

Creating Safer Spaces for Children of Incarcerated Parents

- ▶ More than 10 million children in the U.S. have experienced their parent's incarceration or their parent being under correctional supervision. About 1 in 28 children have an incarcerated parent, making it likely you will come in contact with children of incarcerated parents. But, you may never know it because these children often remain invisible due to the stigma associated with incarceration. These guiding tips will help you create a safer space where children and families feel comfortable disclosing and expressing their emotions without feeling judged, blamed, or labeled.

BE A ROLE MODEL OF ACCEPTANCE

- ▶ Assess your values and beliefs about the incarcerated and their families
- ▶ Examine how your values and beliefs affect your approaches and responses

BE AN ACTIVE NONJUDGMENTAL LISTENER

- ▶ Let children lead the conversation and help them talk about their feelings by asking open-ended questions
- ▶ Acknowledge how hard it is to be separated from a parent
- ▶ Don't ask a question just because you are curious

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- ▶ Use nonjudgmental language, such as a parent who is incarcerated or formerly incarcerated person
- ▶ Avoid *inmate*, *offender*, *convict*, *prisoner*, and *criminal* to describe a young person's parent

RESPECT PRIVACY

- ▶ Let children know what they share is confidential and share the limits of that confidentiality
- ▶ If necessary to share information, let the child know and get permission when possible

SIGNAL SAFE SPACES

- ▶ Post the *Children of Incarcerated Parents' Bill of Rights* in your office or classroom
- ▶ Include children's books about parental incarceration in common areas, school libraries, classrooms, and offices

