

# Children of imprisoned parents have health problems

July 20 2015, by Jeffrey Day

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Children whose parents are in prison have worse health, poorer school performance and are at a greater risk for depression, anxiety, asthma and HIV/AIDS, according to a policy brief released by the Center for Poverty Research at the University of California, Davis.

In 2010, an estimated 2.7 million [children](#), and one in nine African-American children, had an imprisoned parent.

"Targeted use of shorter or out-of-custody sentences would reduce the strain families experience while minimizing negative effects on public safety," said Bill McCarthy, a professor of sociology, who wrote the brief with doctoral candidate in sociology Angela Carter.

A parent's imprisonment increases material hardship for families who are already likely to be poor, and it also has long-lasting effects on their children, according to the brief. In 2004, about half of inmates with children reported providing primary financial support before they were incarcerated. About 30 percent of these parents reported monthly incomes of \$1,000 or less, and 63 percent reported monthly incomes of below \$2,000.

Imprisonment itself increases the likelihood that families and children will experience material hardship, the report said. Families lose income and other resources that new inmates had contributed. Imprisonment also introduces new expenses for families to support the imprisoned parent.

The report concludes that employment assistance for parents upon release from prison, as well as less restrictive visitation rules, could reduce the economic and emotional effects imprisonment has on families.

**More information:** "Reducing the Effects of Incarceration on Children and Families." [poverty.ucdavis.edu/sites/main...arceration\\_brief.pdf](https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/2015-07/Reducing%20the%20Effects%20of%20Incarceration%20on%20Children%20and%20Families.pdf)

Provided by UC Davis

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