SINGAPORE PRISON SERVICE

# Family Intervention

## for Incarcerated Parents and their Children


***Chua Zijun Angeline***

*SPS Psychologist*


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# Background Demographics

**Male inmates: 9204**

**Female inmates: 1162**

**Inmates with at least 1 child under 18 years old**

**2224 fathers**

**508 mothers**

**Inmates with at least 1 child under 7 years old**

**869 fathers**

**227 mothers**

** Accurate as of 31 Dec 2020*

# Impact of Parental Incarceration on Children

- Parent incarceration has a **great impact on children's emotional development, academic achievement and** subsequent involvement in **delinquent behaviours**.
- **Children between 7 to 13 years old**, whose parents had been convicted**, show more criminal behaviour** than children of other ages with convicted parents (Rakt, Murray, & Nieuwbeerta, 2012).
- Parental incarceration is one of the **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)** similar to abuse, violence, and substance abuse. MSF study (2019) on ACE of youths in the criminal justice system found that 46.5% of them had experienced parental incarceration.

# Intergenerational Transmission of Offending from Drug-Abusing Parents*

**21.6%**

of 5,564 inmates from 2007-2018 have at least a child aged 12 years and above who had offended (JH/ Probation/ RTC/ DRC/ INA/ SS)

## Proportion of Offending Children

13.3%

of 8063 children had an **offending father**

**19.1%**

of 2028 children had an **offending mother**

15.3%

of 653 children had both **offending parents**

** SPS Study (Home Team Journal, Jan 2020)*

# Intergenerational Transmission of Offending from Drug-Abusing Parents*

## Protective Factors

- ✓ Strong prosocial support
- ✓ Parental control & supervision from residual parent
- ✓ Constructive use of time in prosocial activities

## Risk Factors

- × Poor parenting practices
- × Lack of parental presence & supervision
- × Antisocial environment
- × Unmet desire to connect with offending parent

** Findings from SPS Study (Home Team Journal, Jan 2020)*

# Objectives & Overview of Family Intervention in SPS

## RESPOND

**Needs identification & referral services:**

- SPS' Family Resource Centres & Yellow Ribbon Community Project
- Regular inmate engagement by prison officers

## REBUILD

**Empowerment of offenders with prosocial skills and identity:**

- Family skills programmes & counselling
- Parenting support groups

**Promoting Desistance & Mitigating Intergenerational Offending**

## RESTORE

**Improvement of familial ties & preparation for reintegration:**

- Family reintegration programmes
- Casework, counseling & family conferences
- Technology use to enhance family engagement

## RESOURCE

**Collaborate with community partners:**

- Case management & family work services
- Activities, workshops & family bonding programmes

# SPS Family Intervention: Case Management

## ▶ Early referrals to FSCs for family case management

- **Enhanced screening** of newly admitted inmates by SPS, to systematically identify families with young children for referral to FSCs for intervention and support
- **Improved coordination of referrals** involving vulnerable families to minimise cases falling through the cracks
- **Strengthened exchange of information** between SPS and FSCs to aid in the development and delivery of interventions and support plans to better meet the offender and family's goals

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**Areas of support provided that inmates and families found useful:**

Basic Needs

Education & Employment

Improve Family Relationship

Manage Family Crises

Improve Mental Well-being

Share Community Resources

Coordinate with Government Agencies

Navigate Prison Processes

# SPS Family Intervention and Reintegration Initiatives

## Increasing Contact

1. Phone/ Video Calls
2. Extra Letter Form/ Cards
3. Extra Face-to-face Visit Time

## Building Skills

1. Support Groups
2. Parenting & Marital Workshops
3. Caregiver & Inmate Info-Handbooks

## Practising Platforms

1. Structured Open Visits
2. Family Conferences
3. Storybook Writing & Audio/Video Recordings
4. Virtual Family Programmes & Visits during COVID

# Feedback from Inmates and Families on Structured Open Visits

*The blindfolded obstacle course allowed me to see a different view of my daughter.* ***It's a great bonding session for building mutual trust and respect.*** *The minute my daughter recognised my voice shouting "I love you", my tears nearly drop. This made me realise how important I am in her life. My daughter is an inseparable figure in my life.*

***Daniel*** *(pseudonym),*
*Inmate*

*I feel that* ***my relationship with my mum has improved when we spend quality time together.*** *I feel good that my mum wants to change and be a better person. I hope that I can spend more time with her and my dad.*

***Matthew*** *(pseudonym),*
*Son of incarcerated mother*

# Feedback from Inmates and Families on Video Conferencing (VC)

## ▶ VC collaborations with schools and community partners

- Increase parent-child touchpoints and strengthen parental involvement and identity
- Provide school-going children with the opportunity to interact with their incarcerated parents

*"I get to talk to my father more and tell him what I cannot get to tell him during tele-visit.* ***It (VC) is very helpful cos I can still bond with him."***

***Charmaine*** *(pseudonym), Daughter of incarcerated father*

**Sharing by an incarcerated mother**

# Key Takeaways

- **Parental incarceration significantly affects children's development and risk of offending**
- **Poor parenting, limited supervision and a lack of structured contact with the offending parent may increase the risk of intergenerational offending**
- **To promote desistance and mitigate intergenerational offending:**
  1. **RESPOND** – Stabilise the offender and their families via case management
  2. **REBUILD** – Equip the incarcerated parent with skills to shape a prosocial identity
  3. **RESTORE** – Strengthen familial ties and prepare for reintegration
  4. **RESOURCE** – Establish partnerships with community stakeholders

# Closing Words

*The greatest satisfaction that one could have was to witness a strained relationship improving.* ***Family interventions had definitely benefitted not only the inmates****, but had also* ***created a positive ripple effect on the inmates' family members as well.***

***Mr Abdul Hafiz***

*Senior Personal Supervisor, Cluster A*

# THANK YOU!