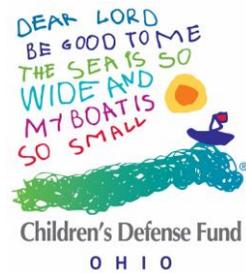


UNDER EMBARGO until Monday, April 25, 2016 - 12:01 a.m. EDT

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New Annie E. Casey Foundation Report Recommends Policies to Help Millions of Children with Incarcerated Parents

More than 270,000 Ohio children have a parent who has served time

COLUMBUS, OHIO – More than 5 million children have experienced the separation of a parent due to incarceration, including 271,000 in Ohio, according to the report issued today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, *A Shared Sentence: The Devastating Toll of Parental Incarceration on Kids, Families and Communities*. With this representing 10 percent of its child population, Ohio is one of only eight states with double-digit percentages of children who have had a parent be incarcerated.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio propose recommendations that state and local policymakers should adopt to help millions of children who struggle with emotional and financial instability as a result of having an incarcerated parent.

"Where the criminal justice system sees a convicted criminal, a child only sees mommy or daddy. Judges must consider the tremendous impact upon families and acknowledge the benefits of allowing children the option to stay in contact with a parent." says Renuka Mayadev, executive director of Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. "We understand the trauma of losing a parent – let's work to ease the child's life transition. The emotional and developmental costs are too great not to."

While states spend heavily on corrections, few resources exist to support the children left behind. In its new KIDS COUNT® policy report, the Casey Foundation offers commonsense steps officials can take to address the increased poverty and stress that children of incarcerated parents experience, which research shows can have as much of an impact on their well-being as abuse or domestic violence.

"Our nation's overreliance on incarceration has left millions of children poorer, less stable and emotionally cut off from the most important relationship of their young lives," says Patrick McCarthy, president and CEO of the Casey Foundation. "We are calling on states and communities to act now, so that these kids – like all kids – have equal opportunity and a fair chance for a bright future they deserve."

Renuka Mayadev continued, "At the same time that we focus on children of incarcerated parents, we must continue ongoing efforts to reform the criminal justice system. Ohio has a mass incarceration crisis. [A recent report](#) finds that Ohio's prison population has increased 12 percent the last decade – even while the violent crime rate has reached a 30-year low. From mandatory minimum sentences to the steep financial sanctions and court fees that criminalize poverty, Ohio has a system that is unnecessarily moving too many people into incarceration, and away from their families and children at home."

The Foundation's three policy recommendations are:

1. Ensure children are supported while parents are incarcerated and after they return.
2. Connect parents who have returned to the community with pathways to employment.
3. Strengthen communities, particularly those disproportionately affected by incarceration and reentry, to promote family stability and opportunity.

Specifically, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and *A Shared Sentence* calls for the following:

Community organizations:

- Build family connections and offer programs and resources tailored to children with incarcerated parents.
- Provide family counseling and parenting courses through prisons and in neighborhoods.

Judges:

- Consider the impact on children and families when making sentencing and decisions about where parents will be confined.
- Require courts to inform local social service agencies and community-based organizations when a parent is incarcerated so he or she can connect with families.

Local governments:

- Create additional pathways with anchor institutions, such as hospitals and universities, to ensure economic inclusion.

States:

- Direct more funds toward prison education and training for in-demand jobs.
- Facilitate access for affected families to financial, legal, childcare and housing assistance.
- Enable families impacted by incarceration to access Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs to cover basic needs and become self-sufficient.
- Provide incentives to housing authorities and private landlords to allow people with records to access safe, affordable housing.

Detailed recommendations can be found in *A Shared Sentence*, which will be available April 25 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/sharedsentence.

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.

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