



Pittsburgh  
Child Guidance  
Foundation

Third Report to  
the Community

# A DECADE ADVOCATING for Children of Prisoners

2012 Report to the Community

## An Epidemic of Imprisonment

Twelve to 15 percent of the children in Allegheny County will experience the incarceration of a parent during their childhoods.

An epidemic has swept through America over the past 40 years. It has put millions of men — and increasingly women — in jail and prison. Today 1 in 100 adults in the United States is behind bars.

Tens of millions of children have been caught in the path — because most of the people who are arrested and incarcerated are parents.

- A majority of the 35,000 adults arrested in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania each year are parents.
- 10,000 parents spend some time in the Allegheny County Jail every year.
- 8,500 children in the County and 100,000 children in Pennsylvania at this very moment are separated from one or both parents by locks, bars, and policies that discourage contact.

## Children’s Lives are Changed When Parents Go to Jail

Across the nation children are more likely to drop out of school if their parents are incarcerated. And dropping out doubles their chances of being imprisoned at some time in their lives. In Pittsburgh boys whose parents are incarcerated are more likely to fail in school, commit serious delinquent acts and use illegal substances in their teens, and are more often referred for psychological counseling by their parents.

Three powerful influences stand out among the many that reshape children’s lives and produce conditions that threaten their futures when their parents go to jail.

### 1. Incarceration Impoverishes Families for Generations

Parents go to jail poor and their families are further impoverished by the economic drain of the loss of the parents’ incomes and increased expenses for legal, court, and probation fees, bail, child care, phone calls, “commissary” purchases, and visits.

The economic burden on children and families continues long after parents leave jail. Employers’ fears and legal bans on employment lead to reduced income throughout formerly incarcerated persons’ working lives. Their minor children are poorer than their peers whose parents were never incarcerated.

Having to do without the things that other children have contributes to the feeling of “differentness” that children experience and fuels both anger at their incarcerated parents and worry about the well-being of their caregivers. Boys, especially, feel responsible for taking care of their caregivers as well as their siblings. Money becomes their top priority.

“My 15 year old has to work now and his school work is suffering. When I’m home I work and he can concentrate on school. He was an honor student. I’m worried about him.”

*Single mother in the Allegheny County Jail*

### 2. Children are Ostracized and Bullied and Their Families are Shunned

Bullying, teasing, and ostracism plague children and families of incarcerated parents. One teenager told her focus group that “people look at you weird” when they know. And worse, when some adults learn that the parent or older sibling of their child’s friend has gone to jail, they try to forbid contact and end the friendship. Adults, too, describe hurtful experiences — being shunned at church or denied promotions at work — if people find out.

One of the consequences of this widespread stigmatization is the desire of many adults to keep incarcerated parents’ whereabouts secret, leaving children to imagine the worst. Children wonder if they caused their parents to leave. Some feel betrayed and angry when they discover they have been lied to by the people caring for them.

*continued on page 2*

### 3. Children's Lives and Bonds are Often Disrupted

Almost half of the mothers and fathers in the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ) lived with their children before arrest. Many were single parents. For most children, comforting contact with their parents in ACJ is essential to maintaining the children's attachments and promoting their mental health. Children who lose their primary caregivers suffer now and may be affected throughout their lives.

**"It's much harder  
on kids than on  
people in here."**

*Single father in the  
Allegheny County Jail*

2 Most children are cared for by their other biological parents and extended family members. Living with family protects many children from further disruption such as moving or changing schools. Close, honest, and trusting relationships with caregivers promote children's mental health and strengthen children's ability to cope with loss. Sometimes, however, the physical, emotional, and financial stress on immediate and extended family may result in children being caught in the middle. Angry caregivers may seek to sever children's bonds with their incarcerated parents or other family members. When maternal and paternal families collide, children may be separated from their half-siblings. Both young children and teens express great fear of losing their sisters and brothers and great sadness and anger when these losses occur.

# Justice through the Eyes of a Child:

## The Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation Initiative, 2003-2012

Ten years, thousands of partners, hundreds of publications, conference and workshop presentations, and a million dollars in grants: The Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation's advocacy on behalf of children of prisoners has changed lives and changed systems here in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania and many other places in the Commonwealth and the nation.

What we learned from the children, their incarcerated parents, and their caregivers — as well as service providers, public officials, and correctional and probation officers — shocked our community. We discovered devastating losses experienced by thousands of children in our own neighborhoods when their parents are incarcerated, and we learned about the long-term damage these losses can cause. Mobilized into action by the facts we presented, an extraordinary group of public officials, citizens, and criminal justice professionals joined together to create

- A protocol to protect children from trauma at the time of a parent's arrest;
- A resource to facilitate communication with families so children do not fear that their parents are lost;
- A renovated Jail lobby to provide a welcoming waiting room for children;
- A reentry program in the Jail to help families heal and encourage parents to bond with their children;
- A discharge center to assist parents with getting home to their children and avoiding an immediate return to Jail;
- An "ombudsman" to help families of incarcerated parents navigate through the mazes of the criminal justice and human services systems; and
- State and local judicial and legislative changes to protect children's need and right to be parented even when their parents are in Jail.

Learn more about these gains on the following pages.

As Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation concludes its decade of devotion to the needs of children of prisoners, the Jail Collaborative is drafting its 2013-2016 Strategic Plan. Its first Plan has been implemented to a surprising degree. The next Plan's achievement depends upon the combined efforts of all those who are now involved as well as a new generation, the young people who are making their voices heard and are ready to embrace the future.

Jail Collaborative begins  
[ Jail, DHS, Health ]

Collaborative reentry  
programs begin,  
continue thru 2008

PCGF launches  
Initiative

PCGF + 6 local foundations  
form criminal justice  
study group (FCJ)

FCJ hosts national  
Video Conference on  
Children of Prisoners

PCGF publishes  
"Parents in Jail Talk  
about their Children"

FCJ publishes reentry maps  
and resource directories  
for Allegheny County

1998-2002

2003

2004

# 1

## Trauma at Time of Arrest

### PROBLEM

Most people who are arrested are parents of minor children. But none of the 118+ police departments in Allegheny County has policies or consistent procedures for officers to follow when they arrest parents. As a police official said, "It all depends on the officer."

**"They came in the middle of the night, pounding on the door...It was scary. I saw them breaking up our house."**

*Teen in Amachi focus group describing her parent's arrest*

Some children are present during arrests and watch their parents handcuffed and sometimes hurt. National research indicates that witnessing their parents' arrests traumatizes children.

When parents are arrested elsewhere,

children may be at home or come home to empty houses, not knowing where their parents are. A teenager in a 2004 Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation (PCGF) focus group said he had cared for his younger siblings for weeks before a relative discovered them.

### ACTION

Judge Kim Berkeley Clark of the Allegheny County Court's Family Division was shocked by PCGF's 2005 First Report to the Community. She gathered police officials, prosecutors, child advocates, mental health professionals, and others to consider what should be done to protect children from trauma when their parents are arrested. This task force recommended that police departments adopt written guidelines that require officers — whenever it is safe for the officers and others at the scene — to

- Ask persons being arrested if they are responsible for children under 18 and to be alert for signs of the presence of children in the home
- Allow parents to designate alternate caregivers and to call them
- Permit parents to comfort and reassure children
- Move any children present to another room before handcuffing parents
- Comfort children until alternate caregivers arrive.

The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police agreed to pilot the protocol and training. A community-based residential service for children and the County's emergency dispatch center agreed to assist police officers. The pilot identified weaknesses in both design and implementation. In 2011 Maurita Bryant, Assistant Chief for Operations of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, renewed the effort to include instruction on protecting children from trauma when arresting parents in the training for all recruits and officers in the Department. The new effort is scheduled to begin January 2013.

### KEEPING IT GOING

Other states including California have demonstrated that the best way to ensure that all law enforcement agencies protect children from trauma when arresting their parents is through statewide legislation. Pennsylvania Senator Stewart Greenleaf of Bucks and Montgomery counties, a former prosecutor, introduced a bill early in 2012 requiring protocols and training for all criminal justice professionals (SB1454). A similar bill is expected in the State House shortly.

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# 2

## After Arrest: In Jail and Out of Touch

### PROBLEM

Most people arrested in Allegheny County are brought to the County Jail for processing. It will be many hours before their children and family members know where they are. And many hours at best before arrested parents are able to check on the care arrangements for their children. Family members searching for their loved ones said it was almost impossible to reach the Jail on the phone after 3pm and on weekends.

### ACTION

The discovery that people could be out of touch for hours or even days surprised criminal justice system leaders. They quickly solved the inability of family members to find out if their loved ones are in Jail. In 2011 referral specialists from Mental Health America Allegheny County (MHAAC) began to answer the Jail's phones after 3pm and on weekends providing this and resource information to anxious families. Between July 2011 and June 2012 MHAAC answered more than 38,000 calls.

The long time before arrested parents can call their families and assure that their children are safe has yet to be addressed.

### KEEPING IT GOING

MHAAC has a year-to-year contract for the after-hours phone service. The high volume of calls and callers' satisfaction with MHAAC's help may convince the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative to continue this service in its 2013-2016 Strategic Plan.

PCGF issues  
First Report to  
the Community

Warden approves  
Jail lobby center for  
children and families

DHS proposes "Advocate  
for Children & Families of  
the Incarcerated" — 1st in  
U.S. PCGF funds for 2 years

Family Court Judge starts  
task groups on impact of  
arrest and visiting on  
children

100 volunteers, County,  
Public Works, and  
3 foundations begin  
plan for Jail lobby center

PCGF issues  
Second Report to  
the Community

DHS continues  
"Advocate" when  
grant ends

2005

2006

2007

# 3

## A Long Scary Wait Before Visits

### PROBLEM

Children want to see their incarcerated parents. They miss them and fear that their parents are hurt or ill or being mistreated.

Visiting conditions in the Jail do not foster contact between children and their parents. Everyone — parents, children, caregivers — told PCGF interviewers that visiting spaces are very unfriendly to children.

Discomfort starts even before the actual visits. The wait in the lobby is long — an hour or more. Children were confined in hard chairs with nothing to do and nothing to eat or drink except coin vending machine snacks loaded with sugar. Weary caregivers became stressed with fidgety and noisy children and correctional officers, whose job is to keep order, reacted by threatening to cancel the visits. Sometimes the atmosphere grew very tense and children, already worried about their parents and the Jail, became increasingly anxious.

### ACTION

The County's then-new Warden, Ramon Rustin, resolved to improve the harsh conditions that greeted children when they entered the Jail.

Professionals, community volunteers, and leaders in the arts, academia, criminal justice, and human services responded to the call from the Warden and PCGF to redesign the Jail lobby so it welcomes children. Lydia's Place, a local nonprofit, managed the planning process. The County's Department of Public Works, The Heinz Endowments and The Grable Foundation joined PCGF in providing financial and construction resources. Together they created the first lobby "welcome center" for children in any U.S. jail.

Shortly after the lobby's opening in 2007 one of the design group leaders, retired police commander Gwen Elliot, died. The County Executive named the waiting area "The Gwendolyn June Campbell Elliott Family Activity Center." Thousands of children and caregivers have found comfort in the bright and warm space affectionately known as "Gwen's Den."

The lobby is a better place for correctional officers to work and for children to wait. Caregivers and caseworkers who thought the conditions too frightening say that now they are willing to bring young children to visit their parents. And veteran officers say that now caregivers are more nurturing with children as they wait.

### KEEPING IT GOING

As initial foundation funding was spent, the County gradually took responsibility for the Center's budget. The cost of operating the Center is allocated from the Jail's Inmate Welfare Fund by the Prison Board. Monies in this Fund come from the profits of the phone system, the commissary, and other costs borne by Jail residents and their families. A long-term goal should be to secure dedicated funding in the Jail's budget sufficient to maintain supervision and recruitment of volunteers, provide supplies and snacks, and repair and replace materials and equipment.

Gwen's Den opened with staff and volunteers available to children and caregivers at least 20 hours a week and a plan to increase hours of coverage. Currently the Center is staffed by one part-time graduate student who is present only on weekends during the school year and several more hours during the summer. There are few regular volunteers and little volunteer recruitment.

Specially selected, trained correctional officers might be able to take on some of the work of the Center. But at least one paid and dedicated staff person is needed to bring volunteers and other resources and activities into the Center. If the Jail creates a Volunteer Office, many of ACJ's units, including Gwen's Den, would benefit.

It may be possible to reduce waiting times and therefore staffing requirements by establishing a visit reservation system either online or by phone. Reserved visit times have made life easier for staff as well as families in jails and prisons elsewhere. Facilities report little problem with "no-shows."

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TOP-BOTTOM

Cmdr. Gwendolyn June Campbell Elliott  
Jail lobby before renovation  
Family Activity Center

Lobby Center opens, named "Gwen's Den" for Cmdr. Gwen Elliott and managed by Lydia's Place

Task groups draft guidelines for arrest and Jail visits

PCGF begins 2nd round of research with parents in Jail, families, and others

Pitt evaluation: Collaborative services work, save \$

PCGF sponsors "Family Ties" training film

Court & PCGF join Jail Collaborative

Jail begins managing Gwen's Den

**PROBLEM**

Most children see their parents at the Allegheny County Jail at a distance through thick glass. When connecting phones are not working or absent, parents and children have to shout through the walls. Children can become terrified or bored and parents' attempts to comfort them are defeated.

Good visits help children cope with separation from their parents. He "lived for these visits" a grandmother said about her very young grandson. Both in the Jail and after release, the ties that are strengthened by good visits have been shown to reduce the likelihood that parents will reengage in the behaviors that get them in trouble. Family connections significantly increase parents' chances of staying out of jail.

Almost universally, participants in PCGF focus groups said people in Jail need the tools and opportunities to build healthy relationships with their children, their children's other parents and caregivers, and close family members.

Men in Jail said that they didn't know how to maintain relationships, that they needed coaches who had these skills to guide them while in Jail and in the critical months after release. Mothers in Jail described how helpless they feel to remain part of their children's lives unless their children's caregivers choose to include them. Children's caregivers and the partners of the parents in Jail said that they needed to have a chance to resolve conflicting expectations before the release occurred.

**"He expects to come home and pick up where he left off. But he has lost my trust. If we had talked about it in here we wouldn't be in this spot."**

*Mother of 2 year old whose husband is coming home from ACJ very soon*

**ACTION**

Addressing all of these issues clearly takes more than just visits. It requires a relationship-building program with resources, coordination, and continuity. Fortunately the County has the perfect vehicle — the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative.

In the late '90s the County departments of Human Services and Health joined the County Bureau of Corrections to create services for people in Jail and after release that helped them stay out. In 2008 the County Court of Common Pleas became a full and active member of the Collaborative, bringing in Criminal Court and Adult Probation.

By 2009 the Jail Collaborative had married its focus on reducing recidivism to a new focus on children and families. PCGF provided data and some funding and the Collaborative completed a Strategic Plan for 2010-2013. The Plan's top priority

— a new reentry program that includes opportunities for parents in Jail to maintain, mend, and create relationships with their children and families both during their stay in the Jail and after release — began in 2010. Armed with data and a track record of successful cooperation, the Jail Collaborative raised almost \$2 million for the program from federal and state governments and national and local foundations.

The program is directed at addressing two things most important to children: the pain of not being able to touch and be held by their jailed parents; and the loss when a parent leaves them again and goes back to Jail.

Men and women volunteer to participate in the reentry program and are assigned to classes that match their needs. They reside in specialized living units and attend classes day and evening.

*continued on page 6*

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**A "COACHED" CONTACT VISIT**

A 15 month old little girl snuggled in her Mother's lap feeding goldfish crackers to her Dad. As this apparently happy scene unfolded in the visiting room of the Allegheny County Jail, the Dad's visit coach came over and commented, "Look how your daughter can share!" Dad looked at the coach and said, "I am having a hard time with this." The coach asked why and the Dad said, "Before I came here I was with my daughter. I helped raise her...I have only been here for three months but I don't think she remembers me." In response, the coach held out her hand to the child and asked for a cracker. The little girl refused, turned her face, and leaned against her Mom. The coach said to the Dad, "See, she does know you." Dad smiled and said, "That made me feel better." This interaction took less than two minutes yet it reassured Dad that he has importance in his daughter's life. That first year with her was not lost.



Pittsburgh police officers trained on arrest guidelines

Jail Collaborative begins strategic planning

Collaborative hires coordinator

PCGF turns research over to Collaborative

Collaborative receives \$608K Second Chance Act grant for reentry

Jail begins expanded reentry services  
PCGF nominates program for Robert Wood Johnson grant

PA legislature begins study of children of incarcerated parents  
PCGF joins Advisory Committee

2009

Each participant in reentry has a service coordinator who guides him or her through the program and continues to stay in touch for a year after release. Participants who are parents and whose families wish to join the program are assigned a family support coordinator as well. Family support coordinators visit families in their homes, teach parenting and relationship-building classes in the Jail, and “coach” visits and phone calls.

The reentry program includes a probation officer located in the Jail as a member of the reentry team. Recently the Allegheny County Adult Probation Office (APO) won a separate federal grant to station five more officers in the Jail, complementing the work of the reentry team. These officers work closely with residents about to be released and continue to supervise them in the community for six months. APO plans to train these officers to engage family members as allies. Both integrating services into the Jail and engaging family members represent significant changes in approach for the Allegheny County APO.

If successful, the reentry program may help jailed parents develop and maintain healthy relationships with their children and children’s caregivers. Strengthened family relationships along with employment, housing, probation supervision, and other services have been shown in other jurisdictions to reduce recidivism. Evaluations of the Allegheny County reentry program are being conducted by the Urban Institute (results due 2013) and the U.S. Department of Justice (results due 2014). As a result of these studies, the Jail Collaborative expects to have information it needs to shape the program for maximum success.

## KEEPING IT GOING

Two major grants currently supporting the reentry program will end in 2013. The Jail Collaborative is working on a new Strategic Plan for 2013-2016 identifying the steps it will take to assure the long-term sustainability of the program.

If the evaluations currently underway validate the effectiveness of the program and identify those elements of the program that may be critical for success, the Collaborative will have reason to expand the program to more residents of the Jail and their families. Currently fewer than 10 percent of Jail residents receive reentry services and an even smaller fraction of families are involved. External funders, both local and national, may continue to invest in the program. For the long term, however, resources to support the program and families must be built into the budgets of governmental and community institutions.

**The Potential of Justice Reinvestment** If the reentry program reduces the numbers of people cycling through the police, courts, and corrections systems in Allegheny County, it will save the

County and state significant amounts of money. Evaluation of the Collaborative’s 1998-2008 reentry services showed that for every dollar spent, the County and community saved \$6. The current reentry program is more intensive and coordinated and may yield greater savings over time. If the County’s elected and appointed officials resolve to pursue justice

**For every dollar spent the County and community saved \$6.**

*Hidenori Yamatani,  
Associate Dean of Research  
Pitt School of Social Work*

reinvestment strategies now being talked about, these savings can be reinvested in the programs that created them, generating a continuing supplemental funding stream. Justice reinvestment will become a realistic strategy for improving the criminal justice system only through careful accounting to determine savings and a firm commitment to spend those savings on these programs.

**Seeking State Cost Sharing** Half of the states in the U.S. provide some support for local corrections. Pennsylvania does not. Local taxpayers provide all of the money for county jails. The Commonwealth of Virginia has a history of cost sharing that might be a helpful model for Pennsylvania.



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awards Collaborative 3 year grant for reentry – totals \$1M with local fund match

FCJ suspended and replaced by Jail Collaborative funders group

PA Supreme Court roundtable on Engaging Incarcerated Parents begins

PCGF presents “Steps to Home” summary of research to Collaborative

Collaborative publishes 3 year plan

Jail hires first Administrator of Reentry  
Family/child reentry services begin at Jail: classes, coaching, visits, phone calls

2010

2011

# 5

## Middle of the Night Releases

### PROBLEM

One of the more unexpected discoveries made during PCGF focus groups was that many residents were released from the Jail in the middle of the night. "The only person waiting for you is the dealer," said a man who had been released from the Jail. A woman told PCGF that she was released at 2 am with no money for transportation. "I know how to get money downtown in the middle of the night," she said, to a chorus of laughter and agreement from the other women in her focus group. Jail records for 2010 confirm that a peak time for release was between 2 and 4 in the morning.

Family members never had advance notice of these releases. A wife in a Saturday focus group said that she had heard a rumor that her husband was going to be released on Monday, but that she had not been contacted by anyone from the Jail. Without solid information she could not be there to meet him nor could she prepare their toddler for the emotionally charged return of her Daddy from Jail.

News of the middle of the night releases startled members of the Jail Collaborative. If the progress residents made while incarcerated was to be maintained, it seemed apparent that a sensible time and method for release was a good place to start.

**"Before the Discharge Center, if they got arrested in flip-flops, shorts, and a tee shirt and released in December, that's the way they got released."**

*Capt. Bradley Flood  
Allegheny County Jail (Ret.)*

### ACTION

The Jail Collaborative asked the Administrator of Criminal Court and the Captain in charge of Intake and Release at the Jail to solve the problem. They designed a "Discharge Center" that would give each individual being released the opportunity to make a phone call and arrange for someone to pick him/her up, provide a bus pass if no one was available, assure that each individual had prescribed medications, appropriate clothing, and a small amount of cash, and, if homeless, inform him/her of places to go to be safe.

Criminal Court judges agreed to modify their release orders so as to provide enough time for the Discharge Center to offer these services and the Jail agreed to release people only between the hours of 8 am and 9 pm.

The Discharge Center opened in March 2011 with two full-time staff people. It is in operation from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday through Friday. From mid-2011 to mid-2012 staff served 6,230 individuals. An additional staff person has been hired for the

evening hours when most people are released.

People released after 8 pm or on weekends and those who get out on bond are still released directly to the streets. The Jail Collaborative may wish to address these continuing problems.

### KEEPING IT GOING

Operating the Discharge Center should be part of ACJ's regular budget. Now it is supported by the Jail's Inmate Welfare Fund, which receives profits from purchases and phone calls by Jail residents and their families. Orderly planned discharge of an individual from the Jail can decrease the likelihood of committing another crime and immediately returning to Jail. This, in turn, increases public safety and reduces Allegheny County tax spending on housing its citizens in the Jail.

**"If I was released from jail at 2 am and had nowhere to go, I'd probably go looking for drugs."**

*President Judge Donna Jo McDaniel  
co-chair of Jail Collaborative  
(from Ready for Reentry, the Jail Collaborative's anniversary brochure)*

# 6

## Parenting and Being Parented

### PROBLEM

The overarching story for children and their incarcerated parents is how their relationships are orchestrated and dependent upon people and systems beyond their control. Whether it is tensions between family members or caregivers and the incarcerated parents or the impediments created by jails, prisons, courts, and child welfare, children's needs and desires for their relationships with their parents are often ignored and hindered.

### Legal Threats to Parents' and Children's Rights to Parenting

Sometimes court actions threaten to sever children's ties with their incarcerated parents temporarily or forever.

### Foster Care May Lead to Termination of Parental Rights When a Parent is Incarcerated.

For the 10 to 30 percent of children who are in the child welfare system, federal law and state court precedent require severing ties to their parents if the children's stay in foster care exceeds 15 months. Average prison sentences exceed this time limit.

### Custody Decisions Can Sever Ties Too — Even When Children are Not in Foster Care.

In custody conflicts jailed parents and their children may be voiceless. Parents can protect themselves from losing custody of their children, they say, only when family members on the outside champion their cause. Often, however, it is these family members who are seeking to end the parents' custody rights.

### LOCAL ACTION

#### An Advocate for Children and Families

Marc Cherna, Director of the County's Department of Human Services, responded to PCGF's First Report to the Community by creating an ombudsman position within the agencies of the criminal justice and human services systems

in the County. In 2007 he hired the first County-based "Systems Advocate for Children and Families of the Incarcerated" in the nation.

Since the end of a two year grant from PCGF, the Advocate position has been incorporated into the budget of the Department of Human Services.

### STATEWIDE ACTION

#### PA Legislature and Supreme Court Shine Light on Children of the Incarcerated

In 2009 the Pennsylvania legislature, led by Rep. Chelle Parker of Philadelphia, requested that the Joint State Government Commission conduct a comprehensive study of the needs of children whose parents are incarcerated in state prisons and county jails. Key Commission recommendations have been included in a bill introduced in the State Senate by Stewart Greenleaf of Bucks and Montgomery counties. A similar bill is expected to be introduced in the House soon. The proposed legislation says that being incarcerated by itself is not sufficient grounds for terminating parental rights.

In unrelated action, the PA Supreme Court's Children's Roundtable in 2012 approved guidelines for family court judges and child welfare administrators across the state protecting children's rights to have contact with their incarcerated parents and parents' rights to be included in planning and hearings related to their children when their children are in the child welfare system.

The State Roundtable's work on engaging incarcerated parents is led by Judge Kim Berkeley Clark. Judge Clark is also chairperson of the Allegheny County Roundtable committee that is beginning to consider and implement the Supreme Court's guidelines.

## Conclusion

This is the first decade of work in Allegheny County on behalf of children and families when parents are arrested and incarcerated. Much has been learned about the needs, feelings, and concerns of the children. Many sectors of the community have come together with the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation to begin to address them. The Jail Collaborative, the funding community, law enforcement, churches, and individual citizens have all been part of this effort. Brave young adults are joining together, breaking their isolation, and raising their voices to change the systems that impact their lives.

As a result, today there are more structures in place and there is greater potential to tackle the myriad issues that confront children and families of the incarcerated.

**"The work is not done and requires continued energy, effort, and passion to assure that the children caught in this epidemic of imprisonment are not forgotten. Our children deserve nothing less."**

*Charlotte Brown, PhD  
President, Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation*



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Counties begin implementing Children's Roundtable recommendations for engaging incarcerated parents

PCGF issues Third Report to the Community

PCGF Initiative ends; the work continues...

2012

Contact PCGF to order copies of this or the 2005 or 2006 Reports to the Community.

All three documents are available on the Foundation's website.