

# Being MOM or DAD While **INCARCERATED**

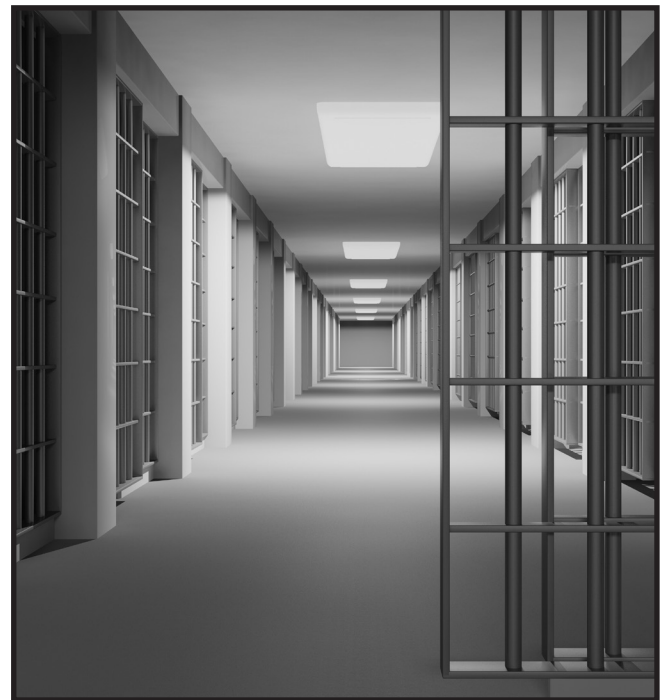
**When a child has a parent in jail or prison, separation anxiety is common.**

Behavior may include clinginess, a reluctance to go to daycare or school, or sadness and anger. How well a child copes may depend on the closeness of the child's relationship with the parent before confinement.

Still, research shows that children who kept in contact with an incarcerated parent had fewer disruptive behaviors and overall better outcomes.

*Here are six ways to promote positive contact with a son or daughter from behind bars:*

- **BE HONEST.** Explain in age-appropriate language how bad choices led to prison. Tell your child it is not his or her fault. This is important, as many children feel guilty or responsible.
- **DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN** a positive relationship with your child's at-home parent or caregiver.
- **WRITE YOUR CHILD LETTERS**, short stories or poetry. Encourage your child to express in letters or visits how he or she feels about you no longer being available.
- **TAKE PARENTING EDUCATION CLASSES** if available, to help you communicate better. The classes also provide a supportive network that can offer ideas for maintaining your relationship with your son or daughter.
- **SEEK THERAPY IF AVAILABLE.** It can help improve your parenting skills and family relationships.
- **CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION IF POSSIBLE.** Doing so shows your child that you value education and boosts your marketability after release.



**Parenting from  
behind bars requires  
commitment,  
cooperation and  
creativity.  
Meet the challenge.**