



Child-friendly visits in corrections

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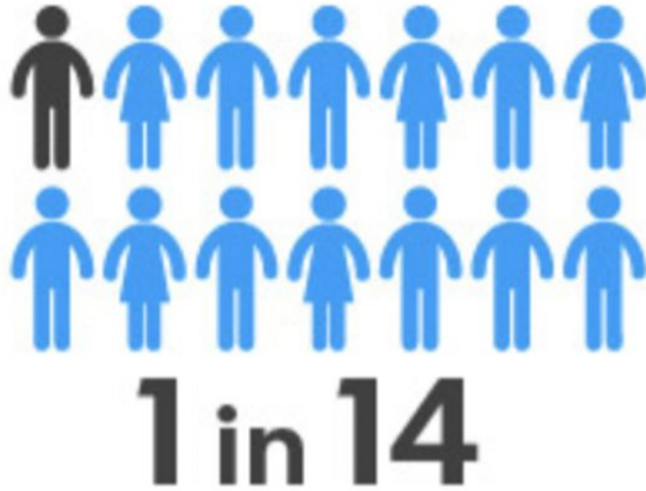
Questions addressed in this presentation

- What do we know about the children?
- What does the research say about parent-child contact, and visits in particular?
- What are child-friendly visits and how are they implemented?





Children who have lost a resident parent to incarceration in Dane County



It is estimated that nearly 8,000 children in Dane County have experienced a resident parent going to jail or prison by the time they are 18, with significant racial and economic disparities

*Estimate is based on rates identified in a nationally representative survey of children (National Survey of Children's Health)
<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/parents-behind-bars-what-happens-to-their-children>



Children with incarcerated parents, on average, are more likely than their peers to experience

Infant mortality

Behavior problems

Health problems

Problematic academic outcomes

Poor mental and physical health in adulthood

More adverse childhood experiences



A BILL OF RIGHTS

I HAVE THE RIGHT...

1. TO BE KEPT SAFE AND INFORMED AT THE TIME OF MY PARENT'S ARREST.
2. TO BE HEARD WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT ME.
3. TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT MY PARENT.
4. TO BE WELL CARED FOR IN MY PARENT'S ABSENCE.
5. TO SPEAK WITH, SEE AND TOUCH MY PARENT.
6. TO SUPPORT AS I FACE MY PARENT'S INCARCERATION.
7. NOT TO BE JUDGED, BLAMED OR LABELED.
8. TO A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH MY PARENT.





More Parent-Child Contact During Parental Incarceration **Positive for Parents During Incarceration**

- ✓ Less rule-breaking inside
- ✓ Fewer symptoms of depression
- ✓ More engaged relationships with children
- ✓ Less parenting stress
- ✓ More positive relationships with coparents



<https://www.earhustlesq.com/episodes/2018/4/25/thick-glass?rq=children>



More Parent-Child Contact During Parental Incarceration **Positive for Parents After Incarceration**

- ✓ Fathers who had regular contact with their children during incarceration (and who lived with them prior to incarceration) were more likely to be involved with their children in the first few months after release¹
 - More positive parenting activities including playing, helping with homework, discipline
 - Fathers who were more involved with their children in the first few months after release
 - ✓ worked more hours per week 8 months after release
 - ✓ were less likely to use illicit drugs 8 months after release
 - ✓ were less likely to commit crime, get arrested, or violate conditions of their supervision 8 months after release.
- ✓ Associated with lower recidivism in some studies
 - fewer new convictions in year following release for Black fathers who planned on living with their child²

¹Visher, C. A., Bakken, N. W., & Gunter, W. D. (2013). Fatherhood, community reintegration, and successful outcomes. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 52(7), 451-469.

²Thomas, A., Wirth, J., Poehlmann-Tynan, J., & Pate, D.J. (2022). "When she says Daddy": Black fathers' recidivism following reentry from jail. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(6), 3518-3542. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19063518>



More Parent-Child Visits During Parental Incarceration

Positive for Parents After Incarceration

- ✓ More post-release parent-child contact¹
 - Increased odds of parent-child residence, even after controlling for prior coresidence
 - More frequent visits for nonresidential parents
- ✓ More positive parent-child relationships
 - More feelings of closeness in the parent-child relationship¹
 - Increased relationship quality²
- ✓ Fewer new convictions in the year following release from jail for parents who did not plan to live with their children³

¹Charles, P., Muentner, L., Gottlieb, A., & Eddy, J. M. (2023). Parent-child contact during incarceration: Predictors of involvement among resident and nonresident parents following release from prison. *Social Service Review, 97*(1).

²Haverkate, D. L., & Wright, K. A. (2020). The differential effects of prison contact on parent-child relationship quality and child behavioral changes. *Corrections, 5*(3), 222-244.

³Poehlmann, J. (2023). Incarcerated parent-child visits, parent-caregiver relationship quality, and reentry outcomes following a parent's release from jail. To be presented at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Orlando Florida.

Considerations for Parent-Child Contact During Parental Incarceration **for Children**

Barriers

- Cost of calls, in person and video visits, IM, email, letters
 - Children in lower income families have fewer visits
- Distance, transportation
- Parents' relationships with children's caregivers

Good practices

- Family choice
 - Supported remote video visits are a good supplement to in-person visits, but should not replace them
- Limit plexiglas for young children if possible
- Limit wait time for families
- Improve interactions with corrections staff
- Child-friendly visits





What are key elements of child-friendly visits?

- The setting is a positive, safe, friendly environment
 - Physical environment
 - Adult volunteers or staff present
- Having just the parent and child present so they can focus on each other (not the child's caregiver)
- Ample opportunities for physical contact such as hugging, holding hands, or lap sitting and carrying children when they are young
- Developmentally appropriate activities
- Snacks or a meal
- Some freedom of movement between activities
- Program t-shirts instead of uniforms for incarcerated parents and staff
- Something for kids to take away, like
 - Project
 - Book or stuffed toy
 - Photo of parent and child together



Preparation for child-friendly visits

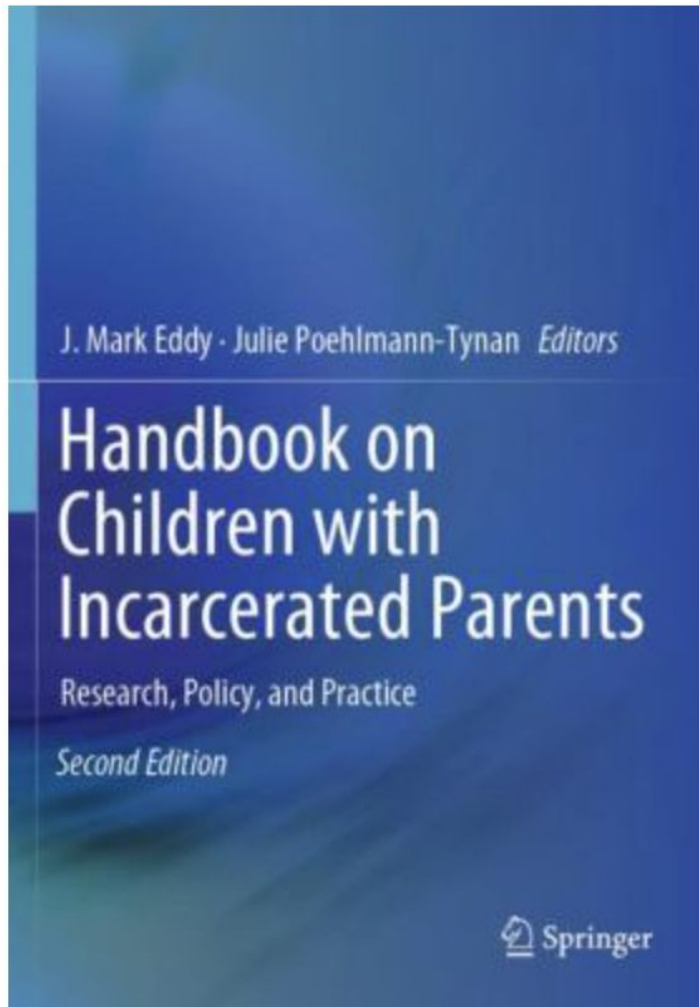
- Identifying appropriate space and time
- Family liaison
 - Fostering open communication among caregivers, children, incarcerated parents, and supportive professionals
- Partnering with a child-focused program or training staff how to interact with children of different ages
 - Making sure that activities are appropriate for children's age
 - Offering snacks that are healthy and are not a choking hazard or with common allergens (e.g., peanuts, gluten, dairy)
 - Helping children transition to the visit area
 - Clearly communicating security policy so children are not turned away
- Preparing children and parents for the visit experience
 - Focusing on the moment and positives
 - Acknowledging sadness and loss, but moving forward
- Supporting incarcerated parents in the visit process (e.g., if a child is not able to attend the visit at the last minute, if the child does not want to interact etc.)
 - If visits can be part of a parent program, that is preferred



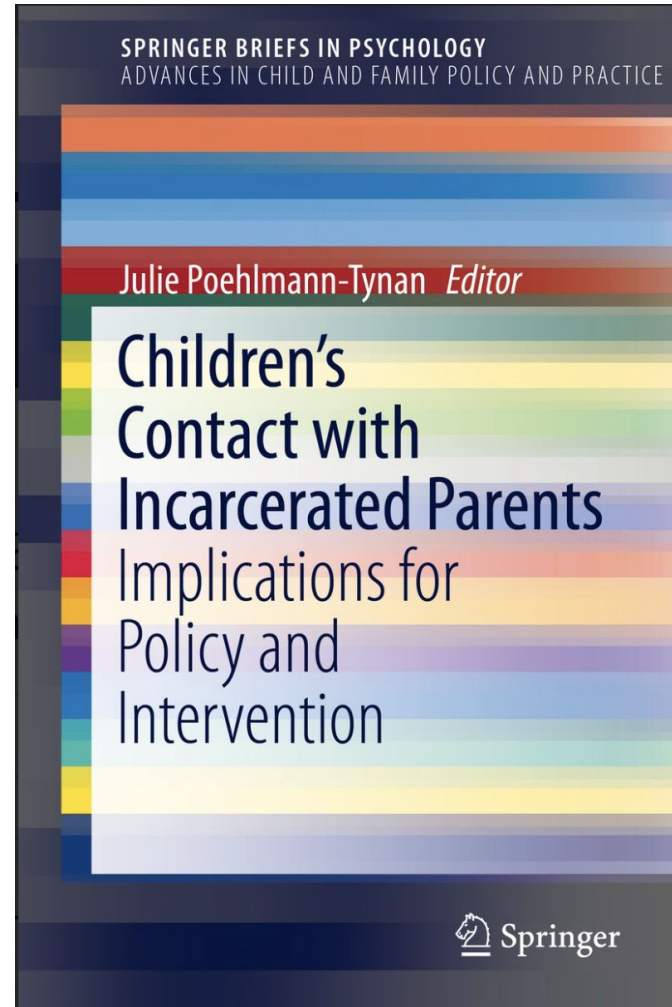
Research on child-friendly visits

- Evaluation of Camp Reunite in WI
- Intervention program evaluations
 - For summaries, see Poehlmann et al (2010) and Poehlmann-Tynan & Pritzl (2019)
- More research is needed

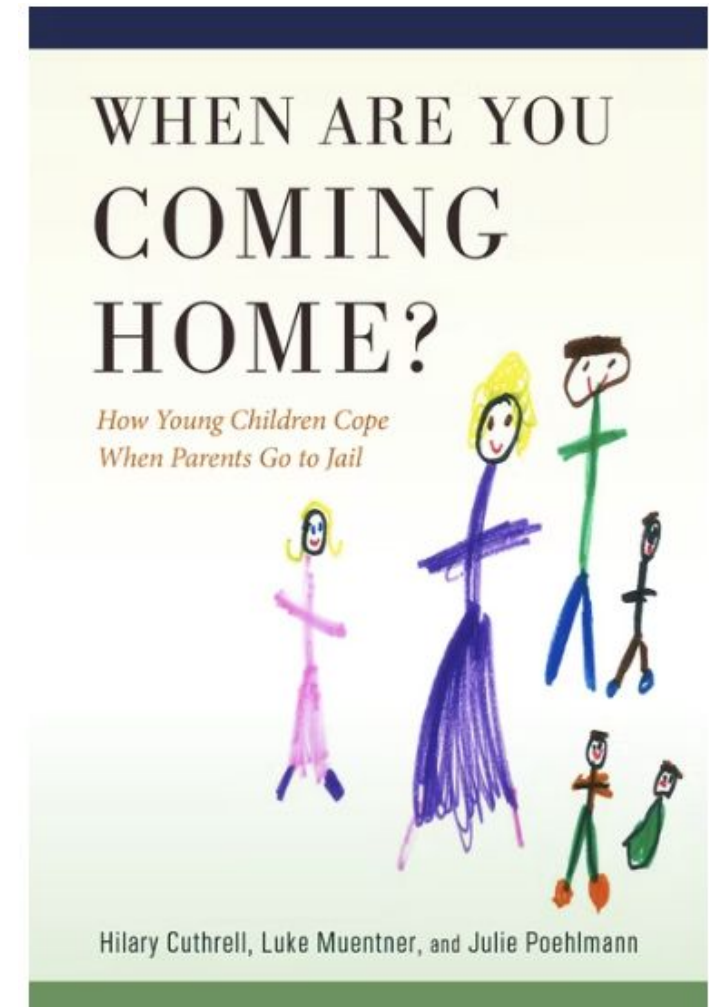




<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-16707-3>



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<https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/when-are-you-coming-home/9781978825703>



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