Objectives

- Describe common characteristics of incarcerated women and their children
- Describe the promising practice intervention for incarcerated mothers and their families
- Provide strategies and tools necessary to replicate the intervention

What is Volunteers of America?

- A social service agency in the United States
- 32 affiliates across
- A faith-based human service organization
- Founded in 1896
Some Facts about Incarceration

- The United States
  - Less than 5% of the world’s population
  - Almost 4% of the world’s prisoners
  - 2.3 million criminals behind bars
  - More than any other nation
  - The number of incarcerated women increased 760%
    - 26,376 in 1980
    - 213,022 in 2014
- American prison stays are much longer than other countries
  - Sentence for burglary:
    - USA: 1 year
    - Canada: 3 months
    - England: 7 months

1/2 of US prisoners are parents of children under the age of 18.

The United States’ prison population is 2.24 million individuals. This is 22% of the global prison population (10.2 million people).

Characteristics of Women in the Criminal Justice System

- Mid-30’s
- Most often drug-related offenses or property crimes
- Fragmented family histories
- Trauma Survivors
Some Facts About Parental Incarceration

- The number of incarcerated mothers has more than doubled (122%) from 29,500 in 1991 to 65,600 in 2007
- Impact on children related to
  - Whether child was living with parent
  - Whether the family was a 1 or 2 parent household
  - Age of the child
  - Surrounding support network
- These children often referred to as the “Orphans of Justice”

Effects of Incarceration on Children

- More likely to engage in antisocial behavior than other children.
- Increased risk for
  - Developmental delays
  - School failure
  - Poor long-term health outcomes
  - Including depression and suicide.
- Often have history of familial:
  - Poverty
  - Substance use
  - Sexual abuse
  - Domestic violence
  - Mental illness.
- More likely than other children to experience homelessness and changes in housing.

Video

- Alex’s Big Feelings
Issues

- Silos of services
- Family status not evaluated at sentencing
- No support for caregivers
- Continuing cycles of poverty and crime
- Struggles with parental reintegration into the family
- Support for mother and children

Genesis of Look Up and Hope - 2009

- Identified gap in services
- Piloted in 5 states
- Woman repeatedly identified issues with children as primary focus
- Developed program!
- Components
  - Trauma-Informed Care
  - Third-party evaluation
  - Community-Based
  - Wrap-Around
  - Gender Responsive

Collaboration

- Volunteers of America
  - 5 locations
- Wilder Research
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
**Overall Numbers**

- 640 total participants
- 190 mothers (all mothers incarcerated at time of program entry)
- 290 children
- 160 caregivers
- Average enrollment 12-18 months

**Family Coaches**

- 1-2 Family Coaches at any given time
  - Master’s Level
  - Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, or Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
  - Case Load of 8-12 families per Family Coach

**Family Coach Qualities**

- Proficient in addictions, trauma, family issues, and gender responsive approaches
- Flexible
- Engaging
- Patient
- High cultural competency
- Connected with community resources
- Persistent
Step #1: Recruitment

- Families can be recruited in any setting where the parent is close to release

Work With Mother

- Individual/Group Counseling
  - Strongly suggested in all cases
  - Substance Abuse/Mental Health
- Education/Employment
- Court Advocacy
- Budgeting
- Parenting education
- Planning for discharge from facility
- Conflict resolution with family
- Barrier buster

Work with Caretaker

- Barrier Buster
- Emotional support/Crisis Intervention
- Parenting education
- Connection with community resources
- Conflict resolution with mother/child(ren)
- Budgeting
- Referral to mental health treatment if needed
- Family Counseling
Work with Child(ren)

- Advocacy at school
- Connection with mentoring projects
- Individual/Family Counseling
- Referral/Collaboration with other treatment providers
- Age-appropriate education about addiction, incarceration, mental health
- Connection with extracurricular activities

Discharge/Termination Criteria

- Goals reviewed every 90 days
- If no significant intervention needed for ~90 days, discharge may be appropriate

Meet Our Families…

- Our Families
By The Numbers

- 160 Caregivers
- 290 Children

- 53 percent of caregivers reported their annual household income as less than $25,000
- 40 percent of caregivers identified at least one serious basic need.
- 33% of caretakers reported a chronic or medical condition (32%) at intake; and two in ten (19%) were diagnosed with a mental health issue.
- 67% showed signs of stress
  - “Signs of stress” refers to a lack of emotional support, lack of time off or respite, poor health or wellbeing (as observed by program staff, or some combination of the above).

By The Numbers

- 290 Children
- 20% of children had mental health issues
  - mood or behavior disorders, depression, or anxiety
  - 12 percent of those were not receiving treatment at the time of intake.
- 23% of children had behavior problems at home or school.
- A majority of children lived with their mother prior to her incarceration (81%); and 25% were subjected to abuse or neglect before they enrolled in the program.
- 74% of children were in the care of a family member
  - most frequently their grandmother (33%)
  - biological father or stepfather (27%)
  - another family member, such as an aunt, uncle, or an adult sibling (17%)

By The Numbers

- Results
  - 80% families experienced improvement in their family relations
  - 56% of mothers demonstrated improved parenting skills
  - 89% of caregivers reported no persistent needs at followup.
  - 69% of mothers increased contact with both their children and their children’s caregiver
  - 56% of moms demonstrated improved parenting skills
  - Elementary school-aged children had particularly positive school-related outcomes.
  - Of those who had a “good” school performance at intake, half continued to improve.
  - 91% maintained their good performance. Of those who had “good” attendance at intake, about one-quarter (27%) continued to improve and 58 percent maintained their good attendance.
Challenges

- Ongoing Funding
- Staff turnover
- User-friendly data collection system
- Lack of support staff

Meet Tierra

- Tierra

Introduction of the Manual

- Research findings
- Program phases/progression
- Barrier Buster
- Correction system engagement
- Staffing and supervision
- Data Tracking
- Document Templates
Questions?

Contact:
Shannon Schumacher, MSW, LSW, LCAC
sschumacher@vaoin.org