


Volunteers of America

Look Up and Hope

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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



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Some Facts about Incarceration

- The United States
 - Less than 5% of the world's population
 - Almost a quarter of the world's prisoners
 - 2.3 million criminals behind bars
 - more than any other nation.
 - The number of incarcerated women increased 700%
 - 26,378 in 1980
 - 215,332 in 2014
- American prison stays are much longer than other countries
 - Sentence for burglary:
 - USA: -16 months
 - Canada: -5 months
 - England: -7 months

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



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The United States' prison population is 2.24 million individuals. This is 22% of the global prison population (10.2 million people)⁴.



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Characteristics of Women in the Criminal Justice System

- Mid-30's
- Most often drug-related offenses or property crimes
- Fragmented family histories
- Trauma Survivors



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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"



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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.



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Video

- [Alex's Big Feelings](#)



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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



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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



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Collaboration

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



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Overall Numbers

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



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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



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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/children/etc
- 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





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Meet Our Families...

- [Our Families](#)



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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 unmet basic need.
- 33% of caretakers reported a chronic 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 emotional support, lack of time off or respite, poor health or well-being (as observed by program staff), or some combination of the three.



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By The Numbers



- 290 Children
- 20% of children had mental health issues
 - most commonly anxiety, depression, or autism
 - 15 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
- 78% of children were in the care of a family member
 - most frequently their grandmother (39%)
 - biological father or stepfather (22%)
 - another family member, such as an aunt, uncle, or an adult sibling (17%)



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By The Numbers

- Results
 - 86% families experienced improvement in their family relations
 - 96% of mothers demonstrated improved parenting skills
 - 89%of caregivers reported no persistent needs at follow-up.
 - 60% of mothers increased contact with both their children and their children's caregiver
 - 96% 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
 - ¼ 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.



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Challenges

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



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Meet Tierra

- [Tierra](#)



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Introduction of the Manual

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



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Questions?

Contact:

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