

Policy debates about incarceration rarely focus on the burden borne by children and families. Theirs are stories of things lost: connections, jobs, income, homes — and hope. And communities, in turn, suffer from losing so many parents, whose absence leaves the economic and social fabric of their neighborhoods in tatters. While momentum for criminal justice reform continues to build, we know progress will take time. But we also know children can't wait--nor can we as a nation afford to let them and their parents flounder, perpetuating poverty from one generation to the next. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016)

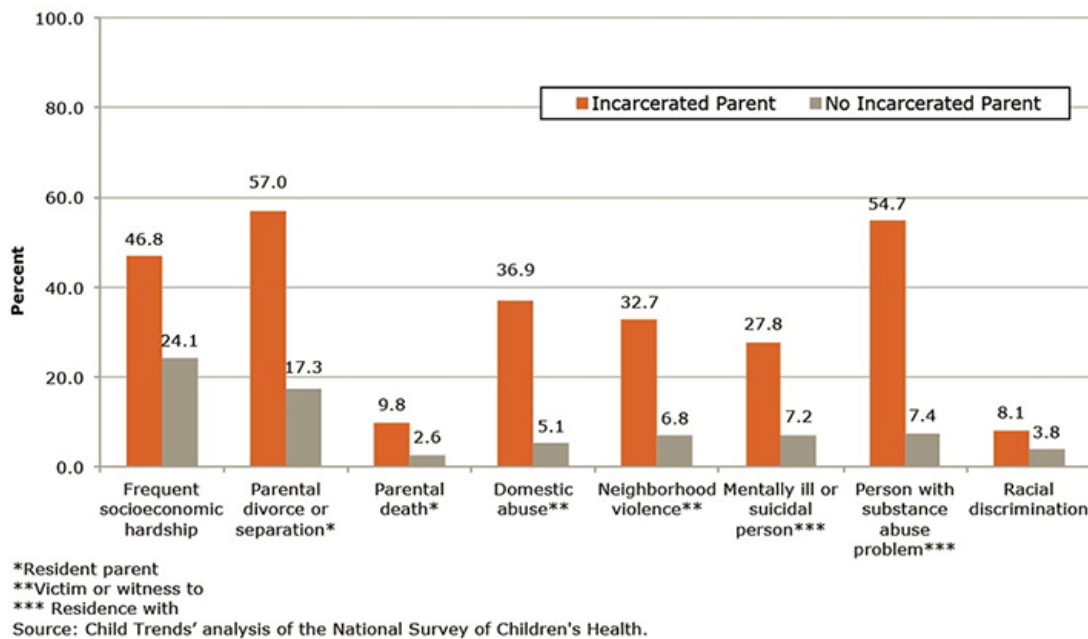
The US Center for Disease Control ranks parental incarceration among the ten most serious “adverse childhood experiences” (ACEs) which are statistically linked to significant health and social problems in adult life. Children of incarcerated parents experience ACEs at a much higher rate than other kids: 3.7 versus 0.7. (ChildTrends 2015) The greater the number of ACEs, the greater the likelihood of lasting harm to the child.

We can't necessarily identify causal links, but the strong association between parental incarceration and poor outcomes for kids is well documented. In many cases, these families experience challenges that place their kids at risk for negative outcomes before incarceration occurs. But parental incarceration must be seen as a red flag signaling the need for support.

A child with a mom or dad in prison is: 2 to 3 times more likely to suffer depression and other serious mental health problems; twice as likely to have learning disabilities; 3 times more likely to drop out of school, 3 times more likely to have delinquent behavior; and 2 to 3 times more likely to become incarcerated. (Schafler, 2013; Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010)

Even though we've got a lot of data regarding the plight of these children, relatively little has been done to effectively translate this research to informing our practices and policies at a systems-wide level. S-90 takes an important step in addressing the needs of this fragile population—the roughly 6,000 Vermont kids who will experience the impact of parental incarceration this year.

Figure 2. Parental incarceration is associated with numerous other adverse childhood experiences, 2011-12



Outcome Measure: RBI Families Improve Cumulative Self-Sufficiency Matrix Scores Across Relevant Domains

| Change in domain scores from enrollment to discharge (FOR FAMILIES DISCHARGED IN FY 2016) | |
|--|-----|
| OVERALL | 44% |
| Health/Mental Health/Substance | 52% |
| Safety and Violence | 48% |
| Criminal Justice/Legal | 51% |
| Housing | 58% |
| Financial Stability | 60% |
| Transportation | 48% |
| Parenting Skills | 23% |
| Education | 38% |
| Social Support/Community Connections | 56% |

