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Pathfinders of Oregon's Mission is to break the cycle of criminality—by providing cognitive-based programs and supportive services for pro-social living; by helping justice-involved adults and at-risk youth to avoid entering, or re-entering the corrections system.

Having an incarcerated parent results in worse short and long term outcomes for children than does having their parents divorce, or having a parent die.

That's a pretty sobering statement, but on the plus side, we know that:

- Maintaining contact with an incarcerated parent and keeping the separation period as short as possible can help children develop the resilience to overcome the trauma of having an incarcerated parent.
- Shorter incarceration times improve the odds that parents will not have their parental rights terminated.
- Maintaining a relationship with a biological parent who has appropriate parenting skills, even when that parent has been incarcerated, results in better outcomes for children than being permanently separated from the parent.
- Distance and the cost of travel are often a barrier to children's ability to stay in close physical contact with their incarcerated parent.

We also know from more than 30 years of research on helping children in high risk situations navigate childhood and adolescence that giving parents the skills to effectively parent their children is more successful than any other intervention, including group and individual therapy. (Forgatch and Martinez, *Parent Management Training*, the Journal of the Norwegian Psychological Assoc., 1999)

- Parents play a key role in their children's socialization and development.
- Parents who have the tools to successfully guide their children and who role model prosocial behaviors are able to help their children grow into healthy adults and productive community members.
- ***The best way to help children is to help their parents*** - That is why the Oregon Children of Incarcerated Parents taskforce convened in the early 2000s recommended developing a parenting program for incarcerated parents.

Family and social networks are the most important influence on behavior and choices. (*Implementing the Family Support Approach for Community Supervision*, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2008).

- Helping criminal justice involved parents build strong families benefits them in terms of lower likelihood of recidivating and benefits their children by helping them avoid following in their parents' footsteps (breaking the cycle of criminality).
- Coordinated, strengths-based community programs that bridge the parent's journey from incarceration to return to the community can support families through:
 - Substance abuse programs
 - Mental health treatment
 - Parenting programs and parenting support (home visiting)
 - Family reunification and continued engagement

Finally, mothers frequently provide the glue that holds communities together. As the number of women in prison has increased we have seen a corresponding degradation in the neighborhoods they leave behind. Reducing the amount of time a mother is separated from her children and her community can improve public safety as well as outcomes for her and her family.