

Children of Incarcerated Parents Series

MYTH: When police arrest parents, they must call child protective services to make decisions about the children's placement.

FACT: At the time of their arrest, parents can make decisions regarding placement of their children.

Since arrest does not necessarily indicate child abuse or neglect, arrested parents can still make decisions about the welfare of their children. Children may be placed in the care of relatives, friends, or neighbors recommended by the arrested parents. If the police find that arrested parents were not providing a safe environment for children -- for example if the parents were fabricating drugs inside the home -- police may call child protective services to investigate the situation and assess whether out-of-home placement is needed.

In every situation, it is important for police officers to assess the immediate safety of the children and if the situation warrants, work with child protective services to ensure the suitability of a temporary placement for children.

For More Information:

Child Welfare Information Gateway:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>

Promising Practices Toolkit:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/promising-practices-toolkit>

When a Parent is Incarcerated: A Primer for Social Workers:

<https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=133§ionid=5&articleid=3443>

Keeping Children Safe when their Parents are Arrested: Local Approaches that Work:

<http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/07/07-006.pdf>

What is the Reentry Myth Buster/Children of Incarcerated Parents Series?

This Reentry Myth Buster is one in a series of fact sheets intended to clarify federal policies that affect formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. On any given day, nearly two million children under 18 have a parent in prison – and many more have had an incarcerated parent at some point during their childhood. Children of incarcerated parents often face financial instability, changes in family structure, and social stigma from their community. This series is designed to help these children, their caregivers, and the service providers who work with them.