with almost 92.9% of those interviewed saying they had some mail contact with family members. Telephone contact was the next most common type at 88.1%. Nearly three-quarters of women (73.8%) said they have had at least one visit with a family member while at Framingham. Table 6 provides

TABLE 7: FAMILY IN CONTACT WITH INTERVIEWEE

Any Type of Contact	%	N
Mother	80.4	37
Sibling	63.0	29
Close Friend	41.3	19
Other Family*	37.0	17
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	15.2	7
Father	15.2	7
Spouse/Life-Partner	15.2	7
Grandparent	13.0	6
Older Child (over 18)	2.2	1
Who Visits	%	N
Mother	45.7	21
Sibling	32.6	15
Other family*	15.2	7
Grandparent	13.0	6
Father	10.9	5
Close Friend	10.9	5
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	10.9	5
Spouse	6.5	3
Older Child (over 18)	2.2	1

N=46 (women who have contact with family members living in and outside of Massachusetts); total adds up to more than 100% because interviewees had contact with more than one family member.

*includes aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws

a breakdown of the types of contacts with family members.

Table 7 shows that the majority of the women we interviewed (80.4%) reported having some form of contact with their mother and that the most frequent adult visitor was the inmate's mother. Just over 45% of the women had at least one visit from her mother while incarcerated. Almost one-third (32.6%) of the women reported having at least one visit from a sibling. Fifteen percent of the women reported having at least one visit from an extended family member including aunts, uncles, and cousins and 13% reported visits from grandparents. Visits from fathers, close friends, and boyfriend/girlfriends were less common, at almost 11% each, followed by visits from spouses and older children.

As Figure 3 indicates, there is a significant difference in the amount of contact the women we interviewed reported having with family members depending on their length of sentence. Women serving sentences from 2 years to less than 5 years have more overall contact with family members living in Massachusetts. Those women with 10 to less than 20-year sentences, had the least amount of contact with family while incarcerated and reported no phone contact.

In addition to using data on contact and visiting provided through inmate interviews, researchers examined visiting records of the inmates interviewed in order to document the number of actual visits experienced by the women and who visited the women.

The Department of Correction provided visiting records kept by custodial staff for 26 women incarcerated at MCI-Framingham who were interviewed for this study. The review of visiting records was for visits the women received between March 11, 2006 and September 25, 2007. Also reviewed were nine visiting records of women incarcerated at the South Middlesex Correctional Center (SMCC) who received visits between February 23, 2007

and October 13, 2007. Two women at SMCC did not receive any visits.

While these are limited data sources, they do provide an overview of who is most likely to visit women in prison. These data, however, do not address the characteristics of the incarcerated women who are the most likely to receive visits. Ten of the 26 women (39%) at MCI-Framingham received visits from their mothers; the frequency and number of visits from mothers varied. Two women each received one visit from their mothers and one woman received as many as 23 visits. While the overall average of visits to women at MCI-Framingham by their mothers is five, this is skewed by the one mother who made 15 more visits than the next most frequently visiting mother (eight visits). At SMCC, five of seven women received visits from their mothers. One woman received just one visit from her mother and one woman received four, the highest number of visits. Altogether, the data from MCI-Framingham and SMCC for 33 incarcerated women show that 15 (45%) of the women received visits from their mothers.

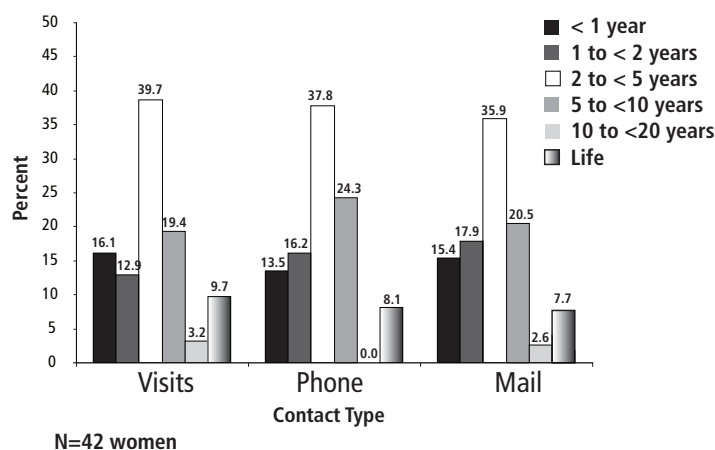
Only three of the 26 women (12%) at MCI-Framingham received visits from their fathers. One woman received four visits, another received eight visits, and the third woman received 10 visits from her father. No woman at SMCC received visits from their fathers. At both facilities, a total of three women (9%) received visits from their fathers.

Perhaps most significantly, friends were the most frequent visitors to this sample of incarcerated women. Seventeen of the 26 women (65%) at MCI-Framingham received visits from friends. Some corrections officers further delineated the category of friend into boyfriend—three visitors were characterized as boyfriends. However, it remains unclear whether more visitors listed as “friends” were actually boyfriends or girlfriends. Four of the seven women at SMCC received visits from friends; it was noted that another woman received visits from her fiancé. Overall, 22 incarcerated women (67%) received visits from friends.

Ten women of the 26 at MCI-Framingham (39%) received visits from their children. No woman at SMCC received visits from her children. These visiting records may not be comprehensive or indicative of all children's visits since visits arranged between incarcerated mothers and their children by the Department of Social Services may be recorded elsewhere. Adding together the visiting records for both facilities, less than one-third of incarcerated women (30%) received visits from their children.

It was not possible to tell from the MCI-Framingham visiting records whether the children were younger or grown. One woman was noted to have been visited three times by her son, three times by a child whose sex was not designated in the visiting records, and one visit from her grandchild. This is a clear indicator that this woman's children were older. Another woman received four visits

FIGURE 3: TYPE OF FAMILY CONTACT BY MAXIMUM SENTENCE LENGTH



from her son and two visits from her grandson, again showing her son was not a young child. Six of the 10 women at MCI-Framingham received only one visit from their children. Only one woman received a substantial number of visits from her children: 19 visits from her son and 24 visits from her daughter between September 2006 and August 2007.

With regard to other family visits, only one woman at MCI-Framingham received visits from her husband (24 visits) and another woman received two visits from her ex-husband. Three women at SMCC received visits from their husbands. Other infrequent visitors included aunts, uncles, grandparents, brothers, and sisters.

This snapshot of visits reflects that two-thirds of incarcerated women who received visits were most likely to receive visits from friends. Less than one-third received visits from their children, while close to half (45%) of inmates' mothers visited. Overall, the visiting records suggest that most women experienced fairly limited visiting which may be an indication of damaged family relationships and/or the difficulties of trying to maintain family connections while incarcerated.

In discussing the family visits received while incarcerated, a number of women offered excuses for why family members are not able to visit at all or visit more often. The most frequent factor cited was that family members are too busy. Tanya who is serving a five to six-year sentence indicated that she would like her mother to visit, but that her mother is too busy apparently because she also has to visit Tanya's father in prison. Inez would like her sister to come visit but indicated she is a busy single parent and is happy she is able to write. Nicole's boyfriend works and does not have a lot of time.

Other women explained that transportation served as an obstacle to visiting by family members. Nicole, whose mother does not visit, indicated that her mother was "really sick," and "can't get a ride." Another woman, Polly, serving a life sentence said her mother visits infrequently because she does not drive. Julia said that most of her family lives far and it costs too much money to come visit. Josie's sister does not drive so she cannot come to visit.

Aside from financial factors, some explained that severed ties and/or rejection of the incarcerated woman served as barriers to keeping the family ties going during time spent in prison. For one woman serving time for a drug charge, her family does not believe she has changed. In another case, a woman spoke of her mother who will not forgive her. Ana said she is "a loner" and has "burned all of her bridges" and Joanne's mother has severed ties with her. Tiffany's mother is apparently angry with her since she violated parole and is back in prison.

Interviewees were asked to respond to open-ended questions about the challenges of keeping in touch with their families while in prison. Money was clearly the major challenge for most of the women. For example, one

woman, Patsy, suggested that money was the biggest challenge to staying in touch with her fiancée as phone calls cost a lot. Another explained that her family had no money for gas as her home is two hours from the prison. Gwen indicated that there was not enough money for envelopes and stamps, though she made no mention if this was because her family did not send her money. Limited financial resources proved to be a substantial barrier for maintaining contact with family members.

It is likely that the kinds of obstacles cited by women such as problems with phone access, financial concerns, and physical distance of family members, make it hard for family members to visit. However, it may be that for some of the women interviewed, admitting that family members do not want to visit or have any contact with them may be difficult, embarrassing and/or painful. An additional factor to consider is that there may be family members who are unable to visit because they too are in prison or have criminal records. Although clearly disappointed about the infrequency of contact with family members, some women expressed gratitude that someone sends them money. Generally, women's comments about the nature of the contact they have with their family members suggest that family connections are very meaningful to women during their period of incarceration.

As indicated earlier, interviews with administrators at MCI-Framingham addressed the topic of the perceived extent of contact between inmates and their family members. Key correctional personnel explained that they had limited knowledge of the scope and depth of inmate contact with family members. Two administrators estimated that most women received a family visit once every two weeks or once a month. Two others stated they did not know how many visits, on average, female inmates had from family members or friends.

Furthermore, from the perspective of administrators interviewed, there was little awareness of how often women have phone or mail contact with family members, including children. Administrators had varied responses about the frequency of telephone and mail contact. One individual thought that most women make phone calls daily and another said that inmates call family members about once a week. Finally, another individual stated that she had no idea about phone use. When asked about mail correspondence, two administrative personnel thought that inmates received mail more than once a week and the rest of the administrative officials explained that they did not know about the frequency of mail contact.

In general, the correctional personnel interviews demonstrated that staff members thought it was extremely or very important for female inmates to receive visits from adult family members. One correctional official emphasized the importance of having a healthy relationship with an adult family member. According to this official, if family relationships were strained prior to incarceration, they may or may not improve over time. Several administrators interviewed noted how an inmate's history of

substance abuse or mental health problems could impact family relationships. Officials emphasized the importance of emotional support provided to inmates by adult family members, including support that entails motivation and hope for the future. Those interviewed also cited the importance of financial and emotional support from family members upon the inmate's return to the community.

Furthermore, correctional personnel were asked about the differences between male and female inmates and responses very much mirrored information obtained in the literature review. Key personnel stated that women express more concern about their children and are more likely to expect to be reunited with them. Women are more likely to have mental health issues and early traumatic experiences including abuse and neglect. In the words of one respondent, "women have many more complex issues and are more vocal about them."

Overall, correctional personnel reported the same kinds of problems with sustaining family connection of incarcerated women that have been identified across the United States. These problems include relationship difficulties prior to incarceration, substance abuse, and mental health problems.

While custodial staff keeps records of all inmate visits, visiting information may not necessarily be shared with treatment professionals working with inmates and, as a result, may not be considered in treatment programming. Better communication between custodial and treatment staff would assure that treatment professionals know who is visiting the inmates. This would provide an important opportunity to engage with family members to support inmate treatment and to work together in planning for community reentry.

Mothers Serving Time

Along with the significant increase in female offender populations both nationally and in Massachusetts comes the concomitant increase of children who have a mother serving time in a correctional facility. For example, from 1990 to 1999, the number of children with a parent in prison increased from 936,500 to almost 1,498,800. According to a 2000 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 1999 there were an estimated 667,900 fathers and 53,600 mothers incarcerated (Mumola, 2000). These figures are especially alarming when one considers that more mothers than fathers are the primary caretakers of the children and when they are imprisoned, the children and other family members are greatly affected.

Yet statistics only go so far in describing the current status of women in prison – especially when it comes to what may be emotional and complex experiences as related to inmates' children or other family members. Several scholars have interviewed female inmates about important topics related to their experiences, concerns, and needs (Hanlon et al., 2005; Islam-Zwart et al., 2007; Thompson & Loper, 2005; Vik & Rawlins, 2007). However, those studies that have focused on family relationships,

and particularly maternal-child relationships – what we describe as "parenting from prison" – remind us that much more research is needed (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004; Houck & Loper, 2002; Moe & Ferraro, 2006; Poehlmann, 2005a; Surratt, 2003). Moreover, only limited research on the experiences and treatment needs of incarcerated women in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been conducted. The inmate interviews at the heart of this research project provide in-depth insights from women themselves about the complicated issues related to maternal incarceration and the obstacles and challenges involved in parenting from prison.

The Children: Who They Are

Among the women interviewed, more than two-thirds (69%) had children 18 years old and younger. Of the women who had children under 18 years of age, 46% had one child, 27% had two children, and another 27% had three or more children. The mean number of children was two. Twenty percent of the children were between the ages of 10 and 12 and another 20% were in the 13-15 year old range, with just 3% under one-year-old. Table 8 provides a breakdown of the numbers and ages of children of study participants.

TABLE 8: NUMBERS AND AGES OF INMATES' CHILDREN

Has child(ren) under 18 years of age*	N	%
Yes	33	68.8
No	15	31.2
# Children per participant**	N	%
1 child	15	45.5
2 children	9	27.3
3 or more children	9	27.3
Age of children***	N	%
under 12 months old	2	3.0
1-3 yrs	10	15.2
4-6 yrs	9	13.6
7-9 yrs	8	12.1
10-12 yrs	13	19.7
13-15 yrs	13	19.7
16 yrs and up	8	12.1
Not reported	3	4.5

*N=48 women

**N= 33 women

***N=66 children

Inmate Experiences of Inquiries about Children upon Arrest and Afterwards

We asked the women questions about whether or not they were asked if they had children at any point from their arrest to when they were taken into Department of Correction custody. Only 21% of the interviewees said the arresting officer asked about children while 60% said

they were not asked. Another 10% could not remember if asked by the police about their children. In terms of post-arrest inquiries, 25% (12) of the women indicated that they were asked by a court official if they had children. Of these, five women reported being asked by the judge, three by a probation officer, one by a court officer, one by an intake officer, and one official was unspecified. Thirty-seven percent of the women interviewed said they were not asked by a court official, and another 15% could not recall if they were asked. Comparatively, half of the women said they had been asked by Department of Correction staff if they had children. It is important to note here that, while these figures suggest that many women were not asked about children, some women who enter the facility are in the process of withdrawal from drugs or otherwise impaired. Therefore, it is possible that some women may not remember being asked. Overall, more of the interviewees recalled being asked about children by the staff at Framingham than by other officials before admission to the facility.

The Children: Where They Live

Research on the children of incarcerated parents indicates that such children experience a variety of caregiving and residential arrangements - which parent is incarcerated makes a difference in what happens to the children during incarceration (Sharp et al., 1997/1998). When fathers are incarcerated, the majority of children who are not already living with their mothers live either with their mothers or grandparents (Johnson & Waldfogel, 2003). When mothers are incarcerated, most children reside with grandparents or other family members. Children of incarcerated women are also more likely to be placed in foster care than children of incarcerated men (Hagan & Coleman, 2001; Johnson & Waldfogel, 2003). Where the child(ren) lives during his/her mother's incarceration may affect how the child reacts to losing his or her mother, if only temporarily.

In addition, children of incarcerated parents face uncertainty about their own futures and must live with the stigma associated with parental incarceration (Travis & Waul, 2003 as cited in Greenberg, 2006). They are more at risk for anxiety, anger, depression, sleep problems, and attention disorders (Snyder, Carlo, & Coats Mullins, 2001). Children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to experience substance abuse, poor grades, and expulsion from school (Sharp et al., 1997/1998). They are at significantly greater risk for juvenile delinquency and incarceration when they reach their adult years (Greenberg, 2006; Huebner & Gustafson, 2007). Given the limited research conducted on the topic of maternal incarceration and effects on children, little is known about the

quality of care children receive while their mothers are incarcerated (Hagan & Coleman, 2001). What is known is that children who experience acceptance and warmth from their caregivers while their mothers are incarcerated have fewer behavior problems (Mackintosh, Myers & Kennon, 2006). However, one study found that 63% of children had insecure relationships with their incarcerated mothers and caregivers (Poehlmann, 2005b). Access to financial resources may also affect the caregiving of children of incarcerated parents. Those caring for children may in fact not receive adequate financial support; this is especially the case if caregivers are relatives (Hagan & Coleman, 2001).

In order to examine the living arrangements of children before and during maternal incarceration, we asked female inmates with children under 18 years old about the residential situations of their children. As indicated earlier, 33 women had children and the total number of children among these inmates was 66. Twenty-one of these children were six-years-old or younger at the time of the interview, 21 were 7-years-old to 12-years-old, 21 were 13 to 18 years old and three had unreported ages. The majority of the women interviewed reported living with at least one of their children before being incarcerated. Prior to incarceration, a small percentage (4.5%) of children lived with their fathers and just 1.5% lived with both parents. Table 9 provides a detailed breakdown of children's living arrangements both before and during maternal incarceration.

TABLE 9: RESIDENTIAL SITUATIONS OF CHILDREN BEFORE AND DURING MATERNAL INCARCERATION

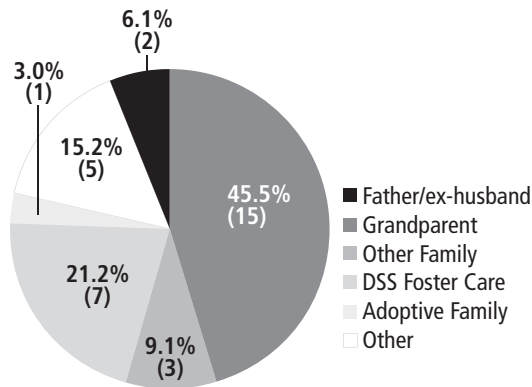
Before Incarceration	N	%
Inmate	33	50.0
Father	3	4.5
Joint Custody	4	6.1
Grandparent	10	15.2
Other Family	2	3.0
DSS/Foster Care	5	7.6
Adoptive Family	3	4.5
Other *	6	9.1
Now	N	%
Father/Ex-husband	9	13.6
Grandparent	26	39.4
Other Family	5	7.6
DSS/Foster Care	11	16.7
Adoptive Family	8	12.1
Other **	7	10.6

*includes: no answer, unclear response, N/A

** includes: unknown whereabouts, no answer, N/A, unclear response, DYS (1)

N= 66 children

FIGURE 4: WHERE CHILDREN WHO LIVED WITH MOTHER BEFORE INCARCERATION WENT TO LIVE AFTER INCARCERATION



N=33 children who lived with mother before her incarceration

It is important to note that some women did not have custody of their children and that a significant number of children were in the custody of a grandparent and/or the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS). More specifically, at the time of the interview, three women had custody of at least one child, four women shared joint custody with their child's father, 17 had at least one child in the custody of a grandparent, and 12 women had a child either in DSS custody or adopted by another family.

As is the case nationally, once mothers in this study experienced incarceration, children primarily went to live with their grandparents, fathers, or were placed in foster homes by the Department of Social Services (DSS). This is especially true of the children who lived with their mothers prior to incarceration. Among the children of the women we interviewed, 33 lived with their mother before incarceration. As Figure 4 demonstrates, almost 46% of those children who lived with their mothers went to live with a grandparent when the mother was incarcerated, 21% went into the custody of DSS, and another 6% resided with their father. Figure 4 provides a detailed breakdown of the residential situations of children who lived with their mothers prior to incarceration; this figure illustrates that grandparents most often took responsibility for their grandchildren.

Grandparents also experienced an increase in caregiving responsibilities for all the children in the study no matter where they lived prior to the mother's incarceration. Figure 5 shows the dramatic increase in caregiving responsibilities especially among the grandparents. There was a 24% increase in the number of children who lived with a grandparent(s) after the mother was incarcerated. This is followed by an increase of 9% in children living with fathers or in DSS custody after the mother was incarcerated.

While grandparents very frequently become the caretakers of children of incarcerated parents, their needs and challenges are often not addressed (Dallaire, 2007). For

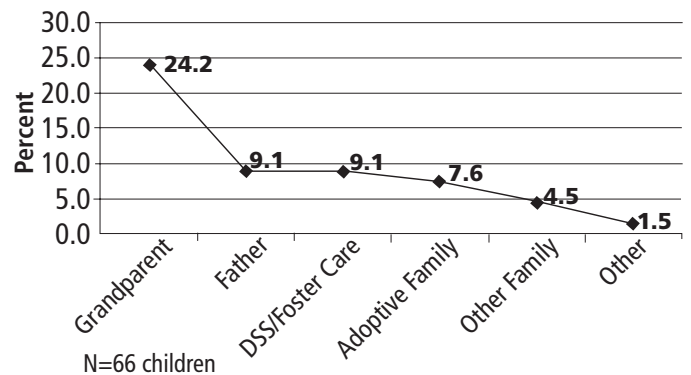
example, often overlooked are the economic hardships of women's incarceration experienced by remaining family members or other caregivers (Sharp et al., 1997/1998).

Where the Children Are: Mothers Assess their Children's Living Situations

In addition to questions about the living situations of their children, inmates were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with current living arrangements and why. Women's responses tended to emphasize particular aspects of the living situation and their comments may be categorized according to which aspect(s) of the living situation they discussed during the interview.

Some women discussed the living accommodations of the child(ren), including talking about the residential and/or physical environment, external factors such as quality of their school or school system, and the quality of care the child was receiving from the primary caregiver. In this way, women's comments were oriented around the resources provided to the child(ren) due to their particular living situation. Alternatively, some women addressed how the child was feeling or responding to their current living situation – these women therefore tended to focus on children's reactions and/or feelings. Finally, several women talked about the caregiver's ability to meet the needs of the child(ren). As the following analysis demonstrates, some mothers appreciated their children's caregivers, some were dissatisfied, and some were ambivalent about the caregivers.

FIGURE 5: INCREASE IN CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES



N=66 children

Living Arrangements

The first main theme addressed by women related to the actual living arrangements of their child(ren). For a number of women, safety emerged as an important consideration when evaluating the living arrangements of their child(ren). References to safety were most common when a child lived with a family member. All but two of the women who cited safety as an issue explained that their children were safe where they were living. Patsy, a woman serving time for a drug offense was grateful that her children, ages 15, 10, and 3 years old, were safe and living in a nice environment. Patsy had given power-of-attorney to her mother and the children live with her in Florida.

In addition to references to safety and the overall living environment of their child(ren), several women indicated a sense of comfort that their children were attending a good school. Luz was pleased that her child lives with a grandparent in a town with a good school system and Patsy mentioned that her children attend a good school in Florida. Additional reasons that women were satisfied with the living situations of their child(ren) included having the child live near friends or reside in a “good” or “comfortable” home. As detailed here, women’s comments about the living environment of their child(ren) indicates that, for several women interviewed, what mattered most to women was safety, comfort, and access to a good education.

Caregiving: Situation and Quality

Incarcerated mothers also discussed the commitment of the caregiver and the quality of care when responding to questions about the level of satisfaction with children’s living arrangements. For example, several women openly expressed appreciation for the child’s grandparent assuming the parenting role. A few mothers whose child(ren) were residing with a grandparent even remarked that the child was living in the best place possible and explained that the grandparent was a good provider. A few women said that if it were not for the grandparent, the child would have had to go into a state-sponsored care situation such as foster care through DSS. Maria, a mother of an 11-year-old girl and a 3-year-old boy who both live with their grandparents, said her kids have everything they want and she is happy that they “have not gone to the state.” Similarly, Josie remarked that her mother has gone out of her way to give her 3-year-old daughter a good life and her child would have gone into DSS custody if her mother hadn’t taken over the care of her daughter.

For the most part, many women whose children were residing with grandparent(s) seemed grateful to the grandparents for providing a good home for the children. However, one woman whose 10-year-old son lived with the paternal grandparents explained that she was not satisfied with the living situation of her children. Delaney, a mother of three who were all in different homes,

including one DSS placement, commented that although she felt she could not take care of her son, she wished the grandparents would allow her to have contact with him. While her son did live with his grandparents before she was incarcerated, it is unclear if Delaney had contact with him at that point.

Of the five mothers who had children in DSS care, at least two were pleased with this situation. For example, Margo, who had one child and was serving a two-year sentence, commented that her older child had been with the same good family for one and a half years. Another mother expressed gratitude that both of her children are together now that they are in DSS custody and that their foster mother is very good at sending pictures. Conversely, Terry, whose children are in a DSS foster home was concerned that her children were not receiving the care they deserved. Delaney thought DSS should be more accommodating to her even though she felt her other son under the care of grandparents was getting good care. Her third child was adopted and she claims this happened behind her back and DSS has since told her it was “out of their hands.” Delaney was not alone in her dissatisfaction with an adoptive situation.

Specifically, a few women who were displeased with an adoptive situation referred to the extent to which they maintained contact with their child(ren). Joan had a 9-year-old boy who was adopted but since it was a closed adoption, she had no idea where he is or how he is doing. Joan did have limited contact with another daughter who was also adopted through DSS.

While the Massachusetts Department of Social Services and grandparents served as the primary caregiving mechanisms for children, six children (10%) went to live with their fathers when their mothers were incarcerated. Women expressed varying levels of satisfaction with paternal living situations. Inez, whose two children, ages 6 and 13, were living with their father commented that she was happy with the arrangement. Inez specifically mentioned that he is a “good father” and “always there” for the kids.

Yet two women were not happy that their children were living with their fathers. Joanne said that two of her children, ages 7 and 9, currently living with their father, were unsafe unless they are with DSS. Both of these children lived with Joanne before her incarceration. Joanne also has a younger child who lives with her cousin in New Hampshire, but she is unhappy with this situation because her cousin wants to adopt the 3-year-old girl. Betsy, who was serving a one-year sentence, had a 13-year-old child living with the child’s father. The father uses drugs and the child had been suspended many times from school. Betsy claimed she filed a 51A report.¹ because of her concerns for her child’s safety, but the father was able to hide his drug habit from DSS. She also had another child who lives with grandparents and was apparently doing well, according to Betsy.

¹ 51A Form: Department of Social Service Report of Child(ren) Alleged to be Suffering from Serious Physical or Emotional Injury by Abuse or Neglect

How the Children are Doing

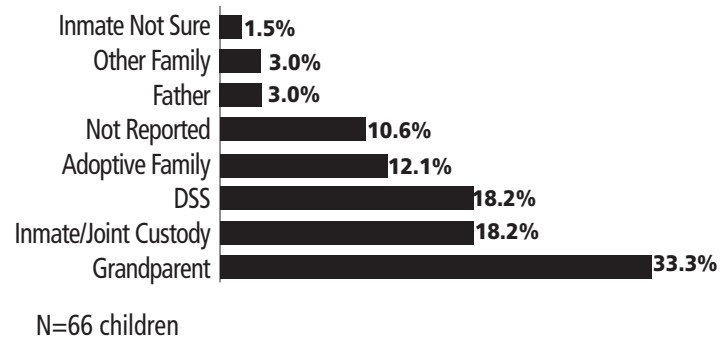
In addition to talking about the actual living arrangements and the caregiving provided to their child(ren), some women emphasized how their child(ren) were doing or feeling when responding to questions about satisfaction with the residential situation. These women described the condition or well-being of the child(ren) in some detail. Several women expressed relief that their child was happy and doing well. For example, Margaret, who is serving a life sentence, indicated that her teenage daughter made the choice of who she wanted to live with and her daughter was very happy living with a paternal relative. Another woman, Betsy, whose son lives with his grandparents, said she is very proud of him because he is well-mannered, disciplined, and does well in school.

With mixed feelings, Adora stated that even though her 17-year-old daughter “steps up to the plate” and helps take care of her younger siblings; she had to grow up too quickly. Adora has five children ranging in age from 20 months to 17 years old. Two of the children lived with her prior to her incarceration, two lived with the maternal grandmother, and one resided with an older sibling. The two children who lived with Adora now live with paternal grandparents. She indicated that the children were separated because of a house fire but eventually they will all be together again, though it is unclear if the fire occurred before or after her incarceration.

Joan spoke about the negative effects her daughter’s living situation had on her daughter emotionally. Before Joan was incarcerated with a six to seven year sentence, both of her children lived with her. Once incarcerated, they were taken into DSS custody. In this case, Joan thought that her daughter was ill with an eating disorder; Joan specifically mentioned bingeing and purging behaviors during the interview. Joan claimed her lawyer told her that if she signed over her rights to the state the children would go to live with her parents but they stayed in foster care. Joan explained that she had no idea where her teenage daughter was currently living. She initially thought her daughter had been adopted, but at the time of the interview, she thought her daughter was still in foster care. Joan had a younger son, but apparently this child has been adopted and she did not know where he lives.

Ensuring that their children are safe and live in a nurturing environment was paramount to many of the women interviewed. Overall, female inmates invoked notions of safety and well-being when describing what made the living arrangements of their child or children satisfactory. As demonstrated here, nearly every woman expressed satisfaction with the current residential situation and many felt the arrangement that had been made was the best possible. For those who discussed concerns, they cited specific problems with the caregiver, the lack of respon-

FIGURE 6: WHO HAS CUSTODY OF THE CHILDREN?



siveness of the caregiver to the needs of the child and/or mother, and dissatisfaction with adoptive situations.

Who has Custody of the Children?

In addition to the topic of child(ren)’s physical living situations, women were asked about the custody arrangements of the child(ren) and the extent to which they were satisfied with such arrangements. From their responses, it appears that some women lost custody when they went into prison or before they were incarcerated, and still have maintained joint custody with the other parent. In addition, we gathered from the interviews that just because a child lived with a certain caregiver, that caregiver did not always have legal custody of the child. Several of the women were unsure whether their child’s caregiver had permanent custody or temporary legal custody.

Grandparents had custody in a large number of cases. As demonstrated in Figure 6, at the time of the interview, one-third (N=22) of the children were in the custody of a grandparent. An equal number of children (18.2% of the children in each situation) were in the custody of the inmate (includes joint custody with the other parent) and in the custody of DSS. Twelve percent of the children were in adoptive homes, 3% were in the custody of their fathers, 3% with other family members, one child’s (1.5%) custody situation was unknown, and we were not able to obtain the custody situation for seven (10.6%) of the children.

Maternal Satisfaction with Custody Arrangement

Similar to how women felt about the living situations of their child(ren) during incarceration, the vast majority (73%) of women claimed that they were satisfied with the custody situation. Fifteen women chose not to respond to further questions about why they were satisfied or dissatisfied. For those who did identify the factors that led them to be satisfied or dissatisfied, many of the

responses were similar to the responses provided about the level of satisfaction with the child's living situation.

In the 15% of cases where the child(ren) were either in the custody of their fathers or experienced joint custody between mother and father, the mothers were generally satisfied with this arrangement. For example, Inez paid child support to her children's father and said she was not able to take care of her two children, ages 13 and 6, as well as he could. She felt that she could not be counted on, that she did not know her children, and they did not know her. Julia indicated that her children's father was a "good person." Joanne, whose two children live with their father, said her children "are not safe unless they are with DSS" and indicated that she still had "rights" because they share custody of the children. Conversely, Betsy was not happy that she had joint custody with the father saying that he used drugs and did not stick to the visitation schedule. Betsy also indicated that her other child, age 13, was in good hands with her mother and stepfather.

Overall, the women whose children were in the custody of maternal grandparents responded quite positively to questions about satisfaction with the custody situation. In one case, Maria said that her children were well taken care of, adding that she still would not attempt to mother her two children, ages 11 and 3. Maria was serving a sentence of one to two years.

Situations where the child was in the custody of paternal relatives received mixed reviews. Nicole was satisfied with the custody arrangements for her 8-year-old son, as his paternal grandparents have had custody of him for seven years. Marilyn, whose young son was with his grandparents, was confident that DSS would give back custody to her saying, "if I do everything I need to, then DSS will give me back custody."

Though pleased that her young son was residing with his paternal grandparents, Lynn was not happy that they have legal custody of him. She indicated that the grandparents did not allow her to have contact with the child, but he did have contact with his father who is also in prison. Gwen has four children: three in DSS custody and one who lived with her ex-husband's sister. Gwen indicated that she was not happy with either of these arrangements. She said she cannot see the kids, who range in age from 8 to 18, on holidays, but that her ex-husband is allowed to see them. She explained she felt that her ex-husband's family thinks she is "low class" and ashamed of her.

Apart from grandparents and fathers who had custody, women discussed situations where other relatives had custody of child(ren). A mother serving a 7 to 8 year sentence, Joanne was concerned that her cousin, who had temporary custody of one of her three children, would seek legal custody for the young child. Joanne had legal joint custody of two other children with her children's father.

Most women whose children were in DSS custody were satisfied with the custody arrangement. However, Margo lamented that while she was satisfied with her only child's DSS placement in a foster home, she had "no control" either way.

Even for women who had little direct contact with their child(ren) through mail, phone, and visits, receiving updates about their child(ren) proved to be very important to them. Many of these women indicated that they planned to be a part of their children's lives when released and that they wanted to stay connected during the period of incarceration.

Women were also asked a series of questions about the information they received about their child(ren) while in prison. Sixty-four percent of the women explained that they did get the information they needed about their child(ren). Most of the women obtained their information from the child's caregiver, a few from the child(ren) themselves, and a small number received the information through a third party such as other family members or friends.

In terms of what they wanted to know about their child(ren), women responded with what may be considered essential information about children's well-being. Women mentioned that they wanted to have information about the child(ren)'s health, such as doctor/dentist appointments, their last shots, and their mental or emotional health status. For example, Margo was concerned about her daughter's asthma and Betsy was concerned that her son was not getting the emotional counseling he needs. In addition to updates on children's health, many of the inmates wanted information about their child's school situation. Specifically, women mentioned behavioral issues in the school setting, children's grades, and the content of their education. Bertha and Tanya were very happy that their mothers sent the children's report cards to them at MCI-Framingham. A mother of two teenagers, Macie did not get the information she needed from family members, but she wrote her child's school to request report cards and the school mailed them to her in prison. Joanne wanted to know how her kids were doing in school, but their father did not want the school to know she was in prison. Therefore, she had not contacted the school and the father did not give her any information. Additional kinds of information in which mothers expressed an interest included their activities such as sports, camp, church, their social life more generally, and their emotional well-being.

Many of the women who indicated that they did not receive information about their child(ren) felt that this was the case because of the caregiver. Gwen, a mother of three, claimed that members of her family felt that they did not need to give her any information due to her addiction. Delaney, who wrote to her son periodically, did not know if the lack of contact was her son "being a kid or the family not giving him my letter." Inez felt that the adults involved in her children's care did not help foster a good relationship between her and the children. She

intimated that if DSS was involved the situation would be better as a DSS worker would have explained to the father what was going on so that the situation would not have “been so negative.” Inez went on to say, “a case should be opened up at all times because things are not being addressed. When mother is in prison, the family needs counseling.”

The interview data indicate that, whether inmates had custody of her child(ren) or not, they still wanted to know about their child(ren) in terms of how they were doing and what was going on in their lives. As some women suggested, it may be the case that some caregivers are reluctant to share information with the inmate about her child(ren). While this study is based on the perspectives and experiences of women serving time in prison and does not include data from children’s caregivers, it is clear that nearly all women interviewed remained interested in and concerned about their child/ren. The provision of information about children to their mothers is clearly important to women themselves and the sharing of information may hinge upon the kind of relationships between women and the caregivers. As demonstrated by our findings and by existing research, it is preferable for incarcerated mothers to have positive relationships with caregivers for the benefit of all (Poehlmann, 2005a, 2005b) – and access to information may greatly depend on positive relationships.

Staying Connected

The women in our study, similar to incarcerated women across the United States, experience a myriad of deprivations due to their imprisonment. One type of deprivation is the lack of contact with their children. According to national statistics from 2000, 60 percent of imprisoned mothers report that they maintain some form of weekly contact with their children, but fewer than half of imprisoned mothers (46%) report a personal visit with their children since going to state prison (Mumola, 2000).

The physical separation of mother and child that characterizes the situation of maternal incarceration may be experienced as very challenging. Based on interview data presented thus far, mothers expressed concern about how her child was doing in his or her living situation. Issues of safety and comfort were paramount. Mothers may also worry about the child’s happiness. It may also be the case that learning that a child is doing well may lead a mother to think that she is not needed – and if a child is not doing well, this may exacerbate the mother’s feelings of guilt about her situation.

Several scholars examining parental incarceration have found that greater contact between mothers and their children is associated with lower levels of parenting stress (Houck & Loper, 2002). Mothers with limited or no contact with children and less influence over the care of their children report greater levels of emotional and physical distress (Houck & Loper, 2002). Some research has also

suggested that having contact with families and children helps to maintain order in the prison environment (Poehlmann, 2005a). It was known as early as the 1970s that mother/child contact can benefit both and can help reduce the recidivism rate of mothers (Adams & Fischer, 1976). Thus, family contact can have a positive impact on both the families and the community.

The women interviewed described their personal experiences of being separated from their children and the challenges they faced in trying to stay connected. Many expressed concern about what the lack of contact has done to the relationships with their children. Specifically, women cited younger children bonding with someone else, adolescents being angry with the mother for getting in trouble, and teenagers’ general lack of communication. As explained in the previous section, in a number of cases, the amount of contact with children was dependent on the contact an incarcerated woman has with her family since in so many situations the family members are serving as primary caregivers. If the mother is in conflict with the caregiver, this will likely result in fewer visits with the child (Poehlmann, 2005a). The following analysis addresses the scope and extent of contact that mothers reported having with their children during incarceration.

Mother-Child Connections: Benefits, Challenges, and Issues

Contact between child and mother can take place in three ways: through actual visits to the prison, through phone calls, and through letter writing. Research on the scope, nature and function of maternal/child contact and maintenance of relationships demonstrates that any form of contact is meaningful to incarcerated women and maintaining contact is beneficial to both mother and child, whether or not there are plans for reunification (Kates & Ransford, 2005).

As indicated earlier in the report, the benefits of mother and child visitation have been well documented. Johnston (1995) found that these visits help the child’s emotional well-being and may prevent negative and/or criminal behavior in the future. Visits may strengthen family bonds, and can even increase success for the mother after release. In fact, some scholars identify visits as the preferred method of contact between an incarcerated mother and her children (Johnston, 1995).

Overall, while incarcerated mothers want to see their children they are not able to determine the conditions of the visit (Hanlon et al., 2005). The mother-child relationship during incarceration is, to a great extent, controlled by others including staff of the correctional facility, the caretakers of the child, family members, and/or the Department of Social Services. Visiting rules and dress codes can be hard to understand and may be perceived as demeaning; moreover, the rules may not be consistently enforced (Aiello, 2006; Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, 2007). Whereas the policies and procedures within a prison are designed to ensure safety, they also may discourage visits, as caregiv-

ers, children, and often the inmate, find the environment intimidating, uncomfortable, and humiliating (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004).

Moreover, the requirements and conditions surrounding a mother-child visit can be emotionally upsetting (Houck & Loper, 2002). The visit with a child or children itself can be difficult and emotionally draining for an incarcerated mother. The wait for the visit may also be anxiety provoking. Scholars cite the potential worry over how the child will react to the visit and how adults accompanying the child, as well as other inmates and correctional staff, will react. There may also be concern about how short or long the visit will be and how the inmate will feel when the visit has concluded (Houck & Loper, 2002).

A number of obstacles to encouraging and supporting children visiting their incarcerated mothers exist. Since there are fewer prisons for women than for men, there is likely to be more difficulty in visiting due to the greater distance and the time required to travel that distance. Of course, obtaining transportation can be a significant problem and financial issues can further restrict opportunities for visitation (Christian, 2005; Thompson & Loper, 2005). A woman-centered correctional approach used in Canada fosters keeping women in facilities close to their home communities and their families (van Wormer & Kaplan, 2006). Strong communication between incarcerated mothers and children and less stringent visiting policies can reduce the stress over parenting loss (Houck & Loper, 2002).

Given the barriers to visiting, contact by telephone serves as important form of contact that helps to sustain relationships during incarceration. Research shows that mother-child relationships are more positive when there is phone contact (Poehlmann, 2005a). Despite this, maintaining communication by phone can often be difficult. Long-distance phone calls can be prohibitively expensive. As shown in one study, these collect-calls cost the receiving household as much as three times that of a call placed from a standard pay phone and five to ten times that of a call from a standard home phone (Hairston, 2002). Finally, letter writing has been identified as especially helpful in maintaining the relationships and can help women to feel more competent as mothers (Tuerk & Loper, 2006).

Researchers asked direct questions about the kind of contact women have with their child(ren), the frequency of contact, and how they felt about the nature and extent of contact in order to identify the barriers to contact faced by mothers in prison and how mothers perceived their relationships with their child(ren). Women discussed both positive and negative experiences of parenting from prison and their comments bring to life some of the findings discussed in the scholarly literature on incarcerated parents.

Despite the important role of mother/child visits, the women interviewed had less contact with their child(ren) through visits than by phone or mail. Furthermore, several of the mothers indicated that any kind of contact, no matter how minimal, is important. For example, Terry

was grateful that even though her children, ranging in age from 3 to 14-years-old, did not visit, she exchanged letters with four of her six children. Several women compared their situations with other mothers in prison and specifically highlighted the reality that other women do not have any contact with their child(ren). Josie commented she was pleased that she could see her 3-year-old son at all, adding that many women do not even know where their children are. Faye saw her children every month and, like Josie, realized that some people do not get to see their child(ren).

Some respondents were completely satisfied with the extent of communication with their child(ren). Sherry seemed pleased with the contact she had with her son. His maternal grandmother brought him to visit monthly, he was very talkative on their daily phone calls, and he wrote frequently. Marilyn's mother brought her son to visits and Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (AIM) brought him

TABLE 10: TYPE AND FREQUENCY OF CONTACT BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD

Any Contact	N	%
Yes	29	88.0
No	2	6.0
Not reported/NA	2	6.0
Type of Contact *	N	%
Visits	15	45.5
Phone	20	60.6
Mail	26	78.8
Visits	N	%
At least once a week	2	6.1
At least once a month	9	27.3
1 to 11 times per year	4	12.1
Never	16	48.5
Other	2	6.1
Telephone	N	%
Daily or almost daily	12	36.4
At least once per week	6	18.2
At least once per month	1	3.0
1 to 11 times per year	1	3.0
Never	6	18.2
Other	7	21.2
Mail	N	%
Daily or almost daily	2	6.1
At least once per week	14	42.2
At least once per month	4	12.1
1 to 11 times per year	2	6.1
Never	7	21.2
Other	4	12.1

N=33

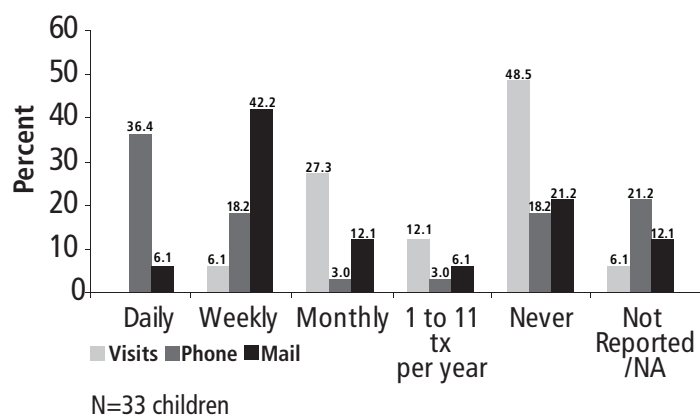
**Adds up to more than 33 because women may have different contact situations with more than one child*

every six weeks for a 2-hour visit. Bertha was satisfied with the telephone and mail contact she had with her two children who live in Florida, as she was able to send them books and cards through family services. Patsy was also happy with the contact she had with her kids, indicating that her 3-year-old son was angry with her at first but now they communicate through visits, phone, and mail.

Twenty-nine (88%) of the 33 women with children reported maintaining connection with their child(ren) by telephone, mail, or personal visits or a combination of these modes of contact. Among those women who had contact, 79% reported exchanging letters with at least one child, 61% reported having telephone contact with at least one child, and 46% said they had one or more visits with at least one child. Considering the majority (64%) of these women plan on living with their child(ren) after their release, it seems that the overall extent of communication between incarcerated mothers and children was not as high as one might expect.

As reflected in Table 10 and Figure 7, visits were the least employed contact method. In fact, almost half (48.5%) of the women reported never having had a visit with their child(ren). Twenty-seven percent said they had visits at least once a month, 12% had visits 1 to 11 times a year, and only a few (6%) had visits at least once a week.² This is consistent with national trends indicating that fewer than half of imprisoned mothers (46%) report a personal

FIGURE 7: FREQUENCY OF CONTACTS BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD



visit with their child(ren) since going to state prison (Mumola, 2000).

Telephone contact was more frequent than visits. Thirty-six percent of the women reported they had daily telephone contact with at least one child, 18% talked weekly, and the remaining 6% reported less frequent phone (of once a month or one to 11 times a year). Even though the phone served as an important tool of communication, nearly 18% of female inmates indicated that they had never had a phone conversation with their child(ren).

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING VISITS...

"She is all I have left of her father. I love to look at her. I get full when I am around her." Margaret

"Everything to me, don't know if I could keep my sanity without seeing him, inspiration to do good, stay focused." Josie

"To keep my sobriety... want to keep sobriety for children and I love them." Gwen

"Knows grandma better." Lynn

"Mental stability. Sense of having control. Exercises parenting skills." Tanya

"More beneficial for him and me to be able to see each other... Less likely to come back to jail." Delaney

"The most important visit you can have – need to keep touch as a mother."
Patsy

"Don't want to lose what I have with him." Sherry

² While mail and telephone contact can be on a daily basis, inmates at MCI-Framingham are allowed a maximum of five regular visits per week.

Mail is the least restricted form of contact between mothers and their children. Nearly 79 percent of the mothers had mail contact with their child(ren) and just over 42 percent of the women exchanged letters with their child(ren) at least once a week. Still, with mail correspondence as the least restricted form of keeping in touch, one out of five women (21%) had never exchanged a letter with any of their children.

Challenges to Maintaining Contact

The mothers with little or no contact with their child(ren) gave varying responses for the limited or total lack of contact. Reasons included transportation difficulties such as the distance between the child(ren) and the prison or the high cost of transportation, family or caregiver dysfunction, the inmate not wanting her child(ren) to come to prison, and in a few cases, the child making a decision not to visit. Several women who had children involved with DSS cited a few unique challenges including the number of visits noted in the service plan.

Distance from the Child's Residence and Framingham

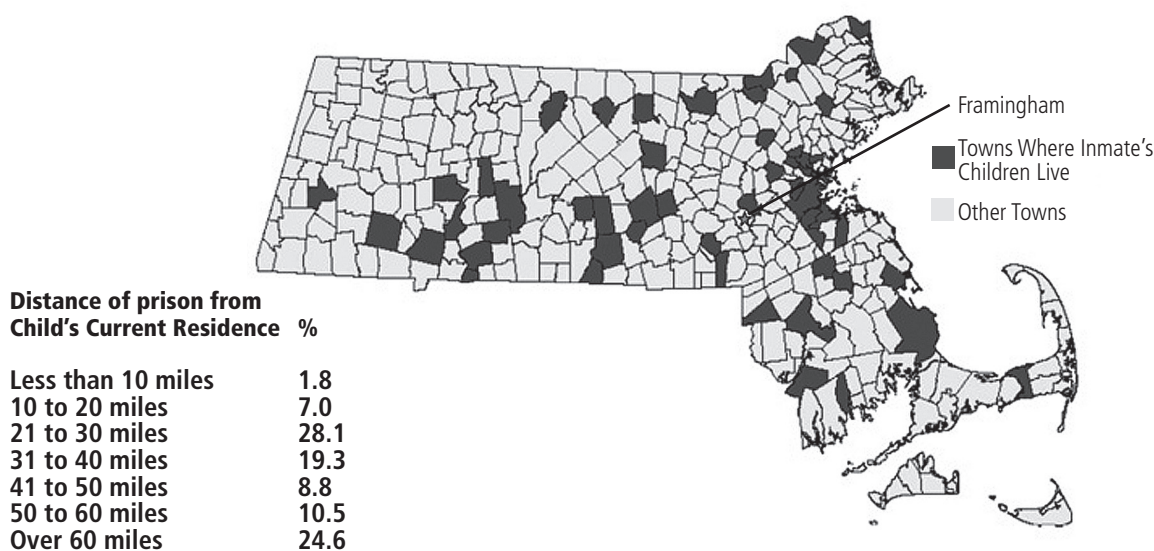
According to the women interviewed, travel to the prison was expensive, time-consuming, and difficult to arrange for many of the caregivers. In addition to the costs associated with travel to Framingham, if the caregiver works or had other obligations, taking the time to travel and then to visit may prove extremely difficult. Beyond adult caretakers who may be busy, children, especially pre-teen and teenagers may have commitments such as sports and

activities and may not be willing to take the time for visits to Framingham. Most importantly, as already explained, the physical distance between the child's residence and the prison served as a barrier to visiting. In one case, Delaney had monthly visits with her baby who was born while she was incarcerated. With the baby now in DSS care, Delaney explained that the drive is too long for him to be in the car. For Margaret, having her family visit entails a two-hour drive. Margaret expressed dissatisfaction with the short visits, indicating that they are "in and out so quickly."

Figure 8 provides the distances between the residences of the 66 children of the inmates interviewed and Framingham. The distance data show that most children lived a significant distance from Framingham. Twenty-eight percent of the children lived between 21 and 30 miles from Framingham and nearly one-quarter lived over 60 miles from Framingham. Driving is the most convenient form of transportation to the prison as public transportation is limited. While there is train and bus service to Framingham from certain areas in the state, visitors must then take a taxi to the prison. As stated in the literature, distance and lack of transportation serve as significant obstacles to children's visits with their mothers.

In one study, approximately 30% of federally held women were housed more than 500 miles from their homes compared with 24 percent of male inmates (General Accounting Office, 1999). The Federal Board of Prisons (BOP) suggested that inmates who are housed further than 500 miles from their homes may pose security risks

FIGURE 8: DISTANCE BETWEEN CHILD'S CURRENT RESIDENCE AND FRAMINGHAM



or have medical conditions. Massachusetts is not the only state to face the challenge of distance as other states also have a small number of facilities that house women. Recently, the Federal Board of Prisons (BOP) has developed initiatives to house their female inmates closer to home (General Accounting Office, 1999).

Inmates were not the only respondents to raise the issue of distance as an impediment to maintaining contact with children. Key correctional professionals also confirmed the numerous challenges facing female inmates who desire sustained contact with children and other family members including the limited ability to have visits due to distance and a lack of transportation options.

Transportation Issues

A few women described how hard it was for children to visit when such visits are dependent on transportation coordinated and/or provided by family members or other caregivers. The most frequently discussed factors included time constraints, travel distance, and financial reasons.

Raquel, who was serving a 3-year mandatory sentence for a drug offense, indicated that her mother did not have a car and is old, thus unable to bring Raquel's three children to visit. Raquel's children, ages 11, 12, and 13, did speak on the phone and exchange letters with her. Even though Julia wanted to see her two children, she explained that money for gas was an issue. Furthermore, the stepmother of her children just had a baby and her kids were busy with sports. Billie's situation was quite different from the others because her two children, ages 10 and six, live in Columbia with her parents and any type of contact was extremely expensive for her. She has had no contact with them since they left the United States with her parents three years ago.

Family or Caregiver Dysfunction

As pointed out earlier, sustaining contact with their child(ren) often hinges on the mother's relationships with children's caregivers. Several women told us that their family members were angry with them for coming to prison "again" or explained that paternal relatives seemed to ignore the requests of the mother to bring the child(ren) for a visit. For example, Lynn has been in prison for 6 months and had not seen her one-year-old son because his paternal grandmother did not want to bring him to visit nor would she answer the phone. Apparently, paternal family members brought him to see his father who was also incarcerated. Lynn expressed disappointment that her son has more of a bond with his grandmother than with her.

The inmate's relationship with an ex-husband/ex-boyfriend also emerged as a barrier to sustained contact between mothers and children. In one case, Macie, who was serving a 2-year sentence had not had contact with her teenage twins since she was incarcerated 6 months prior to the interview. Her ex-husband did not accept collect calls and her children do not respond to her letters.

The father of two of Joanne's children was to bring the children to Framingham once a month to visit per court order, but she said he only came once every two months. Betsy's two children were living in separate residences: the older child lived with the maternal grandmother and the younger child lived with his father. Betsy has had visits with her 15-year-old son a few times, but none with her 13-year-old son because the father did not stick to the visitation schedule and she could not afford a lawyer to take him to court to comply.

Though she has never had a visit or a phone conversation with him during the 3 months she had been incarcerated, Nicole explained that she was satisfied with the indirect communication she had with her 8-year-old. Her son lived with his paternal grandmother who did not have a car or accept collect calls. Still, her son communicated with Nicole's boyfriend who passed on information to her.

The fact that all outgoing phone calls must be collect calls came up in a number of cases. Many families placed a block on the telephone that did not allow for collect calls from a prison. They may do this for any number of reasons, including anger at the inmate or the high expense of the phone calls.

Lack of Awareness of Maternal Incarceration

Several of the women acknowledged that their children were unaware of their incarceration, with most of these women indicating that knowing about and/or seeing their mother in prison would be too difficult. Tiffany did not want her 5-year-old to go through the visiting process as she thought it would upset her. Her daughter did visit when she was in a pre-release program, but her daughter thought that her mother was in school. Similarly, Luz has told her 11-year-old that she was "in treatment" because otherwise it would be too hard on her daughter. Still, they did talk weekly and exchange letters. Rosie had custody of only one of her three children and this 6-year-old thought she was in the hospital. Rosie, serving time on a drug charge, indicated that it would be too hard for her to let him go if he came for a visit. Finally, Goldie and Linda both explained that their children did not know that they were incarcerated, but it was unclear what the children have been told about the situation of these mothers.

While it may seem that for many of the women and family members were trying to protect the child(ren) from the reality of maternal incarceration, this type of deception may lead the child to become more worried about his/her mother and create alternate scenarios that heighten the child's concern or anxiety level. Some research has indicated that children who are not told the truth about maternal incarceration may become fearful and mistrustful (Hostetter & Jinnah, 1993).

A Personal Decision

There were a few situations where either the incarcerated women or her child made the decision to avoid contact.

In Inez's case, she said her children were "sick of me coming to jail," and "mad at me." According to Inez, they "just started talking to me." Margaret's teenage daughter used to visit but wanted to take a break from visiting. Margaret explained that her daughter may come again soon when she is ready. Gwen had an 18-year-old daughter who can make her own choices but her father's family did not allow her to have contact with her mother. Gwen did not have contact with any of her four children. The other three have been adopted through an open adoption process.

Special Cases: Children in DSS Custody

Mothers who discussed contact with children who are in DSS custody offered varying responses. Margo expressed satisfaction with the amount of contact she had with her 5-year-old daughter, indicating that DSS followed the service plan and brought her to visit once a month. Still, Margo wished that her daughter could come more often. Margo had no contact with her 10-year-old or her 2-year-old, but would like her older child to visit saying it would be supportive for her and she would not "come back to prison." Margo's statement reflects the notion that her children matter enough to keep her from returning to prison.

Deb had monthly visits with both of her teenage children who are in a foster home together. She was, however, trying to work with DSS to have them brought to the prison more often for visits. Deb stated at first that she did not want her sons, ages 14 and 12, to come to prison to see her, but they wanted to come. Jennifer, a mother of three children, explained that two of them are involved with DSS and Jennifer had no contact with them. The third child was adopted

but Jennifer received a few letters from the adoptive parents. In another case, Joan explained that because she signed over her rights as a parent she had no contact with her nine and 13-year-old children.

Maria had two children who lived with different sets of grandparents in different states. Her 11-year-old lives in Connecticut with the paternal grandparents and the 3-year-old lives in Massachusetts. The older child visits twice a month. Maria characterized the visits as hard at first because the child clung to Maria. They also talk on the phone weekly, but Maria explained that gets expensive. Maria's mother also visited with the younger child, though it is unclear how often.

In summary, while we have examined the effects of separation on the incarcerated mothers, research has shown that for the child(ren), having contact with their incarcerated parent can help improve a child's emotional response to the incarceration and ultimately, reduce the likelihood of intergenerational incarceration. Children with contact with their parent have fewer disruptive and anxious behaviors (Sack & Seidler, 1978; Stanton, 1980) and overall improved outcomes (Edin, Nelson, & Paranal, 2004; Klein, Bartholomew, & Hibbert, 2002; La Vigne et al., 2005). These direct benefits to the child coupled with the benefits for the mother, including lowered recidivism rates and maintaining contact can yield positive outcomes for all involved (Adams & Fischer, 1976; Glaser, 1969; Hairston, 2002; Holt & Miller, 1972; Klein et al., 2002; Ohlin, 1954).

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH FAMILY DURING INCARCERATION...

"Can't talk to her when I want to, She [mother] has work—by the time she gets out we are in lockdown." Jane

"First time is horrid. You have nothing when you come in, no papers, no stamps, no pens, envelopes." Sue

"With kids, when older they don't write back as fast as you'd like... I have to have patience and make phone calls ... I have to try to set this up since it's collect." Delaney

"System minimizes its importance [contact]." Brianna

"Own guilt, phone bill, transportation, driving out." Josie

"Money. Phone calls are expensive. Gas from Boston to here is a lot." Pat

The next section discusses actual mother/child visits that occurred at both MCI-Framingham and South Middlesex Correctional Center in order to deepen our analysis of the scope and nature of contact incarcerated mothers experience during their time in a correctional facility.

Visit Observations

A total of four mother/child sessions were observed by researchers. Three observations were conducted at MCI-Framingham and one at South Middlesex Correctional Center.

Overall, the family visiting area at MCI-Framingham is more conducive to interactions of mother and child – playing, reading together, talking – than the general visiting area.

The observed visits at MCI-Framingham all took place in the family visiting area. According to the researcher, “this is a bright room with colorful pictures on the wall. The center of the room is very open and there is cushioned seating on every side of the room except for the wall with the toys.” As noted by the researcher, “the room would make most people feel at ease...it did not make me feel like I was in a prison.” There were books mostly for young children. There were several toys, including play cars, trucks, a kitchen model, fake food, a short tunnel, and others. The toys were geared toward younger children and there did not seem to be toys in which a child older than 10-years-old would be interested (i.e. action figures, age-appropriate board games). The younger children who were observed used many of the toys, especially the kitchen toys.

According to the researcher, the visiting atmosphere at South Middlesex Correctional Center appeared more relaxed than that at MCI-Framingham. Since the South Middlesex Correctional Center is a minimum-security facility, visitors do not have to go through a rigorous security check. The visiting area was large, open, and very sunny. The visiting room is not have any toys, books, or anything else for children nor were there any pictures or decorative items. Mothers and children can use an outdoor area when the weather permits. The researcher noted that the visiting atmosphere at SMCC seemed very relaxed.

Though there were children visiting their mothers in the general visiting area at MCI-Framingham the visits observed all took place in the family visiting area. The researchers noted that in all cases correctional officers stayed outside the room, and except for announcing when the visit was over, gave the inmate and child privacy. In the general visiting area, the officers walked up and down the aisles regularly and it was observed that at times the stress level in the general visiting area seemed high, particularly at the end of the visiting time when there was a lot of crying.

Visits at MCI-Framingham

A 3-year-old girl came to visit her mother. The mother and child spent much time together playing. The child played with the kitchen set and pretended to make her mother, grandfather and uncle food. They sat on the floor together reading, counting, exercising, and tickling each other. There was some conversation about when the mother was going to get out and how much she missed her daughter. “When mommy comes home we’ll go to the beach...if mommy ever gets out of here.” The mother picked up the child several times, and there were kisses and hugs. The mother smiled a lot while playing and talking with her child and there was a lot of giggling. There appeared to be a sense of ease reflected in the child’s facial expression when the mother reminded her that she would see her tomorrow.

A 2-year-old boy came with his grandfather to visit his mother. The inmate spent time talking to her father while the child played alone and ran back to the mother to show her toys every now and then. The child played with the kitchen toys for most of the time and there was very little physical contact between the mother and son. The mother picked up the child at the end of the visitation period and kissed him. The researcher noted that the child seemed disinterested in this visit with his mother.

A DSS worker and a 14-year-old boy came for their monthly visit. From the beginning to the end of the interaction, the mother-child pair conveyed an air of intimacy, comfort, and trust. The mother touched her son a number of times as she made different points, by patting his head, and at one point, punching him playfully. The mother and son talked continuously for the duration of the visit. There was a good deal of excited conversation about a car that the son wanted to buy. When the visit ended, the mother and son hugged in an affectionate manner.

Visits at South Middlesex Correctional Center

A 10-year-old boy and his mother visited together. The two spent time talking, trying to make jokes, and laughing. There seemed to plenty of physical contact. This visit lasted one hour and fifteen minutes and, during this time period, the researcher noted that many of the visitors in the visiting room at this time were adults. The children appeared happy to be spending time with their mothers.

In all but one of the visiting situations, the mother and child played together and were very affectionate. In the fourth case, the child played alone most of the time and the only physical contact came at the end of the visit. The observational data, while limited by the number of visits observed, indicate that in-person visits between incarcerated mothers and their children provide important opportunities for physical and emotional connection that allow for sharing, playing, and bonding.

Special Issues

Pregnancy and Childbirth During Incarceration

Only six of the women (12.5%) interviewed for this study had been pregnant while incarcerated. Three of the six women gave birth while incarcerated, one miscarried, one woman left prison before the baby was born, and one woman did not report if she gave birth while incarcerated. The women who shared their stories all had quite different stories to tell.

Rosie was pregnant while awaiting trial. Though she did not give birth while incarcerated, she indicated she was pleased with the medical care she received while in custody. Correctional staff informed her that if she was eventually sentenced in her case, she could enter a rehab program, start methadone, and keep the baby. She ended up going out on bail and regretted that decision, saying she wished she had gone into a program. The baby went immediately into DSS custody and has since been adopted.

Tanya, who was in prison for the fourth time, was pregnant while awaiting trial at another facility. She was told the baby had Down syndrome and the option of abortion was discussed, and she was not happy with this option. The fetus died before birth.

In another case, Adora indicated that she has been pregnant six different times while incarcerated and once gave birth while in prison. She explained that she was treated well at the hospital. Because her pregnancy was classified as high-risk, she was taken to the hospital once a week for ultrasounds. Staff of the Catch the Hope program, an obstetrical program that is part of the medical contract with the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, came to speak to her about her options for the baby and she decided to give temporary guardianship to the grandmother.

Delaney was pregnant when she was arrested and gave birth while incarcerated. She was treated very well while giving birth adding that hospital staff was very supportive, helpful, and kind. A caseworker at the hospital informed Delaney that, since she had no contact with her family, the baby would go right into DSS custody. Delaney was regretful about this situation and wished she had kept in contact with her family for this reason.

Ashley, while pregnant with her first child, said that she was treated well at the hospital and that officers came

into the room only occasionally. Members of the correctional staff arranged for Ashley to go into pre-release before the baby was born and then a residential program where the baby could also live. Ashley had custody of her child and, at the time of the interview, was planning a life with her daughter when they leave the program.

None of the women who described their experiences of pregnancy and childbirth during incarceration cited complaints about their care or treatment during incarceration. Negative responses were related to decisions the women had made in their lives as illustrated by Rosie's and Delaney's stories and feelings of regret.

Release Preparation

Research shows that the majority of incarcerated women expect to care for their children upon release. However, there is little information on whether women do ultimately care for their children upon return to the community (Hagan & Coleman, 2001). Reentry is often a difficult situation for mothers and their families. Incarcerated mothers may not have had strong ties to their children during or prior to their imprisonment, making it especially difficult to return to the role of mother. Released women may not get the aftercare services they need such as critical services pertaining to housing, employment, and childcare. These mothers will need much support and a strong plan in place after the period of incarceration has ended.

Overall, the vast majority (71%) of the women we spoke to felt that they were prepared for release. Several women said they planned on going into a drug program. As one mother who was serving time for a drug crime explained, "Want to go to rehab - Granada House in Brighton. Want to get clean before...[I] can get my daughter back." Other women indicated that being in prison has helped them prepare to go out in the community. Sherry who had one child explained, "Jail was a reality check" and a "good support system." Yet another indicated that she "learned a lot from being here."

Only eight of the 48 respondents (17%) said they were not prepared or not sure if they were prepared for release. Many of these women had drug problems and seemed unsure of what would happen upon release. One mother of two children, Maria, said she was not ready because of her drug problem and was just tired of battling it. Two other women said they were trying to prepare and would write letters to drug programs. One woman who was serving a seven to eight year sentence for a drug crime did not know if she would be deported upon release.

Study participants were also asked if they planned to live with their children after release and what steps they needed to take to be able to do this. Twelve (36.4%) said they do plan to live with at least one child when they are released and three (9.1%) said they do not. Three (9.1%) more of the women said they do plan on residing with their children upon release, but indicated that they

wanted to, in some way, get their lives straightened out before they live with their children.

More specifically, many of the women talked about resolving their own issues before living with their children. For example, Deb, a mother of two young children in DSS custody, explained that she wanted to complete a drug program and get a place to live before getting her children back. Joan also hoped to complete a drug program prior to working with DSS to get her two children back. This may not be feasible, as Joan had previously indicated that at least one of her children was adopted. Both Margo and Rosie wanted to complete programs with Rosie adding that she hoped to take anger management and parenting classes.

Several comments regarding plans to live with children post-incarceration addressed the significant role of grandparents in the lives of the inmates. Josie expressed her hope to parole to her mother's house where her only child was living. Similarly, Tiffany's plan was to get a job and live with her mother and child. Lynn's only child was residing with a paternal grandparent, but Lynn planned to live with her mother close to the child. She wanted to go back to school and obtain housing before talking to the grandmother about regaining custody. When Sherry was asked if she wanted to live with her 12-year-old, she

indicated she would not take him away from his grandmother who has raised him since he was five.

Three of the women indicated that they did not want to live with their children upon release. Inez was "tired of the battles" though she did not expand further on this. Both of her children lived with their father and she was happy with this arrangement, having said earlier in the interview that she had no desire to "deal with the day-to-day stuff." Gwen explained that she did not want to live with any of her four children as three of them have been adopted and the fourth lived with her ex-husband's family. She did want to get in touch with them adding she would like to have a family portrait done before she dies. Marilyn stated that she did not want to live with her 5-year-old; she wanted to get a job, get an apartment, attend substance abuse meetings, and get counseling.

The above findings suggest that many of the women understood that they needed to get themselves situated before they bring their children back into their lives. For a number of women in the study, there was an underlying realization that until they themselves can become stable, in terms of substance abuse issues, emotional issues, and/or financial difficulties, living with their children would not be the best choice for themselves or for the children.

CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR WOMEN

As indicated in the research design and methodology section, this study also examined the programs and services available to incarcerated women in the Massachusetts correctional system that enhance women's relationships with their family members, and children in particular. The following analysis addresses the scope of program offerings, identifies programs that have an explicit focus on family relationships and preservation – especially as related to maternal/child relationships – and, in the case of MCI-Framingham, assesses the extent of inmate participation in programs. While the following discussion of programs and services addresses what is provided by the Massachusetts Department of Correction to women at MCI-Framingham, South Middlesex Correctional Center and the Women and Children's Program, there is an emphasis on the facility that primarily houses and serves incarcerated women in Massachusetts, MCI-Framingham.

While most concerned with programs and services provided to incarcerated women that have a focus on family connections and preservation, this report identifies the importance of taking a gender-specific approach to the management and treatment of female offenders given their distinct situations and needs. Several months prior to the beginning of the study, the Massachusetts Department of Correction began contract procurements for many changes to address the unique needs of women in the correctional system by establishing a separate treatment service contract for women in the correctional system in Massachusetts. Specifically, as of April 1, 2007, the Department of Correction contracted for "a comprehensive and integrated network of gender responsive, trauma-informed residential, non-residential, and reentry treatment services for female offenders" (Massachusetts Department of Correction, RFR 07-1000-M03, p. 7). The stated goal of these services is to "reduce recidivism by providing integrated program services which address the multi-dimensional needs of the female offender by targeting criminality, substance abuse, domestic violence, family preservation, and reentry by using trauma-informed models." (p. 7). Similarly, female offender medical and mental health services contracted through the Massachusetts Department of Correction are required to incorporate elements of a trauma-informed approach to treatment. This shift involved taking "new medical and mental health service delivery approaches specifically designed for women with co-occurring mental health/substance abuse disorders and histories of physical and sexual abuse" (Massachusetts Department of Correction, RFR 08-9004-R21, p. 54). While this study wasn't directly focused on overall service delivery for female offenders, the shift to gender responsive, trauma-informed service contracts that occurred during the course of the study may indeed have an effect on women's family connections – something that could be studied in the future.

Programs at MCI-Framingham: Scope, Content and Administration

The Massachusetts Department of Correction offers a wide variety of programs, including classes, workshops, and treatment programs for female inmates at MCI-Framingham. Researchers collected basic information on 70 programs of the 81 programs coordinated by the institution's Director of Treatment, ranging from those that are religiously-oriented to those that deal with substance abuse, mental health and family preservation. In addition to the program inventory instrument, researchers utilized personnel interviews and documents outlining services and programs provided by the Massachusetts Department of Correction in the following analysis. These documents are discussed in the research design and methodology section and included in the references section.

The number and variety of programs MCI-Framingham has assembled is a testament to the institution's commitment to offering opportunities for inmates to develop key life skills in preparation for reentry, including skills related to parenting and relationship-building. The Treatment and Program Department oversees the delivery of all programs at MCI-Framingham. The goal is to ensure that programming is not over-concentrated in any one area. Moreover, there is a commitment to giving inmates the opportunity to prepare themselves adequately for reentry.

Inmates themselves have input into the process of determining program offerings. Correctional personnel reported that inmates often come up with many ideas for classes and/or that programs develop organically from inmate initiatives. Therefore, programming is viewed not only as a route to reentry, but also as a mechanism for inmate self-improvement.

Inmates generally learn about available programs through an orientation or through fliers posted in the buildings. While program information does not seem to be delivered in a systematic way, correctional personnel interviewed expressed confidence that most inmates are aware of the variety of programs offered due to effective word-of-mouth communication in the facility.

According to data from correctional personnel interviews, staff generally runs education, recreation, garden, vocational, substance abuse, writing, anger management, religious programs and the "Choices" program. Volunteers help run the arts and crafts program, the Wicken program, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, RISE and various release preparation programs. A number of programs are staffed by outside volunteer groups and agencies. As of August 2007, program staffing included 290 volunteers with the vast majority (87%) of volunteers associated with religious programming and services. One correction-

al staff member indicated that an increase in staff would be beneficial for program improvement.

Overview of Available Programs

Inmate programs at MCI-Framingham are broadly categorized as academic, vocational, mental health, and other (for example, parenting education, domestic violence, religious, substance abuse, release preparation and recreational) according to the “Welcome to MCI-Framingham” brochure. Some programs, such as those that focus on religious practices or on supporting a hobby, exist for the purpose of assisting inmates as they cope with incarceration; other programs are more directly oriented around reentry.

For the listing of programs offered at MCI-Framingham that were included in the program inventory, see Appendix B. The program inventory conducted by researchers demonstrated that program offerings vary in terms of duration and frequency. The majority of programs are held weekly for more than 12 weeks, though many are available daily or more than once a week. However, just less than one-quarter of the programs last less than three weeks. Fewer programs – approximately 17 percent – are described as “ongoing.” Table 11 provides breakdowns on frequency and duration of programs included in the inventory.

In terms of eligibility for programs, about half of all programs have special eligibility requirements and are not open to all inmates. Such programs have prerequisites because of the nature of the topic (limited to parents, limited to those requiring substance abuse treatment, etc.). Others require an appointment or invitation to attend.

Most programs offered at MCI-Framingham are for groups of 10 or more inmates; about 20 percent (21.4%) have more than 50 participants. While specific program topics readily lend themselves to a large-group approach, the kind of life-skills training that is required for successful reentry may be done more successfully with smaller groups of participants.

Programs at MCI-Framingham are not generally based on standard curricula that define a beginning or an end, and because so many programs are new or ongoing, it was difficult for researchers to determine how many programs are completed by inmates.

For those programs that were able to offer completion information, about half reported a substantial 90-100% completion rate. These programs merit further examination as possible models for replication and potential expansion. With 17% of programs reporting a completion rate of 75-89%, the vast majority of programs at the facility experience high rates of completion.

TABLE 11: FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF PROGRAMS

Frequency of Programs			Duration of Programs		
	%	N		%	N
Daily	20.0	14	Less than 3 wks	22.9	16
Weekly	41.4	29	3-6 weeks	10.0	7
Monthly	7.1	5	7-12 weeks	12.9	9
Other	27.1	19	Over 12 weeks	27.1	19
Not reported	4.3	3	Ongoing	17.1	12
			Not reported	10.0	7

N=70 programs

Programs That Directly Address Family Connections

A small number of programs at MCI-Framingham are specifically concerned with creating and/or maintaining connections to family members, and perhaps most importantly, to children. MCI-Framingham dedicates some program staff to the specific task of fostering family connections. The Family Preservation team is comprised of three full-time employees and two trained volunteers (one from AIM who does child custody workshops and one from the Children and Family Law Program who does workshops on custody issues). The team coordinates services with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and facilitates on-site Foster Care Reviews and supervised visits for inmates whose children are in the custody of DSS. A Memorandum of Understanding between DOC and DSS outlines visiting procedures in order to help facilitate “parental visits that are respectful and supportive of the parent-child relationship” (DOC/DSS Memorandum, p.1).

The team also maintains the children’s visiting area, teaches a parenting education class twice a week, runs a parenting support program, a child custody workshop, and implements the “Read to Me Mommy” which involves videotaping an inmate reading an age-appropriate book for their child and sending the book and video to the child. Similarly, the “Book from Mom” program enables inmates to send books to their children. The family preservation staff also coordinates efforts with outside agencies that provide parenting and/or family assistance such as Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (AIM), which provides child custody education workshops and transportation for children from the Boston area to visit their mothers. Furthermore, Girl Scouts Behind Bars is designed to “enhance the parenting skills of inmate mothers, reduce at-risk behaviors of inmates’ daughters, and to strengthen parenting skills.” In addition, staff coordinates the Big Brothers Big Sisters’ Amachi Program which is a mentor-

ing program developed to provide support to children aged 7-15 who have or have had incarcerated mothers.

Families are invited to participate in a Family Orientation that is usually held during the holiday season. During the orientation program, children and adults can participate in a religious service and recreation programs, mothers are offered the opportunity to craft a small gift for each child, and children are given an age-appropriate toy and book. The prison also offers mother-daughter retreats and mom-and-teen retreats.

A few correctional personnel indicated that the Family Preservation program is perceived in positive terms by staff at MCI-Framingham but that the program is understaffed and underutilized by families.

Program Participation

Ninety-six percent of the inmates we interviewed had participated in programs at MCI-Framingham at one time or another during their incarceration. The majority of the women responded positively when asked about MCI-Framingham's programming. The Correctional Recovery Academy seemed to help many of the women understand their addictions while teaching coping skills. The Academy also helped women understand their own criminal behavior. The computer class also received many positive comments, mostly because the women did not know much about computers or specific computer programs before participating in the course.

In terms of the programs that may help women sustain and/or strengthen relationships with their children and families, the women seemed pleased with the offerings and program content. For instance, the "Healthy Relationships" class helped women learn the signs of unhealthy relationships and how to avoid them. In fact, one woman stated that the "material and the teacher were outstanding." All the women who had participated in the parenting class said the class was helpful to them. Based on many of the responses, the women learned new parenting skills. They also thought it was helpful to hear other women's experiences and ideas.

Both correctional personnel and inmates observed that improving program participation is complicated. Many of the female inmates have mental health and/or substance abuse problems requiring intense treatment. Additionally, other responsibilities such as court cases may interfere with women's ability to take advantage of programs available to them. Women who are at the facility short-term may not have an incentive to take advantage of programming. Moreover, inmates serving short sentences may not have time available during incarceration to access other, non-medical programs that would foster personal growth and family development. In contrast, long-term inmates may be more able to commit to a program and attend regularly.

Correctional personnel also reported that programs that focus on family preservation could be difficult to implement because of a lack of interest from family members and children. Several staff members commented on the detached attitudes of visiting children who may have been exposed to abuse or criminal activity, and who naturally have little interest in visiting a prison.

Overall, key personnel reported the same kinds of challenges in responding to the needs of incarcerated women that have been identified nationally and noted in existing scholarship. For instance, while custodial staff keeps records of visits, this information may not necessarily be shared with treatment professionals and may therefore not be considered in treatment programming. This particular finding could inform correctional programming by tailoring programs according to the family constellation of the inmates - a topic discussed in the Recommendations section.

Women's Transition Program

The Women's Transition Program serves offenders releasing from MCI-Framingham, SMCC, Women and Children's Program, Houses of Correction as well as those offenders under the jurisdiction of Probation, Parole or on pre-release status. This program includes a parenting skills component which focuses on skills development and development of the parenting role and responsibilities.

South Middlesex Correctional Center: Family Preservation Programming

SMCC provides family preservation programming and services that include a "parenting education program which is a five-week, ten session group that addresses issues related to understanding the development and behavior of children. It also deals with instilling courage and self-esteem, problem solving, effective discipline, and preventing substance abuse" (South Middlesex Correctional Center, 2008). The curriculum utilizes two texts authored by Popkin, *Parenting Your 1 to 4 Year Old* and *Parenting Your 5 to 12 Year Old*. Additionally, an outside vendor runs a parenting support group that provides a continuum of parenting classes reinforcing the skills developed in the parenting education program. The group "encourages women to take a leadership role in continuing to address the multifaceted aspects surrounding parenting."

Additional programs at SMCC that are considered Departmental Programs that have a family relationship component include Family Violence Reduction, Transition Workshop, and Victims of Violence. Institutional programs at SMCC that relate to incarcerated women's family connections, particular in regard to children, include Visit Coordination by the Department of Social Services, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, Parenting/Family Services, "Read to Me Mommy" Program and the Women's Visiting Cottage/Trailer Program.

SMCC offers the visiting trailer program which is used for overnight and weekend visits between female inmates and their children. The inmates are required to successfully complete the Parenting Education Program before being eligible for this program. In addition, there are various resources and support services that work with the offender and their child(ren) while participating in the Visiting Trailer Program. The Department of Correction is currently constructing the “Family Reunification House” on the grounds of SMCC. This house will be part of a parenting program that will provide incarcerated mothers the skills and education to enhance their relationships with their children. The program will also aid the women in transitioning back into the community. The Family Reunification House will replace the trailer used by incarcerated mothers for extended visits with their children.

Women and Children’s Program

One of the nation’s first residential pre-release facilities for pregnant and parenting female offenders is the Spectrum Women and Children’s Program established in 1989 and based in Westborough, Massachusetts. This program provides “substance abuse treatment, anger management and parenting education services” along with additional programming, much of which is group-based, at this 15-bed facility.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Gender-Specific Framework

A gender-specific framework for women refers to creating an environment where the numerous needs of incarcerated women can be met. Gender-specific approaches are multidimensional and are based upon social and cultural factors including class, race, abuse/trauma history, mental illness and substance abuse issues, and family relationships (Bloom & Covington, 2000; Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003; Sydney, 2006). Interventions provided within a gender-specific framework acknowledge the various pathways into the criminal justice system and focus on strengths-based treatment approaches and skill-building for female inmates (Bloom & Covington, 2000).

Importantly, a gender-specific framework provides reliable and valid information about the needs of women in prison, their families, and children. Educational and treatment programs are responsive to the real-life experiences of women including a history of violence and abuse, economic background and current circumstances, as well as family responsibilities. This framework rests upon the respectful treatment of inmates' privacy and safety needs during the period the women are incarcerated and after they are released. When a gender-specific framework is utilized, resource planning and staff training reflect inmates' circumstances while also bolstering job safety and job satisfaction for correctional staff.

Today there is typically support-in-principle for a gender-specific framework for incarcerated women. However, in reality, on the national level, problem areas continue to exist. Our analyses of the literature found that gender differences may not be considered in an objective classification system and current practices may not adequately identify programming needs of women (Van Voorhis & Presser, 2001). Also on the national level, female inmate resources may be lacking in cultural sensitivity, lacking in the ability to address a woman's trauma history, and women may not receive appropriate aftercare services (Morash, Bynum, & Koons, 1998).

Staff may lack the understanding and training in compassion and listening skills and staff may suffer from workplace stress (Sydney, 2006). Lack of a culturally diverse staff is an important issue facing correctional facilities. Operational factors are important as well. Nationally, women's prison facilities may not be well-maintained and may be less equipped than facilities for men. Prison overcrowding and inadequate space are considered among the most significant problems facing the prison system in the United States.

Table 12 reviews the principles and innovative practices of a gender-specific framework with emphasis upon: 1) female classification/needs assessment; 2) female inmate resources; 3) staff training; and 4) operations.

Innovative Practices: Overview

As indicated earlier in the report, there was general agreement among the key correctional personnel that most incarcerated women at Framingham report coming from a background of violence, either in childhood, or adulthood, or both. Many of these women were not parented or well supervised during their own formative years and may suffer from mental illness or substance abuse as a result of their troubles. In this way, incarcerated women in Massachusetts are no different from the majority of prisoners in the United States. Not surprisingly, the combination of childhood neglect, domestic violence, mental illness, and substance abuse often leaves incarcerated women in a state of emotional immaturity with limited life skills. Therefore, incarcerated women often face significant challenges as they work to maintain relationships with family members and, in particular, their children.

There is some debate over the value of using the term "best practices" for initiatives that have not necessarily been tested empirically. Our preference is to use the term "innovative practices" rather than "best practices." "Best" practices gives the impression that research has determined the best approaches. The term "innovative" practices is less definitive and encourages continued refinement of approaches. The practices discussed here emerged from the extensive literature review on incarcerated mothers and reports of approaches to addressing the unique needs of incarcerated mothers across the country. With that caveat in mind, we summarize in Table 13 what the consensus seems to be about current "innovative practices," providing incarcerated mothers and their children the tools they can use to foster the development and maintenance of healthy relationships. This overview specifically identifies practices related to contact with children and family and includes a table of examples currently in place in correctional facilities across the United States.

Contact with Child(ren) and Family

Research indicates that when there is on-going contact between a child and his or her parent, both the child and the parent benefit (Poehlmann, 2005a, 2005b). The children adjust better to family disruption and the difficulty of parental separation. The parent is also more likely to maintain a feeling of connection to the child. Child contact is associated with more responsible parenting which is difficult and challenging even under optimal circumstances (Supervised Visitation Network, 2002). If regular contact is lost, the child can experience feelings of abandonment, while the parent loses much of his/her motivation to remain involved with the family. In addition, children will readily fantasize about the "missing" parent, and often such imaginings have little basis in reality (Johnston & Straus, 1999). The goal of consistent parent-child access is to maintain the parent-child bond

TABLE 12: GENDER-SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK

	Principles	Innovative Practices
1. Classification/Needs Assessment	<p>Inmate security and programming needs are determined through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Procedures for collecting appropriate data » Regular assessment of security needs (continuum) 	<p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Appropriate gender classification instruments » Needs assessment to determine family situation including status of children » Utilize alternative sentencing options whenever possible (e.g. electronic monitoring)
2. Female Inmate Resources	<p>A holistic approach that is “trauma informed” and multi-dimensional responsive to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Mental illness » Dysfunctional relationships » Generational substance abuse and violence » Parental and relational needs » Economic stability, access to employment, housing, healthcare, and education » Need for autonomy and empowerment 	<p>Resources should provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Inter-agency coordination of program delivery » Access to community-based services » Family focused intervention » Services with a “cultural lens” » Strong female role models » Peer-led services, supportive networks » Emotionally and physically safe environment » Relational/diversity needs assessment » Continuous quality medical care in prison » Examination of mother-child programming through the eyes of the child
3. Staff Training	<p>Program staff training includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Working with women in “trauma sensitive ways” » Incorporating women into the “concept of leadership” » Providing information about female developmental needs » Knowledgeable about contextual differences (i.e. race, class, and gender) » Providing information about child-welfare 	<p>Training curricula should incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Non-directive conversational approach (active listening) » Direction to specific occupational roles » Content based upon interviews with offenders and staff » Interactive and experiential exercises » Video scenarios from actual inmate experiences » Thematic educational sessions on female development » Self-taught training alternatives (i.e. video instruction)
4. Operations	<p>Facilities’ physical plant and grounds include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Sufficient space within the facility » Up-to-date equipment and tools » Visiting accommodations » Location accessible by public transportation 	<p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Operations budget includes “set-aside” funds for on-going maintenance and emergencies » Specialized medical equipment on-site » Evaluation of housing options for potential upgrade » State sponsored funding for transportation for family visits

and create a secure environment for both adult and child (Stern & Oehme, 2002).

Visiting Environment

Visiting allows mothers and child(ren) to bond while playing, talking, and interacting. Research has shown that environment plays a role in both alleviating and accelerating stressful responses. Careful consideration should be given to lighting and furniture arrangements, and it would be helpful if the physical space were cheerful and soothing (Houck & Loper, 2002).

Moreover, for children, the same age-appropriate toys, activities, and/or games should be available on a consistent basis. The ideal visiting environment should include a blackboard and/or whiteboard to give younger children a chance to draw pictures or play games. Children should be encouraged to bring items to give to mom (i.e. a pic-

ture). While it may not be possible to allow snacks, allowing a parent and child to have a snack or meal together can engender opportunities for symbolic nurturing and a satisfying experience for both parties.

Role of Staff in Mother/Child Visitation

Ideally, trained staff should be on hand to facilitate interaction. The presence of a neutral third party adult who can monitor the interactions between parent and child(ren) is an essential component. Often children have been traumatized within the family, as it once existed; consequently, a high priority needs to be given to creating a predictable environment wherein the child feels some sense of control (Johnston & Straus, 1999). Children should be introduced to the staff, assured of their availability during and following visits, and adequately informed of the schedule/routine surrounding visitation (including frequency and duration) (Stern & Oehme,

2002). Such preparation should always be conducted in a developmentally and age-appropriate manner. A child requires safe contact with an absent parent without having to be put in the middle of the parental conflicts, parental psychopathology, or parental inconsistency.

Those who monitor parent-child interactions need to possess an ability to remain consistent and caring, as well as be non-judgmental and non-critical. The National Supervised Visitation Network (2002) also recommends the following characteristics for staff:

- Experience in a child care-giving role and substantial experience with children;
- Ability to relate to cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic groups and diverse life-styles;
- Supportive and positive attitude;
- Maturity, diplomacy, and common sense;
- Ability to express authority and consideration;
- Ability to maintain independence;
- Ability to assist parents with parenting skills;
- Capacity to be observant; and
- Good communication and writing skills.

Rituals

A ritual when the parent and child greet one another, and another when they depart, is usually appropriate irrespective of a child's age. Younger children need a concrete reminder of the parent when they depart, such as a toy or picture. Often, an activity can serve as the initial or parting ritual; for instance, parent and child can draw together, and the child can leave the facility with something they created together.

Types of Visits

Extended Visitation gives inmates a chance to parent in a controlled environment. This may be done in conjunction with parenting classes to give mothers a chance to practice what they have learned. This kind of visitation provides an opportunity to help mothers assess their own skills while learning from their peers. Examples of extended visitation include holiday parties, and special visits, such as overnights or weekend stays.

Enhanced Visitation affords an opportunity for mothers and children to interact in groups; it allows the children to be with other kids in the same situation and not feel so isolated. Examples of enhanced visitation include camp programs and mother/teen days.

One effort that has demonstrated the successful development of a visitation program with incarcerated parents is the "Girls Scouts Behind Bars Initiative" that began in 1992 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1995). This program focuses on mothers and daughters and there is equal consideration of the parent's and the child's needs.

While shared time together is meant to be enjoyable and consistent, the program also incorporates family life programs, topics on violence prevention, and coping with family disruption. As with other visitation programs, one additional goal is to help the mother develop and maintain a role as a responsible, involved parent. This kind of program provides the child(ren) an opportunity to engage with the parent and to get to know her mother better.

Visiting Assistance promotes effective communication between inmates and families and facilities. It keeps families and caregivers aware of resources available to them and it acknowledges that transportation may be limited or financially prohibitive. Assistance measures may include transportation assistance and a handbook for families/caregivers on prison policies including visiting schedules.

Other Communication

Building and sustaining a relationship with the child depends on consistent and predictable contact, even when in-person parenting time is impossible. Along with appropriate phone contact, mail and when feasible, e-mail correspondence can help a child remain connected to the parent. In addition, expressing and sustaining interest in the school-aged child's academic pursuits is essential.

Phone Contact has been proven effective when divorced/separated parents are unable to have regular in-person contact with their child(ren) (Stahl, 2002). Phoning, even intermittently, allows the child to feel cared for and to develop an awareness that the parent is interested in the child's day-to-day routines and activities.

Programming for Women

Gender-specific programming is critical for incarcerated women as the special needs of women, and particularly women who are mothers must be addressed by correctional facilities. That is, services for women must not simply be placed into male-model programs. While services for women and men should be equal, equality and sameness are not the same (van Wormer & Kaplan, 2006). Programming needs to focus around the real lives and experiences of incarcerated women (Moe & Ferraro, 2006). An important focus of gender-specific treatment becomes improved self esteem for incarcerated women. However, positive treatment models for incarcerated women can be used by the government to expand women's prisons, rather than rethinking incarceration itself, especially for non-violent offenders (van Wormer & Kaplan, 2006).

Programs should provide personal support including peer support. The creation of an emotionally and physically safe environment for talking is essential so the participants feel they can talk confidentially. Also important are strong female role models and service with a "cultural lens." Additionally, gender-specific programming for women should acknowledge that there is no clear distinction between a victim and an offender (Huebner & Gustafson, 2007). A significant number of women in

prison have a history of childhood as well as adult abuse. While these women are incarcerated for perpetrating crimes, indeed they have histories of their own victimization (Norton-Hawk, 2005). This means that gender-specific programs must be prepared to deal with how a history of abuse impacts present day functioning for female inmates, especially how such abuse affects parenting expectations and experiences.

A gender-sensitive model also emphasizes a holistic health focus on treatment for mental illness and substance abuse as prerequisites to developing any kind of relationship with inmates' children and their caretakers. Similarly, the loss women experience when their children are taken away has to be addressed prior to considering any form of contact with children and their caretakers.

Many inmates had no effective parental role model; they may lack the ability to parent their child(ren) (Luke, 2002). They need to be provided the tools to learn how to be a positive role model for their child(ren). Programs that foster relationships hold the potential to reduce substance abuse, teen pregnancy and criminal justice costs. Performance in a parenting program can be one measure of the likelihood of parent-child reunification (Luke, 2002).

Programming in prison also serves to prepare inmates for release. A significant national issue is how to assist women released from prison to make a successful reentry into the community. Planning for reentry should not come just during the last month of incarceration but should be part of the overall plan for a woman while she is serving her time (Covington, 2002). Women often face many barriers as they transition out of a correctional facility, including difficulties obtaining employment. In Massachusetts, the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) may present a major obstacle to obtaining a job. A criminal record that is available to potential employers can effectively prevent women from working, especially in human service and health-related positions such as home health aides. In addition to problems with employment, a history of incarceration can limit access to eligibility for public assistance benefits including public housing (Legal Action Center, 2004).

There is considerable consensus in the literature that a well-coordinated continuum of care is needed for successful community reentry (Collins & Howe, 2006; Covington, 2002; Legal Action Center, 2004). We extend this recommended continuum of care to include assuring that the needs of the children are also met.

The work of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety (EOPS)/Family Justice Enhancing Reentry through Family and Government Partnerships in 2006 offered a clear picture of the concerns of women and their families as related to prison release. This study was funded by EOPS and the study and project were conducted with full support and cooperation from the DOC. This report was based on 41 face-to-face and telephone interviews with

incarcerated women, women released from correctional facilities, and family members of these women. Family members and women identified emotional support to be one of the most important ways families help with community reentry. The most common concern about release by both the women and their families was a fear, relapse, or return to previous behavior. Not surprisingly, released women found work and emotional issues to be the most common challenges for them. Correctional staff members stated that issues related to children and housing were the most common challenges facing released women. Importantly, 60% of family members of released women stated that the greatest need facing women was related to access to mental health services.

In order to meet the needs of women facing the challenges of reentry into the community, Collins and Howe (2006) offer important recommendations. Correctional programs need to use gender-specific risk and needs assessment tools to predict the needs of women, including safety issues. An integrated case management model is needed to ensure that women's needs are addressed in a coordinated way. Principles of trauma-care must be utilized so that professionals can respond to the histories of the many kinds of abuse the women have endured. These scholars also suggest using relational models to help ensure the development of trusting relationships that are particularly important to women (such as family members and professionals). Finally, Collins and Howe suggest that collaborative responses are needed by correctional personnel and social service providers.

Support for Family and Caregivers

As discussed earlier in the report, maternal incarceration impacts not only inmates but also child(ren) and other family members. Providing services that meet the needs of the incarcerated mother as well as those of their families is essential to guaranteeing stability for the child(ren). Moreover, the needs of caregivers who take responsibility for the children of incarcerated mothers must be addressed, as the scope and nature of these needs are likely to be significant.

Furthermore, similar to mothers' reluctance to tell law enforcement or prison personnel about their child(ren), caregivers may be reluctant to ask for help from outside organizations (Hairston, 2002). They may not be aware of any benefits they could be eligible for or any social service agencies that can help them. Some may think that revealing that they have a relative in prison may hurt their eligibility or lead to the child being taken away.

TABLE 13: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Component 1: Contact with Children and Family

Benefits of Component	Innovative Practices	Examples
<p>Provide opportunity for mother and child(ren) to bond while playing</p> <p>Provide opportunity for inmates to parent in a controlled environment</p> <p>Chance for mothers to practice what they have learned if done in conjunction with parenting classes</p> <p>Allow for peer-to-peer learning</p> <p>Afford opportunity for moms and children to interact in groups (children may share similar circumstances and avoid feelings of isolation)</p> <p>Establish effective communication between inmates and families and facilities</p> <p>Ensure awareness of resources available to family/caregivers</p>	<p>Visiting Environment</p> <p>Welcoming, comfortable environment</p> <p>Snacks</p> <p>Child can bring items to give to mom (i.e. picture)</p> <p>Blackboards/whiteboards</p> <p>Age appropriate toys/books/games/activities</p> <p>Trained staff to facilitate interaction</p>	<p>MCI-Framingham has children's visiting area furnished with toys and books for all-aged children, as well as regular weekly and special holiday activities. Inmates may choose a book provided by the Family Preservation staff to give to their child(ren).</p> <p>Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York provides books, toys, and activities to foster interaction and nurturing; spend time with other kids in same situation; has a carpeted furnished recreation center maintained with vending-machine funds, prison art classes paint murals on the walls; staffed by a teacher and eight inmate caregivers; provides for day-long stays and over-night stays.</p> <p>The FCI Danbury facility's children's visitation center has child-size furniture, toys, games, books, and activities such as reading, storytelling, board games, puppetry, arts and crafts, and birthday/holiday celebrations.</p> <p>The North Carolina Correctional Institute for Women's MATCH (Mothers And Their Children) child visitation center is child-friendly – there are no correctional officers, and the center is colorful, with couches and a kitchen; there are no physical contact restrictions.</p>
	<p>Extended Visitation</p> <p>Special visits, such as overnights or weekend stays</p> <p>Enhanced Visitation</p> <p>Camp programs</p> <p>Mother/teen days</p> <p>Mother/child retreats</p>	<p>The Massachusetts Department of Correction has the visiting trailer program on the grounds of South Middlesex Correctional Center which is used for overnight and weekend visits between eligible female inmates and their children.</p> <p>The Tennessee Prison for Women has a 16-bed Child Visitation Unit where mother and children are able to have a weekend visit and bond in a family-like setting away from the general inmate population.</p> <p>South Dakota Prison for Women has a State Mother and Child Residency Program and the P.A.C.T. (Parent Children Together) program; the (minor) child can spend every weekend in house on grounds.</p> <p>Shakopee Women's Prison, allows monthly overnight visits and vacation stays with children for eligible inmates.</p> <p>The Oklahoma DOC schedules a Playday with lunch, games, and art activities for inmate mothers and their children.</p> <p>The Nebraska Correctional Center for Women offers overnight visitation stays (up to five nights per month for children between one and six years old).</p> <p>Indiana has Family Ark Summer Day Camp for children of incarcerated mothers; includes camp activities such as arts and crafts, games, pony rides on prison grounds.</p> <p>At the Illinois Decatur, Dwight, Lincoln, and Fox Valley facilities, family activities range from day camps for mothers and children, video visiting programs, storybook programs, summer read programs, 4-H clubs and holiday activities for mothers and children.</p> <p>Illinois Decatur Facility also offers Parents and Children Together Program, giving families a chance to have visual contact through video conferencing technology. Children are given a videocassette of the visit along with a free book.</p> <p>Delaware has 4 visiting rooms for eligible mothers to stay overnight with their children (infants-10 years of age).</p> <p>Idaho's Pocatello Women's Correctional Center offers a one-week Camp Share program, where mothers and children participate in counseling and recreational activities throughout the day, and children spend the nights at a community center and participate in evening activities planned by community members.</p> <p>In Florida, the DOC has a program "Reading and Family Ties – Face to Face" which transmits live video story-reading sessions between mother and child over the internet free of charge.</p>

TABLE 13: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

Component 1: Contact with Children and Family		
Benefits of Component	Innovative Practices	Examples
	<p>Visiting Assistance</p> <p>Transportation assistance</p> <p>Handbook for families/caregivers on prison policies including visiting schedules</p> <p><i>*For additional examples, refer to "Caregiver/Family Support" section</i></p>	<p>The Massachusetts Department of Correction works with the non-profit agency Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (AIM) which provides child custody education workshops and transportation for children from the Boston area to visit their mothers.</p> <p>The New York Department of Corrections provides free transportation for family visitors to various prisons across the state. Also has a Family Reunion Program, providing overnight visiting in private home-like units in 11 facilities.</p> <p>Vermont DOC has a privately run Family Tree Access Center, which facilitates parent-child contact, parent-to-parent communication, and social services coordination (refer also to "Caregiver/Family Support" below).</p> <p>In California, Centerforce, a private nonprofit agency under contract with the Department of Correction, provides transportation assistance for visitors. This organization operates "visiting centers" outside each prison to help families stay connected.</p>
Component 2: Programming		
Benefits of Component	Best Practices	Examples
<p>Provide inmates the tools they need to learn how to be a positive role model for their children</p> <p>Prepare inmates for addressing release-related issues such as: employment, financial management, and housing</p>	<p>Parent Support Programs</p> <p>Parenting programs that focus on prison-parenting along with preparation for parenting on release</p> <p>Parenting programs focus on the "child's view"</p> <p>Parenting help with communication with child</p> <p>General Programming Guidelines</p> <p>Programs provide personal support; include peer support</p> <p>Creation of an emotionally and physically safe environment for talking</p> <p>A holistic approach</p> <p>Family focused intervention</p> <p>Service provided with a "cultural lens"</p> <p>Strong female role models</p>	<p>MCI-Framingham has a 10-week parenting education program on child development and behavior; utilizes group discussion and role-playing; also has program specifically for parents of teens, a child custody workshop that teaches mothers/grandmothers about legal processes of minor children custody, a Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program to enhance parenting and safety skills and mother-daughter relationships. Offers a "Read to Me Mommy" program which teaches mothers parenting skills and develops age-appropriate reading materials for mothers to present on video – and a "Book From Mom" program, a library where mothers can select books to read to their children.</p> <p>Minnesota DOC operates a multifaceted Parenting/Family Program, that includes a parenting unit, parenting education and support, childcare planning, extended visitation, and liaison work between offenders and professionals involved in their children's care.</p> <p>At the Illinois Decatur, Dwight, Lincoln, and Fox Valley facilities, family activities range from day camps for mothers and children, video visiting programs, storybook programs, and summer read programs (also see - Visiting section).</p> <p>The Kansas DOC has partnered with United Methodist Women to create the Parenting/Family Program, where inmate mothers learn parenting skills to practice during extended visits with their children.</p> <p>Nebraska Correctional Center for Women offers parenting classes, including money management, physical growth and development, social and emotional growth, and alternatives to spanking.</p> <p>Indiana's Women's Prison has an outreach program that links mothers with home, children, and caregivers via an outreach coordinator. Offers a "Responsible Mother, Healthy Baby" case management program for pregnant inmates, bonding programs/events, children's visitation center, summer day camps (see above in Visiting section), and a biannual parent-teen day. An outreach family care coordinator links mothers with home, children and caregivers, and meets w/children and caretakers at homes to ensure environment health and safety and family planning, staffed by full-time RN.</p> <p>South Dakota has a Mother Goose program (joint with SD Dept. of Education and Cultural Affairs, State Library, Head Start, and Discovery Center/Aquarium) that teaches incarcerated women how to introduce math and science skills to their four to seven-year-old children.</p>

TABLE 13: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

Component 2: Programming		
Benefits of Component	Innovative Practices	Examples
		<p>Oregon rewards its female inmates with therapeutic visiting sessions if they complete the 12-week research-based education parenting curriculum program; visits include the mother, the child, the child's caretaker, and a family therapist, and work on specific skills learned in the class; therapist provides feedback to the inmate.</p> <p>Coffee Creek Correctional Facility offers the Even Start Family Literacy Program, to facilitate family bonding, parenting skills, and literacy needs of mother and child; bi-monthly meetings and home visits from a family advocate are held to ensure child's needs are being met while parent is incarcerated; mothers attend debriefing sessions after each meeting with their child.</p> <p>At the FCI Danbury location, parenting skills programs include anger management, how to interpret children's behavior, how to administer positive discipline, and how to "parent from a distance."</p> <p>CA DOC offers two programs: a 17-day long, all-day class focusing on child rearing and responsible parenting; the Friends Outside 30-hour program, designed to reduce child abuse/neglect, set the stage for successful reunification, and assist participants to achieve closure if losing contact/ custody.</p>

Component 3: Caregiver/Family Support		
Benefits of Component	Innovative Practices	Examples
<p>Provide services that address the needs of family members and caregivers of children</p> <p>Administer programs focused on children and caregivers</p>	<p>Services for Children</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <p>Counseling</p> <p>Programs that allow for interaction with other children in the same position</p>	<p>MCI-Framingham offers the Big Brothers Big Sisters' Amachi Program which is a mentoring program to provide support to children aged 7-15 who have or have had an incarcerated mother.</p> <p>Early Head Start Program at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Oregon serves children up to age three; children spend biweekly sessions in a facility, participating in a playgroup and receiving health and mental health services. Inmates and caregivers participate in parenting classes and spend time parenting the children.</p> <p>Pennsylvania Prison Society has SKIP (Support for Kids with Incarcerated Parents) program, a 12-week support group for children ages 8-12 led by a trained instructor; also gives caregivers resources and referrals for finding additional local support.</p> <p>Idaho's Pocatello Women's Correctional Center offers a one-week Camp Share program, where mothers and children participate in counseling and recreational activities; children spend the nights at a community center and participate in evening activities planned by community members. (also see - Programming)</p>
	<p>Caregiving Support</p> <p>Family Therapy</p> <p>Training and support</p> <p>Legal Advocacy</p> <p>Parenting</p>	<p>CA DOC is required to contract with a nonprofit to provide free visitor services such as weather shelter, transportation assistance, childcare for visitor's children, emergency clothing, information on visiting processing, and referrals. (see also - Contact with Children and Family)</p> <p>Texas DOCJ offers a Guide for the Families of Offenders, with a description of correctional system and policies, along with a family liaison officer.</p> <p>Washington's Correctional Institute for Women has a Family Council, which establishes communication between the institution, families, and inmates.</p> <p>New Mexico provides a booklet for arrested parents called "Planning for your Children," that explains what inmates may expect and what they can provide to their children and their children's caregivers, and directs them to a booklet on caregiver legal issues and a booklet on resources for children or caregivers.</p> <p>Washington DOC offers The Family Help Line, a statewide, toll-free "warm" telephone line, and is a program of Parent Trust for Washington Children. The Family Help Line offers callers information and referral; parenting education and techniques; supportive listening and assistance with stress reduction and self-advocacy.</p>

TABLE 13: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES (CONTINUED)

Component 3: Caregiver/Family Support

Benefits of Component	Innovative Practices	Examples
		<p>Ohio DOC and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services united with Alvis House, Center for Families and Children, and Talbert House to develop “family reentry plans,” programs to help guide the offender and his/her family upon release into the community.</p> <p>Vermont DOC has a privately run Family Tree Access Center, which facilitates parent-child contact, parent-to-parent communication, and social services coordination (<i>also see – Contact with Children and Family</i>).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Massachusetts Department of Correction has taken many steps to help mitigate the challenges and obstacles women in prison face, particularly in regard to the challenges of developing and enhancing family connections. The Department has proven itself in the establishment of many programs and services offered to women in the correctional system.

In order to ensure that incarcerated women are provided the best chance for building and fostering healthy family relationships, especially with their children, we offer the following recommendations that emerged from the findings. It is important to note that several recommendations offered here were identified through interviews conducted with correctional personnel.

The Massachusetts Department of Correction should be provided the financial resources needed to further develop existing programs and services that help foster family relationships of female offenders and to implement the following recommendations:

1. In-depth Needs Assessment

Early identification of women who have children is essential for appropriate program development for the mothers and a linked response to services for the children and caregivers. This can be accomplished by:

- a) An in-depth needs-assessment to supplement current intake practices and enhance communication and information sharing between custodial staff and treatment staff for a fuller picture of the incarcerated woman's family contacts - especially those with children. This needs assessment form would serve as the basis to develop both short and long-term goals for maintaining connections with family and children. In addition, it will enable the inmate and staff to choose what programs and services can help not only the inmate but also her children and members of her family.

2. Visiting

The Department should continue efforts to enhance visiting and contact between incarcerated mothers and their children and family members. This can be done by adopting mother/child visitation guidelines, which would ideally include:

- a) The development of transportation alternatives for visiting; this could include assessing the feasibility of providing bus, train and/or taxi vouchers for visiting family members and children.

- b) The expansion of collaboration with social service agencies to develop visitor services. These services should include helping families negotiate the visiting process and locate appropriate transportation, and answering questions regarding contact. This kind of collaborative effort should be pursued in collaboration with community agencies.

- c) An increase in DSS facilitation for children's visits; this may require an increase in the capacity of Department of Social Services to make increased facilitation possible.

- d) The assessment of the potential for expanding available options related to extended and enhanced visits, including day camps for children and other programs held in the facility to other segments of the female offender population. This may include the option for outdoor play and activities for children's visits at MCI-Framingham.

- e) The possibility of developing a cyber-visiting system using video conferencing to connect mothers to their children. This could also include an examination of the feasibility of using the Internet for electronic mail and telephone service such as Skype.

- f) Making available to caregivers The Children of Prisoners Library booklet, "Visiting Mom or Dad." Refer to Appendix C.

- g) A review of recording procedures for all inmate visits to ensure complete information is collected regarding relationship to inmate, age of children, and documentation of DSS-facilitated visits. This can aid future research efforts on family relationships of offenders.

3. Program Enhancements

As detailed in this report, the Department of Correction has developed comprehensive programming for inmates and women have the option of participating in parenting programs, of which there is no shortage. Some potential enhancements to the current program offerings may include:

- a) Increased Family Preservation staff for greater utilization of existing family-related programming by families of incarcerated women; and, as appropriate, an emphasis on small-group settings.
- b) Opportunities for inmates to practice what they have learned during an extended visit with her

child(ren). Ideally, a trained staff member should be present to evaluate inmate progress and work with the inmate to make improvements.

c) A comprehensive evaluation of the entire program delivery system. While MCI-Framingham conducts informal evaluations of each program that it offers, a comprehensive evaluation of the entire program delivery system may assist the institution in setting goals and improving program implementation, especially as related to family preservation. Such an evaluation may also help create systemic changes that would improve reentry results, lower recidivism rates, and even break generational cycles of criminality.

d) Efforts to increase the availability and/or frequency of program offerings to provide ample opportunity for inmate participation.

e) An assurance that children of all ages are provided adequate opportunity to engage in age-appropriate relationship-building activities with mothers.

f) An increase in the type and amount of peer-to-peer programming.

4. Support Services for Caregivers and Children

The development of support services for the caregivers and children would go far in working towards stabilizing the family environment. Enhancements in the support services may include:

a) Consideration of adding an Outreach Program Coordinator to the correctional system. The Department could investigate the possibility of further development of an Outreach Program Coordinator to work with community organizations to obtain resources and services for mothers, their children, and caregivers while mothers are in prison. Resources may include transportation services for visits, family therapy, parenting classes for caregivers, and mentoring for the children. The Outreach Coordinator would link the mother to her child(ren)'s caregiver in an effort to promote contact.

b) An examination of the possibility of having a DSS case worker or manager physically located at MCI-Framingham to coordinate and oversee all DSS-involved cases.

c) Seeking the input of family members and children's caregivers to improve services to incarcerated mothers. Focus groups or short questionnaires can yield simple and practical suggestions to enhance relationships among family members and caregivers when a mother is incarcerated.

5. On-going Research and Evaluation

a) To assure that the implementation of "innovative practices" are indeed effective, a system can be devised that will provide an annual professional evaluation of program services for incarcerated women.

b) In order to develop a clearer and more complete picture of the experiences and status of children of incarcerated mothers, the DOC could track the placements of children of incarcerated mothers as well as their outcomes.

c) Efforts should be made to collect information on the needs, perspectives, and experiences of children to identify additional ways to address the unique needs and situations of this population of children.

d) The DSS worker or manager located at MCI-Framingham could also oversee records management of all DSS-involved children in order to ensure adequate service provision. These records could also serve as the basis for tracking short and long-term outcomes of children.

CONCLUSION

Massachusetts has been and currently is developing model approaches and initiatives for female correctional programming with an emphasis on family preservation. The critical strengths of correctional programming in Massachusetts include the great number of gender-specific programs and services offered to incarcerated women, the high quality of training available to staff, and the holistic, integrative, trauma-informed approach to programs and services for female offenders.

Ensuring appropriate services for incarcerated mothers and their families, particularly children, can mean healthier parent/child relationships during the mother's absence. It can also mean a reduction in the significant problems children of incarcerated parents experience as children and as adults. This report highlights the importance of incarcerated women maintaining, and in some cases developing, healthier family relationships. Implementing the recommendations offered here would go far to assist women as they strive to develop healthy relationships with some of the most important people in their lives and may also reduce the likelihood of their children being involved in the criminal justice system.

Our findings confirm the important role that correctional facilities can play in encouraging family visitation within a supportive environment. It calls upon correctional staff to work to overcome obstacles to visitation, such as addressing the transportation needs of family members and expanding resources to make more available and accessible transportation services. Additionally, enhanced and extended visitation options would go far to foster improved family relationships.

In an effort to enhance existing correctional resources for incarcerated women, their families, and especially their children, it is important to learn from correctional programs operating in other states. By integrating components of innovative programs from other states and building on the substantial resources and efforts already in place, the correctional system in Massachusetts will go even further in addressing the unique needs of incarcerated women.

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APPENDIX A

MCI-Framingham Visiting Policy

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VISITING HOURS

Inmates in the general population may have visits on Tuesday and Thursday. The hours are from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. On weekdays, visitor processing stops from 3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. If visitors are inside the Visiting Room prior to 3:45 p.m. they may remain inside until 5:00 p.m. or when count clears. On weekends, visitors must have a visitor's pass prior to 3:30 p.m. to visit the first half. Tuesday and Thursdays, visitors must have a visitor's pass prior to 8:15 p.m. to visit the second half.

SCHEDULE FOR SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

Saturday: 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Inmate last name begins with M-Z

Saturday: 5:00 p.m. - 8:45 p.m. - Inmate last name begins with A-L.

Sunday: 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Inmate last name begins with A-L

Sunday: 5:00 p.m. - 8:45 p.m. - Inmate last name begins with M-Z

- Holiday schedules shall follow the visiting schedule for the assigned day, unless otherwise authorized by the Superintendent.

Inmates are allowed a maximum number of five (5) visits per week during scheduled visiting hours. During weekdays an inmate may remain in the visiting room throughout both visiting period if they desire. An inmate who is on a visit for any portion of either period shall be charged with utilization of one visit (i.e. if the visit runs from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. then the inmate shall be charged with 2 visiting periods). No visitor or inmate shall be allowed to enter or exit the visiting room between 2:50 p.m. and 3:10 p.m. due to change of shift and between 4:15 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. due to the major count. Maximum number of visitors allowed per visit will be two (2) adults and three (3) children.

Visitors may visit for the entire scheduled visiting period. In emergency situations and overcrowding, at the discretion of the Shift Commander, visits may be limited to no less than one (1) hour in duration to accommodate all visitors. Visits that started earliest will be terminated first (excluding visitors who traveled over 100 miles) to provide room when visitors are waiting to enter the visiting room due to overcrowding.

Visitors who have been convicted of a felony or have been sentenced to a penal institution must complete a Felony / Background Form and receive permission from the Superintendent, prior to visiting.

Visitors must present a photo identification, which, in the opinion of the admitting officer(s) is adequate. A current MA. Driver's license, passport or an identification card issued by the Department of Transitional Assistance shall be sufficient. Visitors may be requested to produce their vehicle registration.

Attorney, law student, and paralegal visits will be conducted in one of the three designated attorney-visiting rooms. This will allow offenders confidential contact with their attorneys and/or representatives.

SPECIAL VISITS

Superintendent shall approve special visits (I.E. Extended hours/visitors). Request for Special Visits must be made in writing one week in advance. Request made outside this time frame due to a family crisis or emergency shall be handled on an individual basis. Inmate must request the special visit through their respective Unit Manager. The Unit Manager will review same and make a recommendation to Superintendent.

MINOR CONSENT FORMS

1. No child who was a victim of the inmate's offense shall be authorized to visit without the authorization of the Commissioner or designee.

2. A parent entering with their minor child must have a copy of the minor's birth certificate and appropriate identification with them each time they visit.

3. If the adult entering with a minor is the minor's Legal Guardian and has a court document indicating they are the appointed legal guardian, they must present that court document, along with a copy of the minor's birth certificate and appropriate identification, each time they visit.

4. An individual that is not the parent or legal guardian of a minor must submit a completed Minor Request Form to the Superintendent, and obtain the Superintendent's approval to bring the minor in to visit prior to visiting. Staff must verify that there is an approved Minor Consent Form on file for the minor, and that the individual accompanying the minor has a copy of the approved minor form, along with the minor's birth certificate and appropriate identification.

5. Staff at Outer Control shall ensure that the parent entering the facility with a minor presents a copy of the child's birth certificate and verify that they are the parent noted on said birth certificate.

6. Staff shall ensure that the legal guardian entering the facility with a minor presents a copy of the court document proving they are the minor's legal guardian if they have been court appointed as Legal Guardian, along with a copy of the child's birth certificate and appropriate identification.

7. If there is no approved Minor Consent Form on file, the officer will give the individual a blank form and advise them that the form must be completed by the minor's parent or legal guardian, then submitted to the Superintendent with necessary documentation for approval.

8. If the MCI-Framingham inmate is the parent of the minor and wishes the minor to visit, the inmate may fill out a Minor Consent Form, which may be obtained from a Unit Team member. The inmate must ensure that:

a. The form is filled out completely, noting the name and address of the adult that will bring the minor to MCI Framingham.

b. A copy of the birth certificate is provided for attachment to the Minor Consent Form.

9. Once a. and b. have been completed, the information should be forwarded to the Superintendent for approval. Upon the Superintendent's approval, the form will be returned to the inmate; a copy of same, along with the birth certificate, will be sent to the adult approved to bring the minor to visit; and a copy will be placed on file at Visitor Processing .

10. If the Minor Consent Form is on file and the individual accompanying the minor is listed as being authorized to bring the child to visit, the minor will be allowed to enter with the accompanying adult.

11. If the minor consent form on file does not list the individual accompanying the minor as being authorized to bring the child in, the minor will not be allowed to enter the facility.

VENDING MACHINES

1. The machines and their contents are made available for inmates and their visitors for their personal consumption in the visiting room.
2. There will be no food or drink removed from the visiting area by any visitor or inmate.
3. It is the responsibility of the inmate to ensure that all trash is deposited into the appropriate receptacles.
4. Abuse of the machines may result in the suspension of visiting privileges or use of vending machines.
5. Sharing of food products and or/drinks will not be allowed. Food or drinks will not be allowed in the children's area.

PARENTING ROOM

1. Inmates who receive visits, which include small children, are encouraged to utilize the parenting room in the visiting area.
2. All children must be supervised by the guardian or parent at all times.
3. All toys are to remain in the parenting room and be put away at the end of the visit.
4. Inmates and visitors who abuse the privileges of the parenting room may be subject to loss of visiting privileges.
5. Food or beverages are not allowed in the parenting room.

VISITOR DRESS CODE

All visitors, 14 years of age or older, are required to adhere to the dress code. Any questionable clothing issues shall be directed to the Visitor Processing Sgt./Officer in charge.

The following IS NOT acceptable for visitors entering MCI-Framingham:

- Bare feet
- Bathing suits, shorts, any clothing with excessive pockets, drawstrings, excessively baggy or tight clothing, hooded clothing, sheer, excessively revealing or transparent clothing and bodysuits of any type.
- Any clothing that displays a gang affiliation or is in any way attributable to gang culture; additionally, clothing that is obscene, racial or displays sexual content is not allowed.
- Any clothing similar to that issued to an inmate or uniformed personnel.
- Double layered clothing on the bottom half of their person (e.g., two (2) pairs of pants, two (2) pairs of underpants, or skirt and slacks, etc.)
- Farmer jeans of any type: shorts, dress, pants, overalls, jumper, etc.
- Fatigue or camouflage clothing.
- Hair ribbons, bands, barrettes, or hair accessories of any type.
- Jackets, coats or vests of any type.
- Jeans of any type or color are not allowed by males at male facilities and females at female facilities.
- Jewelry – No earrings, facial jewelry, necklaces, bracelets or watches allowed. The only exception is a wedding ring and medical alert jewelry.
- Leather, or clothing with excessive metal.

- Flip-flops
- Dresses or skirts will not exceed 4" above the knee, no slits or openings extending 4" above the knee. Wrap around skirts.
- Sleeveless clothing, tank tops, halter-tops, muscle shirts, or clothing that reveals the midriff or exposes the back. Tube tops of any type are not allowed.
- Sweatshirts, sweatpants, wind pants or exercise clothing.
- Ties
- Zippers that go the full length of the garment.
- T-shirts with logos are not allowed; however, shirts without a collar will be allowed.
- Leg warmers
- Hospital type gowns/clothing/scrubs.
- Hats of any type.
- No cell phones or pagers allowed.

Note: All clothing worn must be neat and presentable. Traditional undergarments (bras and underpants) must be worn. All shirts or tops must be tucked into clothing and must remain tucked in at all times. Religious clothing/headgear may be allowed and is subject to search. The Shift Commander will be the final approving authority

***NOTE** Elderly visitors, pregnant females or individuals with medical documentation of an existing condition may be allowed to wear clothing (pants) with an elastic waistband.*

INSTITUTION RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. Upon entrance to the Visiting Room, inmates will provide the Visiting Room Officer their institutional pass and institutional ID card.
2. Seating will be on a first come first served basis and only in those areas designated for inmates. As the inmates enter the visiting room they will take a plastic chair from the stack and place it across from their visitor's seats. When the visit has ended they will return their plastic chair to the stack and wait to be strip searched prior to exiting the visiting room. Seating will be monitored by the Visiting Room Sergeant or the Officer in Charge.
3. Inmate are required to sit with their back flat against the chair and their feet flat on the ground. Legs may not be crossed and there is no straddling on the chairs.
4. Inmates are not allowed to take or give any item to or from visitors. The exception to this is items purchased from the vending machine. Inmates are not allowed to share items from the vending machine with their visitors.
5. Visitors will be allowed to use the toilet facilities in the Visiting Room, when necessary. The visitor must submit to a pat search prior to re-entering the Visiting Room. The Visitor will be required to sign the Search Log upon completion. Whenever a child uses the bathroom an adult shall be present prior to conducting the pat search. If the adult enters the toilet facilities with the child, they are also subject to a pat search.
6. The toilet facilities shall be searched prior to any visitor entering and after the visitor has exited and a pat search of the visitor has been completed.
7. Footwear must be worn in the visiting room.
8. No jewelry other than a wedding ring and medical bracelet may be worn into the visiting room.

9. Medication that has been approved by the Shift Commander must be kept at the desk in an envelope. All envelopes are to be marked with the visitor's name and contents of envelope.
10. No gum, cigarettes, candy, medication, money, or other items not authorized for retention by a visitor will be allowed into the visiting room. These items are to be secured in the lockers located in the visitors lobby.
11. The introduction of guns, controlled substances, alcohol or other weapons is cause for loss of visiting privileges as well as criminal prosecution.
12. If a visitor appears to be under the influence of alcohol or any unknown substance or the odor of alcohol is detected they will be denied entrance.
13. Visitors may purchase a debit card in the lobby for vending machine purchases. Money is not allowed in the visiting room.
14. When visitors have an infant or small child, they will be allowed to bring two (2) clear plastic bottles with either formula, milk, water or juice. A cloth diaper/and or receiving blanket will be allowed.
15. Visitors may only visit with one inmate at a time during their incarceration at MCI-Framingham unless special approval has been provided by the Superintendent or her designee. (Visitors cannot visit one inmate on one day and another inmate on another day).
16. Physical contact between visitors and inmates shall be limited to a brief greeting at the start and at the completion of a visit. Excessive or inappropriate physical contact may be cause for termination of the visit and loss of privileges.
17. Visitors who choose to deposit funds into inmate accounts must do so by making the check or money order payable to inmate and depositing it in the INMATE ACCOUNT BOX located in the main lobby. The funds will be deposited into the inmate account in accordance with 103 DOC 405: Inmate Funds Policy. MCI-Framingham does not accept cash deposits for inmates. Visitors must only deposit money into the account of the person they are visiting.
18. Visitors to MCI Framingham, their vehicles and their possessions are subject to search while on state property.
19. Inmates who are scheduled to serve disciplinary sanctions, or are otherwise not able to receive visits, are responsible to notify visitors prior to such a visit, if they desire to avoid limited or otherwise restricted visits.
20. When an inmate's housing status changes abruptly (e.g. from general population to Close Custody, HSU, etc.), upon the inmate's request, reasonable efforts will be made by the Unit Team staff to contact visitors and have them informed of visiting restrictions.
21. All visitors must park their vehicles in the area assigned for Visitors Parking. All vehicles must be locked while on state property. Visitors will be required to list the registration number of the vehicle they arrived in on the Request to Visit Form. If requested by staff, a copy of the registration must be produced. Visitors are not allowed to loiter in the parking lot.

APPENDIX B

Inventory of Programs offered at MCI-Framingham

Program Name	Frequency	Duration	Eligibility
Activity Center	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All
Adult Basic Education	Daily	7-12 weeks	All
AGLOW Women	Other	Ongoing	All
AIM Child Custody Workshop	Weekly	7-12 weeks	All
Al Anon	Weekly	Ongoing	All
Angel Tree	Other	Less than 3 wks	Special
Arts & Crafts	Monthly	Ongoing	All
Bible Study	Weekly	Ongoing	All
Black History	Other	3-6 weeks	All
Boston University	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	Special
Building Trades 1&2	Daily	Over 12 weeks	All
Catholic Aftercare Program	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	Special
Catholic Family Mass	Other	Ongoing	All
Chaplaincy Counseling	Daily	Ongoing	Special
Chaplain's Choice	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All
Christian 12-step	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All
Christian Science	Weekly	Ongoing	All
Christmas Family Worship	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Christmas Gift Distribution	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Computer 1 to 4	Daily	Over 12 weeks	Special
Cosmetology	Daily	Over 12 weeks	Special
Domestic Violence	Other	7-12 weeks	Special
ESL 1 to 4	Daily	Over 12 weeks	Special
Fifth Friday Worship	Other	Ongoing	All
First Step Program	Daily	3-6 weeks	Special
Food: Its use & Misuse	Other	Less than 3 wks	Special
Gardening	Daily	Over 12 weeks	All
Girl Scouts Beyond Bars	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All
Going Home Program	Monthly	Less than 3 wks	All
Gospel Choir	Weekly	Ongoing	All
Healthy Relationships	Weekly	3-6 weeks	All
Heifer International	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Jehovah's Witnesses	Weekly	Ongoing	All
Martin Luther King Day Worship	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Mom & Teen Retreat	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Mom& Me Workshop	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Mother-daughter Retreat	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
NEADS	Daily	Over 12 weeks	Special
Newspaper	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All
Parenting Education	Other	3-6 weeks	All
Planning for Life	Weekly	7-12 weeks	Special
Praise Team	Weekly	Ongoing	Special

Program Name	Frequency	Duration	Eligibility
Pre-GED	Daily	7-12 weeks	All
Prep Release	Monthly	Less than 3 wks	Special
Protestant Baptism	Other	Less than 3 wks	Special
Protestant Baptism Classes	Weekly	3-6 weeks	Special
Protestant Holiday Worship	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Protestant Mentoring	Weekly	Ongoing	Special
Protestant Retreats	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Protestant Sunday Worship	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All
Protestant Worship - New Hope	Monthly	Ongoing	All
R.I.S.E.	Monthly	Less than 3 wks	Special
Read to Me Mommy	Weekly	7-12 weeks	All
Reading for the Blind	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	Special
Recreation	Daily	Ongoing	Special
Sacred Arts	Other	Less than 3 wks	All
Self Esteem	Weekly	3-6 weeks	All
Sexual Abuse Survivors Group	Weekly	7-12 weeks	Special
SPAN	Daily	Ongoing	Special
Spanish Bible Study - Pentecostal	Weekly	Ongoing	Special
Spanish Church Service	Weekly	Ongoing	Special
Spanish Discipleship	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	Special
Special Education	Other	Not Reported	Special
Steps to Recovery	Daily	7-12 weeks	Special
Title 1	Daily	Over 12 weeks	Special
Victims of Violence	Other	7-12 weeks	Special
W.O.R.C.	Other	Ongoing	Special
Wednesday Church Service	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All
Women in Media	Weekly	3-6 weeks	All
Yoga	Weekly	Over 12 weeks	All

APPENDIX C

Visiting Mom or Dad The Child's Perspective

By Ann Adalist-Estrin

2nd edition: originally published in 1989 by the Parent Resource Association.

The decision of whether or not to take children to visit parents in jail or prison is a hard one. It depends on finances, prison policy, transportation, distance and the preference of the parent behind bars. Studies do show that most children manage the crisis of parental incarceration better when they visit their parents. Usually, it takes time for them to cope with the feelings that the visits raise, though. While not visiting is sometimes easier on the emotions in the short run, out of sight is not out of mind.

Distance leaves a lot of confusion, questions, imagined dangers and fears for kids to deal with. These feelings may show up in problem behaviors at home, school or both and can be harmful to the child over time.

Children depend on their adult caregivers to make the experience of visiting parents in prison as stress free as possible.

Know the Rules

Knowing visiting rules and regulations, including where to go and what to bring, is an important part of the adult's preparation for a prison visit. These preparations can make the visit and the post visit reaction easier for the child.

Children need preparation as well. First, it is important to share with the child as much as is appropriate, according to the child's age, about what the visit will be like. Tell the child: how long the ride is, if correctional officers will be in uniforms, what the inmate parent will be wearing, details about the search process for getting in and guidelines for going to the bathroom and using vending machines.

Some of this information can best be obtained from prisoner parents. Prisoners can tell caregivers what they will be wearing, and if there are any changes in their physical appearance since the last time the child saw them.

Some information can be obtained from the prison, especially about visiting hours and what you can take in. Caregivers may also tell children how they will go to the prison, how long the trip will take and if there is money for snacks. When the experience matches children's expectations, they will be less anxious.

Know the Child

How long can the child sit? Are there choices of time of day to go? How long in advance do they need to begin to discuss the visit? Some children (those with slow-to-warm-up temperaments) take a long time to adapt and adjust to people, places, and ideas or plans. They need days or weeks of talking about the visit to be ready. Other children with very persistent and non-distractible temperaments may become too anxious if the preparations begin too far in advance. Discussing the visit only a day or two ahead of time may work better for them.

Incarcerated parents can also help. They can write to their child telling them all about what the visits will be like. They can be in touch with caregivers in advance to be filled in on the child's daily life and make lists of things to talk about in the visit.

Plan to Talk

What to talk about in the visit is often a real challenge for the children and their parents and caregivers. Children are afraid if they tell their parent about life on the outside, it will make them sad. Parents may be worried that if they talk about life inside, the children will be scared or bored. But, it is OK to talk about every day life. That is what children and parents are missing and needing.

Caregivers also need to know how to talk to children after visits. Ask them about what they remembered or liked best about the visit and also about what they didn't like or what was hard to say. This will let them know that it is OK to talk about their parents. It will also prepare them for the next visit.

Some caregivers may have trouble separating their feelings about the prisoner and the crime from the child's feelings. When this happens, children have trouble expressing their own feelings—from fear of upsetting the caregiver. In some cases, it becomes necessary to seek professional guidance and counseling.

Have Realistic Expectations

The charts on the following linked pages gives guidelines on how to prepare children of different ages for visits:

Preparing Children For Prison Visits: A Developmental Guide			
Infants: 0-6 Months	Babies Like To: Be held a lot!!	Before the Visit Caregivers Can:	During Visits Inmate Parents Can:
	Look at things, especially faces. Reach and bat and grab.	Let baby hear a tape of parent's voice (videos are great, too).	Know that holding your baby won't spoil him or her.
	Put things in their mouths.	Wash baby's sheets and clothes in the soap or body wash used by the parent.	Position baby so he/she can see you – change position if he/she gets bored.
	Some need their fingers and thumbs to calm themselves.	Communicate with the incarcerated parent about the child's new and emerging skills, what her noises mean as she learns to talk and how he is standing, crawling or rolling over. This may make the inmate parent sad but will help maintain the attachment and could minimize distress at visits.	Allow baby to touch your face and explore you.
	"Respond" to familiar voices and faces		Gently unfold fingers when they grab your hair, etc.
	React to new sounds		Talk to baby a lot!
	Use their sense of smell to differenti- ate between people		Change the tone in your voice. Sing. Imitate baby's sounds.
	Cry to communicate		Understand that babies cry because they need or want something.
			Let baby's caregiver help you to "read" baby's signals. They may be changing rapidly and you will need help knowing what the

Preparing Children For Prison Visits: A Developmental Guide

Older Babies: 7-13 Months	Babies Like To:	Before the Visit Caregivers Can:	During Visits Inmate Parents Can:
	<p>Sit alone.</p> <p>Crawl and move.</p> <p>Pick up tiny objects.</p> <p>Practice banging and shaking and dropping things.</p> <p>Go to someone they know when “strangers” are around.</p> <p>Babble and shriek.</p> <p>Show understanding of simple commands (wave bye-bye).</p> <p>Practice getting the caregiver to come to them and take care of their needs by calling, crying or shrieking and then stopping when held or attended to.</p>	<p>Allow baby lots of time unencumbered by seats and straps. If they will need to be restrained during the visit, let them be out of car seat, walker or stroller and roll around on the floor or grass or blanket for a while before the visit.</p> <p>Talk to baby both in “baby talk” and using adult words. Babbling back in the baby’s language promotes language development as long as adults also use real words to communicate to baby.</p> <p>Be careful not to pressure baby to perform for you or others if he/she is resisting, even though you may want them to practice all the new things they can do to show Mom or Dad at the visit.</p>	<p>Let baby crawl or sit alone or play “active” games (patty cake, bend and stretch.)</p> <p>Give baby age appropriate finger foods if allowed. Be very careful with vending machine snacks that can cause choking such as popcorn, peanuts and small candy items.</p> <p>Be patient – if baby reacts as if you are a stranger, keep close...but don’t push. Baby will probably warm up to you after several visits.</p> <p>Some babies may have the opposite reaction and cling to you. In this case, saying goodbye can mean that caregivers may have to pull or pry baby away from Mom or Dad. This is painful for everyone.</p> <p>In most cases, quick goodbyes are best. Never trick baby (or any age child) or sneak away. This will cause the child not to trust you next time</p>

Preparing Children For Prison Visits: A Developmental Guide

Toddlers: 14-30 Months	Toddlers Like to:	Before the Visit Caregivers Can:	During Visits Parents Can:
	<p>Refine their motor skills by walking/running/climbing.</p> <p>Scribble</p> <p>Explore everything!</p> <p>Imitate adults</p> <p>Label objects using newly learned words.</p> <p>Tell adults what they need and want.</p> <p>Test the rules to see if they are real.</p> <p>Hold a picture of Mom or Dad in their mind when they are not with them.</p> <p>Do some things for themselves.</p>	<p>Be sure toddler is rested and fed... this is a most difficult age for visits if there is no play area.</p> <p>Do not bombard toddler with rules ahead of time...toddler will either not remember or test them anyway.</p> <p>Show toddler lots of pictures of the incarcerated parent.</p> <p>If possible make arrangements ahead of time so that you can be prepared to cut visits short if toddler cannot follow the rules.</p>	<p>Play word games...label objects, make silly noises, etc. ask where’s your nose etc.</p> <p>Walk around if allowed.</p> <p>Label objects, colors and people for your child.</p> <p>Give toddler choices whenever possible...even little ones...do you want to sit here or here? Do you want one kiss or two?</p> <p>Give clear rules/limits with consequences but try to tell toddler what they can do, not what they are not supposed to do. “Walk, Junior. If you run you will have to sit on Mom-Mom’s lap” is better than “Stop running.”</p> <p>Toddlers are really frustrating, even to free world parents. It is especially hard when you want the visit to be perfect. Be patient but firm. Toddlers need both from parents and giving them both understanding and discipline is good parenting!</p> <p>Prepare yourself emotionally for the possibility of needing to cut the visit short if toddler cannot sit still or follow the rules. As unfair as it is to you to miss out on time with them, it is also unfair to be angry with a toddler for not being able to meet unrealistic expectations.</p> <p>Show pride in toddler’s accomplishments while accepting that many emotional needs are still similar to a baby’s.</p>

Preparing Children For Prison Visits: A Developmental Guide

Pre-Schoolers: 2 1/2- 4year olds	Children Will:	Before the Visit	During Visits Parents Can:
	<p>Practice lots of skills like fine motor skills (drawing, digging, etc.).</p> <p>Begin to express anger in words. ("You're not my friend." "I hate you.")</p> <p>Point out discrepancies in familiar events.</p> <p>Insist on being the center of attention and interrupt adult conversations.</p> <p>Enjoy being read to.</p> <p>Wonder about the incarcerated parent's daily life: when and where they sleep, eat, go to the bathroom, etc.</p> <p>Practice their emotional separateness by being oppositional and defiant.</p> <p>Ask many questions.</p>	<p>Caregivers Can:</p> <p>Read children letters from parents.</p> <p>Send drawings to parents.</p> <p>Give autonomy, power and choices when appropriate so child can accept not having power or choice when grownups are in control.</p> <p>Be clear about whether or not the child does have a choice. Habits that adults have in using words can be very confusing to children:</p> <p>When adults ask,</p> <p>"Are you ready to go?" or "Can you give dad a hug?" or "Let's go now, ok?,"</p> <p>children get the idea that they have a choice.</p> <p>If you are willing to accept, "No, I don't want to" or "I am not ready"</p> <p>as a response from the child, then your questions are OK</p> <p>If you really mean to say "We are going now, this is not a choice," then say that!</p>	<p>Accept angry feelings and set limits on aggressive behavior. "You look like you are mad at me and you don't like me being here do you?" is a way of letting children know that you get it that they are upset.</p> <p>"Even though you are very angry, you are not allowed to hit me, if you hit me again you may have to leave and see me next time." is a way of enforcing rules even though you will not want them to leave.</p> <p>Be careful not to say that you will leave as a consequence. And remember, the anger isn't bad, the child isn't bad...just the hitting is bad.</p> <p>Sing songs together.</p> <p>Play classification word games (all things that are fruit...).</p> <p>Understand that it is hard for pre-schoolers to be "quiet."</p> <p>Draw pictures with your child or talk about pictures they have sent you.</p> <p>Give many choices and accept pre-schoolers' tastes and preferences even when they are choices made only to be opposite from you.</p> <p>Answer children's questions as best you can. Don't be afraid to talk about your daily life</p>

Preparing Children For Prison Visits: A Developmental Guide

School Age: 6-12 years old	Children Will:	Grown-ups Can:
	<p>Need to be accepted by their peers.</p> <p>Play sports and games.</p> <p>Collect things.</p> <p>Want to talk about their life but worry that they will make the incarcerated parent feel bad if they talk about the outside.</p> <p>Hold back emotions so that the visit will go well.</p> <p>Sometimes refuse to visit...out of anger, hurt or fear. Or sometimes just because they would rather play basketball or hang out with their friends.</p>	<p>Remember and accept that children may be embarrassed by the parents' incarceration and crime.</p> <p>Play games with them.</p> <p>Ask about their hobbies, sports, collections.</p> <p>Listen to their stories without asking too many questions or giving advice. Just listen.</p> <p>Tell them it helps you to feel good when they talk about their lives.</p> <p>Look for signs of sadness, disappointment, upset and anger and let children know you accept those feelings and want to talk about it.</p> <p>Answer questions as honestly as possible.</p> <p>Talk to them about your life on the inside. Tell them things they can relate to like TV shows you watch, books you read and classes you take.</p>

A Child's First Visit

If the facility is geographically near, and several visits will be possible within a short time after the initial incarceration, it is probably best if the adult (custodial parent, foster parent, social worker) visits alone the first time. In that way, s/he will be able to describe the facility to the child, assure the child of the parent's health and safety, and prepare better for the visit.

It is important to take time to talk to the incarcerated parent about the importance of focusing her/his attention on the child. Give the prisoner parent ideas for things to talk about related to the child's interests and feelings.

This pamphlet and others in the Children of Prisoners Library (CPL) can help prisoners prepare for visits. Since most prisoners do not have access to the Internet, friends and family can help by mailing CPL materials to them.

If it is not possible to make a "pre-visit", try to ask the inmate about the facility and the visiting rules, or speak to someone who has visited the institution, and get as much information as you can about the entry process. How long is the wait? What does the visiting room look like? What is available to eat? If you don't know anyone, call the facility.

Since many visiting rooms have nothing to help you amuse a child, try to think of imaginative ways to keep the child engaged while waiting and while visiting. For ideas, see CPL 107, Communication Tips. CPL 103: Conversations - Questions Children Ask, can also be helpful.

Two Final Thoughts

The known is always easier than the imagined...when possible, be truthful.

It is usually easier to leave than to be left. If possible let children leave the visit before the parent returns to their unit or cell.

About the Children of Prisoners Library (CPL)

Pamphlets may be downloaded without charge from the Family and Corrections Network (FCN) web site, www.fcnetwork.org. Duplication is permitted and encouraged, so long as the materials are not altered or sold. Sorry, FCN is not budgeted to mail free copies. Send comments to The Children of Prisoners Library at FCN, 32 Oak Grove Road, Palmyra, VA 22963, 434/589-3036, 434/589-6520 Fax, fcn@fcnetwork.org. Copyright Family and Corrections Network, 2003.

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The Children of Prisoners Library was written by Ann Adalist-Estrin, who adapted material from *How Can I Help* and authored other materials in the Children of Prisoners Library. It was edited and published by Jim Mustin.

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