Promising Practices for Strengthening Families Affected by Parental Incarceration

A Review of the Literature

OPRE Report 2021-25

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Overview

Over 5 million American children under the age of 18 years, a disproportionate number of whom are Black or Latino, have had a residential parent jailed or incarcerated. While a number of existing studies identify parental incarceration as a key risk factor for poor child and family outcomes, there is more limited information describing programs that aim to promote positive outcomes for children with parents involved in the criminal justice system. This literature review analyzes published studies about family strengthening programs that seek to maintain and build healthy relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their children. The review is organized by six key areas of programmatic focus that the research team identified based on an initial scan of the literature, consultations with experts and programs in the field, and guidance from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.[1]

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This literature review addresses the following three overarching research questions:

1. What areas should family strengthening programs explicitly address in their models?
2. What programs and practices are currently being used to strengthen families involved with the justice system?
3. What does the research and evidence indicate about programs that aim to strengthen families involved with the justice system?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this review is to summarize the research and evaluation literature on programs that aim to strengthen families involved in the justice system. This review focuses on family strengthening programs, defined as programs that seek to maintain and build healthy relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their children. To this end, the research team identified six key focus areas for this review based on consultations with experts from a wide range of disciplines including child development, parenting, and criminology. The findings presented in this review identify key gaps in the

[1]The authors use the term "family strengthening" throughout this review to align with the terminology in the literature. The term conveys that *all* family and parent-child relationships—regardless of a parent's involvement with the criminal justice system—can be strengthened with support. This review addresses the need for more systematic information on programs that promote positive outcomes for children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice. Such programs typically aim to improve the quality of the relationship between incarcerated parents and their children as a key component of their program models. Accordingly, the research team excluded programs from this review that did not focus on the parent-child relationship or include programming to support children in some way.

knowledge base on family strengthening programs, which can help programs improve their models and help researchers more rigorously study these programs' impacts on children and families in the future.

KEY FINDINGS

- **It is especially valuable for family strengthening programs to address six key focus areas.** Based on an initial scan of the literature and consultations with a diverse set of experts and programs in the field, including the ACF, the research team identified the following six key focus areas: (1) engaging non-incarcerated caregivers, (2) considering children's ages in program design, (3) considering a parent's gender and role, (4) engaging in cross-system collaboration, (5) implementing strategies to engage parents who are incarcerated and their families, and (6) promoting families' financial stability.
- **The review included studies of 59 family strengthening programs for families involved with the criminal justice system. All programs addressed at least one of the six key focus areas.** Programs most frequently implemented strategies to engage parents involved with the criminal justice system and considered a parent's gender and role. Fewer programs considered children's ages in program design and engaged nonincarcerated caregivers. And still fewer programs promoted families' financial stability or engaged in cross-system collaboration as part of the program model.
- **However, research examining the outcomes or impacts of family strengthening programs that address the six key focus areas is limited. More such research is needed.** The review highlights a number of examples where program models address one of the six key focus areas. Twenty-seven of the 59 programs included in the review had not participated in an evaluation that examined whether they improved outcomes for children and families. Twenty-five of the programs had data showing improvements in at least one outcome over the program's duration. However, only seven programs improved at least one outcome in an impact study involving a comparison group.

METHODS

The research team used a targeted, systematic approach to identify relevant literature. The team created a set of search terms specifically aligned with the six key focus areas that it used to identify relevant peer-reviewed journal articles and reports published between 2007 and 2018 in a range of databases. In addition, selected journal articles or reports had to include research on programs with a theory of change, logic model, or motivation for program services that corresponded to the core goal of strengthening families involved in the criminal justice system. The team also included systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which described multiple programs and prior research. The review excluded research on programs for incarcerated individuals that did not explicitly seek to promote family strengthening—including some employment programs, individual mental health services, and substance abuse services—even though these programs have the potential to strengthen outcomes for families by first improving other outcomes for individuals. The search resulted in 110 articles that the research team closely reviewed and analyzed in order to describe the content of each program and assess the rigorousness of each program evaluation.

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The Authors

Introduction

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. At present, 2.3 million people are incarcerated across the country, 1.2 million of whom are parents of children under the age of 18.[1] Over 5 million children under the age of 18 have had a residential parent jailed or incarcerated.[2] Parental incarceration has short- and long-term economic, social, and psychological consequences for families.[3] It is thus critical to identify programs that can reduce the negative effects of parental incarceration on families and children. In response to this need, the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provided funding to ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) for a contract with MDRC and MEF Associates to conduct a literature review to better understand the range of programs and practices currently being used to strengthen families involved with the justice system and identify the particular areas that programs should explicitly address in their models.

This review defines "family strengthening programs" as those that seek to maintain and build healthy relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their children. The report is organized into five sections.

- **Section I** describes the characteristics of families in which a parent is involved with the justice system, explains why parental incarceration is a critical policy issue, and summarizes why strengthening these families is important.

- **Section II** identifies six key focus areas that family strengthening programs should address in developing and refining their models. The research team identified these focus areas based on expert consultations and an initial scan of the literature on existing family strengthening programs.[4]

- **Section III** provides an overview of the methodology used to complete the literature review and summarizes findings on the number of family strengthening programs the review identified, the rigor

[1]The term "incarceration" refers to any situation in which an individual spends time in a local jail or in a state or federal correctional institution. Given the wide variety of contexts in which family strengthening programs are implemented, this review uses a broad definition to include the largest number of possible approaches (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

[2]Murphey and Cooper (2015).

[3]Geller, Garfinkel, and Western (2011); Murray, Loeber, and Pardini (2012); Mowen and Visher (2016); Wildeman and Western (2010).

[4]Before executing the full literature review, the team conducted phone consultations with 10 individuals with expertise on the effects of parental incarceration on children and families, as well as programs providing family strengthening services. They represented a range of disciplines including child development and criminology.

of existing evidence on their effectiveness, and whether they addressed one of the six key focus areas discussed in Section II.

- **Section IV** describes how the identified programs addressed the six key focus areas and highlights some of the effective programs.

- **Section V** identifies directions for future research.

Although the beginning of this report describes the broader context of racial and socioeconomic disparities in the criminal justice system's approach to arrest, sentencing, and incarceration, the research team recognizes that the family strengthening programs discussed throughout it operate within this structural context and do not themselves change these disparities. Concurrent reforms are needed to make substantial and lasting changes in the criminal justice system.

Section I. Background

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES INVOLVED WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES?

The number of people incarcerated in the United States has increased 500 percent over the past 40 years.[5] While men make up the majority of the incarcerated population, the number of women in this group increased from 26,378 in 1980 to 222,455 in 2019.[6] A 2015 report estimated that over 5 million children under the age of 18 years have had a residential parent jailed or incarcerated.[7] While nearly 80 percent of incarcerated individuals have children under the age of 18 years, mothers are much more likely to have been a primary caregiver before incarceration.[8]

Parental incarceration is a major cause of economic disadvantage for both parents and children. People who are incarcerated are far more likely to be economically poor, and the majority of their children are also poor.[9] Conversely, economically poor people in the United States are significantly more likely to be incarcerated than more economically advantaged groups.[10] A wide and longstanding body of research demonstrates significant racial disparities in the incarceration experiences of Black and Latino groups relative to White populations. Scholars have argued that these inequalities are systemic and rooted in a long history of policies and practices that have disadvantaged people of color and created a system in

[5]The Sentencing Project (2019).

[6]Carson (2015).

[7]Murphey and Cooper (2015).

[8]Glaze and Maruschak (2008).

[9]Wildeman and Western (2010); Smeeding (2016).

[10] Looney and Turner (2018).

which Black and Latino people are disproportionately more likely to be arrested, convicted, and incarcerated.[11] Approximately 11.5 percent of Black children have experienced parental incarceration, compared with 6.4 percent of Hispanic children and 6.0 percent of White children.[12] A criminal record presents a significant barrier to obtaining formal employment, particularly for Black individuals, increasing the likelihood that families affected by parental incarceration will have less financial stability in the long term.[13]

HOW DOES PARENTAL INCARCERATION AFFECT FAMILIES?

In general, families in which a parent is incarcerated are at increased risk for negative outcomes, including financial hardship, conflict between coparents, and poor parent-child relationship quality.[14] Parents who are incarcerated often rely on family members, commonly grandparents, to care for their children.[15] Grandparents who take on this caregiving role are more likely to experience high rates of depression and chronic health problems, limitations to their daily activities, and financial vulnerability due to the need to quit their jobs or reduce their work hours to care for their grandchildren.[16] Parents typically must rely on family support both during and after incarceration, leading to increased economic hardship for the entire family.[17]

Children in these families are likely to experience anxiety and depression, aggressive behavior, delinquency, and school-related problems.[18] Disruption in caregiving puts them at significant risk for homelessness and placement in foster care.[19] Changes in residence are more varied and less predictable for children when their mother is incarcerated; when the father is incarcerated, children tend to remain in

[11]Alexander (2010); Hinton, Henderson, and Reed (2018).

[12]Throughout this review, the authors use the term "Latino" to describe the population of individuals of Latin American origin or descent. However, the authors also use the descriptor "Hispanic" when citing research that uses the term. Hispanic is defined as relating to Spain or to Spanish-speaking countries, especially those of Latin America (Murphey and Cooper, 2015).

[13]Pager (2003); Pager, Western, and Sugie (2009).

[14]Geller, Garfinkel, and Western (2011); Mowen and Visher (2016); Wildeman and Western (2010).

[15]Hanlon, Carswell, and Rose (2007).

[16]Denby (2012); Burton (1992); Dowdell (1995); Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, and Driver (1997); Bryson and Casper (1999); Minkler and Roe (1993).

[17]Geller, Garfinkel, and Western (2011); Glaze and Maruschak (2008); Grinstead, Faigeles, Bancroft, and Zack (2001); Christian (2005); Arditti, Lambert-Shute, and Joest (2003).

[18]Murray, Farrington, and Sekol (2008); Geller et al. (2012); Murray, Loeber, and Pardini (2012); Turney and Haskins (2014).

[19]Wildeman (2014); Wildeman and Western (2010).

the same residence with their mother.[20] Increased residential instability may place children whose mother is incarcerated at even greater risk for negative outcomes.[21]

WHY IS FAMILY STRENGTHENING IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS WHO ARE INCARCERATED AND THEIR CHILDREN?

A number of studies have tried to identify factors that may reduce the negative effects of parental incarceration on children and families.[22] When parents have relationships with children characterized by strong attachment, children are more resilient to the effects of parental incarceration.[23] Parents who have stronger family relationships are also less likely to reoffend and recidivate.[24] Furthermore, children who are able to visit their parents in person have better parent-child relationships and social-emotional outcomes than children who are not able to visit their parents.[25] Both children and parents benefit from these higher-quality relationships. When parents are sensitive and responsive to children's needs during in-person and remote interactions, the relationship between parents and children can be a protective factor against the negative effects of incarceration.[26]

Unfortunately, few families are able to maintain high-quality and secure relationships when a parent is incarcerated.[27] Opportunities for visitation are typically limited, and most children are rarely able to see their parents in person.[28] Parents may struggle to maintain close bonds with children and other family members with the limited visitation time they have. Given these challenges, researchers have theorized that programs working directly with incarcerated populations should incorporate into their models supports to strengthen families. Based in ecological and family systems theory, this literature suggests that helping parents maintain healthy and high-quality relationships with children can reduce the negative effects of incarceration on children and promote more positive outcomes for families involved with the justice system.[29]

Programs that aim to enhance relationship quality between parents who are incarcerated and children have been shown to improve outcomes for both. For example, the Parenting Inside Out program targets parenting skills and knowledge and aims to improve relationships between parents who are incarcerated and children. A randomized controlled trial showed that this program reduced parental depression;

[20]Glaze and Maruschak (2008).

[21]Wakefield and Wildeman (2018).

[22]Hall, Wooten, and Lundgren (2016); Mowen and Visher (2016).

[23]Arditti (2016).

[24]Brunton-Smith and McCarthy (2017).

[25]Haverkate and Wright (2018); Shlafer, Loper, and Schillmoeller (2015).

[26]Seymour (2017).

[27]Nesmith and Ruhland (2008).

[28]Poehlmann-Tynan (2015).

[29]Arditti (2005); Hale (1988).

improved parenting skills and knowledge; and reduced children's anxiety, depression, and externalizing behaviors.[30] Although there is limited experimental evidence in this area, a growing body of research indicates that family strengthening programs may be valuable for reducing the negative effects of incarceration on families.

Section II. Key Focus Areas for Family Strengthening Programs to Address

An initial scan of the literature, consultations with experts and programs, and guidance from ACF helped the research team identify six key focus areas that are critical for family strengthening programs to address. Section II reviews the relevant empirical evidence explaining why each of these areas is important for family strengthening, as well as why it may pose a particular challenge for programs.

1. **Engaging caregivers who are not incarcerated.** Most family strengthening programs target the family member who is incarcerated in a prison or jail setting, with a smaller number of programs also engaging their children.[31] Yet, children's caregivers while their parent is incarcerated also play a large role in children's experience in the program. The caregiver's relationship with the incarcerated family member can influence how effective the service will be, and how well children adjust and adapt to their parent's absence. Caregivers encompass a broad group, including mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, other relatives, family friends, and foster parents, among others. When a father is incarcerated, children most likely live with their mother, but could also be cared for by another relative, such as a grandparent.[32] In contrast, when a mother is incarcerated, the caregiver is most likely to be the maternal grandmother, but it might also be the child's father or aunt.[33]

   Excluding caregivers from services may make it difficult to engage children in programming. Caregivers often play the role of gatekeeper, and can either facilitate high-quality contact or limit the parent's interactions and engagement with children and families.[34] Family strengthening programs may vary their approach based on the parent's relationship with the caregiver. For example, some studies have found that efforts to strengthen families affected by incarceration are more likely to be successful

[30]Eddy, Martinez, and Burraston (2013).

[31]Seymour (2017).

[32]Geller, Garfinkel, and Western (2011); Wildeman, Schnittker, and Turney (2012).

[33]Baker, McHale, Strozier, and Cecil (2010); Engstrom (2008).

[34]Tasca, Mulvey, and Rodriguez (2016); Schubert, Duinick, and Shlafer (2016); Miller et al. (2014); Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, and Shear (2010).

when the parent has a positive relationship with the child's caregiver.[35] Yet, programs for families have tended to include caregivers only to coordinate visitation with the child.

Including caregivers in services to strengthen families involved with the justice system poses significant challenges. Many caregivers may have had negative interactions with the parent in the past, particularly when the caregiver is a prior romantic partner.[36] When a parent is incarcerated, nonincarcerated caregivers are sometimes reluctant to allow children to interact with them.[37] Caregivers may see the incarceration as a reason to limit the parent's contact with the child, thus making it difficult to engage both the caregiver and the child in services.[38] Addressing these challenges may require a more complex set of incentives and supports that explicitly engage caregivers in family strengthening services.[39]

2. **Considering children's ages in program design.** Families may benefit from programs tailored to the ages of children, as the nature of parent-child interactions varies based on the child's developmental stage. However, many family strengthening programs that aim to improve parenting skills and support high-quality parent-child relationships serve parents with children of different ages.[40] This can be problematic because parental incarceration has varying implications for children across their development. For example, adolescents who experience parental incarceration may require additional supports as they pass through the "storm and stress" of this developmental stage.[41] As they gain greater independence and autonomy in their lives, adolescents may also vocalize their preferences about the type of interactions they want to have with their parents.[42] Teenagers may have access to services such as support groups, after-school programs, mentoring, summer camps and recreational programs, teen leadership programs, and job skills training. These types of programs, however, do not typically involve their parent or target the parent-child relationship. They tend to focus exclusively on the adolescent and provide services outside of the prison or jail context. In contrast, younger children largely interact with their parents at the level determined by the other adults in their lives.

   At the same time, most existing family strengthening programs do not explicitly consider the unique developmental needs of children in different age groups. In-person and video-based visitation programs are fairly standard, regardless of a child's age. These programs allow parents to visit with their children either in person or remotely (through phone calls and video chats).[43] Yet, some components

[35]Bloom and Phillips (2017); Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, and Shear (2010).

[36]Geller, Garfinkel, and Western (2011); Wildeman, Schnittker, and Turney (2012).

[37]Tasca (2016).

[38]Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010).

[39]Kjellstrand (2017); McHale, Salman, Strozier, and Cecil (2013).

[40] Colanese (2017); Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, and Shear (2010).

[41]Arnett (1999).

[42]Arnett (1999); Johnson and Easterling (2015).

[43]Seymour (2017).

of a prison visitation program are not appropriate for younger children (such as invasive security checks or interactions with prison guards). Efforts need to be made to make the physical visitation space inviting and nonthreatening to a young child.[44]

3. **Considering a parent's gender and role.** Family strengthening programs may also benefit from acknowledging the distinct needs of mothers versus fathers who are incarcerated. Consideration should also be given to whether the parent lived with their children prior to their incarceration. Although substantially more fathers are currently incarcerated in the United States, mothers make up an increasingly large percentage of the population in correctional facilities.[45] Most types of services, including mental health services and parenting programs, are relevant for both men and women. However, it may be important for family strengthening programs to respond to key differences between male and female populations. Children can have different experiences depending on whether it is their mother or father who is incarcerated.[46] A mother's incarceration may be particularly traumatic and problematic for children because mothers are overwhelmingly more likely to have been children's primary caregivers prior to their incarceration.[47]

4. **Engaging in cross-system collaboration.** Families often must navigate multiple systems, such as child welfare, correctional, and child support systems, suggesting a need for programs to collaborate in their efforts to support family strengthening. The lack of coordination across systems can impose significant burdens on families before a parent is sentenced and during and after incarceration. A lack of data sharing across systems makes it challenging for programs to know how participating families are engaging with a range of other services. Although few studies have addressed cross-system collaboration as a mechanism to improve family strengthening, in key instances such approaches have had benefits.[48] Research examining cross-system collaboration has focused on programs that embed family strengthening supports in drug courts and treatment centers, as well as local jails.[49]

5. **Implementing strategies to engage parents who are incarcerated and their families.** Ensuring parents actively engage in services is a constant challenge for voluntary family strengthening programs, and serving an incarcerated individual presents a different set of challenges than operating a program for that same individual in the community following the person's release. Parents who are incarcerated report a desire to participate in family strengthening programs and to improve their parenting skills and relationships with their children.[50] Even so, programs experience significant challenges engaging them in services. For example, participants may be transferred to another facility or released

[44]Shlafer, Loper, and Schillmoeller (2015).

[45]Harvey (2018).

[46]Dallaire, Zeman, and Thrash (2015); Turney and Wildeman (2015).

[47]Dallaire, Zeman, and Thrash (2015).

[48]Rhodus and Roguski (2007)

[49]Rhodus and Roguski (2007).

[50]Blumberg and Griffin (2013); Miller et al. (2014).

before completing a family strengthening program.[51] These challenges can be particularly salient for programming in jails, where incarceration tends to be brief. Transfers to other facilities are typically unpredictable.[52] Individuals who commit violations in facilities may be placed in a segregated unit or prevented from participating in any program for some time. It is critical for family strengthening programs to consider innovative approaches to address these barriers to engagement. Programs might consider implementing services in a short timeframe during incarceration or develop a plan to continue services after release. Programs that aim to implement services within the community may also face challenges engaging participants and should consider the priorities and competing demands formerly incarcerated parents face upon release, including those associated with immediate needs such as employment and housing.[53]

6. **Promoting families' financial stability.** Incarceration damages families' economic well-being. Families are often responsible for costs related to fostering the parent-child relationship, such as transportation to prison facilities, high-cost phone calls, and general financial support of the child.[54] The ability of incarcerated parents to maintain their relationships with their children can be jeopardized if they or their families are unable to meet the costs of transportation and ongoing communication. Upon release, people typically receive only a small amount of "gate money" for clothes and transportation, the amount of which varies from state to state.[55] Such financial support is often insufficient to cover the immediate costs associated with reentering the community. Upon release, people incur costs related to seeking employment and finding a place to live, as well as other expenses imposed by the justice system, such as court costs, post-release monitoring fees, restitution fees, and child support arrears.[56] Barriers to employment such as having to disclose prior convictions or a significant gap in employment history limit formerly incarcerated people's access to financial opportunities and independence.[57] Moreover, those with a felony on their criminal record are prohibited from accessing safety-net benefits, such as public housing, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) in certain states, further limiting released parents' ability to support themselves and their families financially.[58] Formerly incarcerated parents may struggle to address competing priorities such as building a relationship with their children and overcoming these barriers to economic stability.

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[51]Baker, McHale, Strozier, and Cecil (2010); Miller et al. (2013); Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018); McDonald et al. (2009).

[52]McDonald et al. (2009); Miller et al. (2014).

[53] Fontaine et al. (2017a).

[54]Christian, Mellow, and Thomas (2006); Comfort (2016); Eisen (2015); Braman (2004).

[55]Wilson (2007).

[56]Bannon, Nagrecha, and Diller (2010).

[57]Looney and Turner (2018).

[58]Geller and Curtis (2011); Mohan, Palacio, and Lower-Basch (2017); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015).

Most programs that aim to support families' financial stability focus exclusively on the employment and income of the parent who is incarcerated and do not emphasize building relationships with family members at the same time. Therefore, more programs are needed that explicitly combine services to enhance financial stability with components that target family strengthening.

In summary, family strengthening programs should consider a number of issues when developing and refining their models, and there is much to learn from existing programs. Accordingly, after first outlining the methodology to conduct this targeted review, this report will examine the published research and evaluation literature on family strengthening programs.

Section III. Review Methodology and Overview of Findings

To conduct this targeted review, the research team created a set of parameters to guide the literature search, based on expert consultations, a preliminary literature scan, and guidance from ACF. The team chose search terms (listed in Box 1) that directly aligned with the six key focus areas highlighted in the previous section and used those terms to identify relevant peer-reviewed journal articles and reports published between 2007 and 2018 on Google Scholar, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, SocINDEX, PsycINFO, National Criminal Justice Reference Service, and ProQuest Research Library. The team then completed further screening activities to ensure that the content was aligned with one of the six key focus areas.

Box 1. Glossary of Frequently Used Terms

Family strengthening program	A program that seeks to maintain and build healthy relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their children.
Incarceration	Any situation in which an individual spends time in a local jail or in a state or federal correctional institution.
Caregiver	The adult who takes care of a child while their parent is incarcerated. Caregivers encompass a broad group, including mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, other relatives, friends, and foster parents, among others.
Financial stability	Limited economic stressors on one's ability to meet concrete financial needs and maintain an adequate standard of living.
Key Focus Areas	Based on an initial scan of the literature, consultation with a diverse set of experts and programs in the field, and guidance from the Administration for Children and Families, the research team identified six key focus areas that may be particularly important for family strengthening programs to address: (1) engaging caregivers who are not incarcerated, (2) considering children's ages in program design, (3) considering a parent's gender and role, (4) engaging in cross-system collaboration, (5) implementing strategies to engage parents who are incarcerated and their families, and (6) promoting families' financial stability.

To be included in this targeted review, journal articles or reports had to feature studies of programs with a theory of change, logic model, or motivation for program services that corresponded to the core goal of strengthening families involved in the justice system—that is, supporting the maintenance and development of healthy relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their families. The review excluded studies of services that did not explicitly seek to promote family strengthening—including some employment programs and individual mental health and substance abuse services—even though these programs have the potential to improve family strengthening outcomes by first improving their intended targeted outcomes for individuals. Recognizing that families can take many forms, this review prioritized studies of programs that directly targeted relationships between parents and children (as opposed to programs aiming to strengthen relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their spouses or romantic partners, with no direct focus on their children). Box 2 provides more specific information about the review's methodology.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMS AND EVIDENCE BASE

Using this methodology, the team identified studies of 59 programs that directly aligned with one of the six key focus areas and met its definition of a family strengthening program: a program that sought to maintain or build healthy relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their children and families. As summarized in Table 1, for each focus area and implementation context, the research team cross-referenced the programs aligned with that area or operating in that context with the levels of documented evidence of the programs' effectiveness. The team then placed the programs in one of the following three groups: (1) demonstrated at least one positive effect in an impact study,[59] (2) found a positive change in at least one outcome in a study comparing data before and after the program (a pre-post study), or (3) did not examine any outcome over time.[60] The programs placed in the third group were examined in studies that used a range of designs and that collected data at one point in time describing the program and its participants. However, the literature on these programs primarily summarized the program models and the implementation conditions. The table indicates the number of programs aligned with each of the six key focus areas and operating in each of the implementation context, as well as their breakdown across the three levels of evidence of effectiveness. Programs are often counted in multiple categories.

The literature review did not find any evaluations of programs that showed no effects or negative effects in an experimental study or a study that examined change in outcomes over time. This may be a function of there being few studies of such programs in general, coupled with the difficulty of publishing null or negative results in academic journals. Some studies reported mixed results for programs having both positive and null or negative effects.

[59]A "rigorous study" is defined as a well-conducted randomized controlled trial or quasi-experimental study, as per recommendations from the What Works Clearinghouse.

[60]What Works Clearinghouse (n.d.).

Box 2. Literature Review Methodology

To be included in the literature review, journal articles and government reports had to report on studies of family strengthening programs for incarcerated parents and their families and meet the following two criteria:

1. **Studies must have been published between 2007 and 2018.** This criterion was intended to ensure that the review reflected contemporary family strengthening programs.

2. **Studies must include a description or analysis of one or more family strengthening programs that include at least one key focus area identified in this project.**

This review focused on family strengthening programs that seek to maintain and build healthy relationships between parents who are incarcerated and their children. The review included programs both inside and outside of the United States that addressed at least one of the following six key areas of focus:*

1. Engaging caregivers who are not incarcerated
2. Considering children's ages in program design
3. Considering a parent's gender and role
4. Engaging in cross-system collaboration
5. Implementing strategies to engage parents who are incarcerated and their families
6. Promoting families' financial stability

After defining these selection criteria, members of the research team conducted searches using the following terms in Google Scholar, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, SocINDEX, PsycINFO, National Criminal Justice Reference Service, and ProQuest Research Library.

Key Terms	Search Terms
Caregivers	Caregivers, father, fatherhood, men, women, mother, motherhood, paternal, maternal, co-parent, coparent, relative, foster, family, grandparent, partner
Children	Children, son, daughter, youth, teen, adolescent, juvenile, infant, toddler, child, boys, girls
Incarceration	Prisoner, inmate, ex-prisoner, offender, ex-offender, criminal justice, prison, arrest, reentry, incarcerate, ex-inmate, parole, probation, criminal supervision
Reunification	Reunification, integration, union, release
Program	Intervention, treatment, healing, program, initiative, project

The initial search yielded more than 500 articles. The research team eliminated articles that did not fit the criteria described above, resulting in 110 articles for close review. Many of the excluded studies addressed important issues, such as employment, substance abuse, involvement in the juvenile justice system, trauma, and HIV programming, but did not directly relate to the team's definition of family strengthening. Members of the team further analyzed articles related to family strengthening to determine the content of the programs on which they reported and the rigor of any evaluations of the programs. The review also included studies that described and analyzed multiple programs using meta-analysis or systematic reviews.

NOTES: *In cases where articles included descriptions of programs outside the United States, the research team made a judgment about including them based on their potential applicability to U.S. systems.

Table 1. Overview of Family Strengthening Programs and Their Level of Evidence

Program Focus Area and Implementation Context	Level of Evidence: Demonstrated at least one positive effect in an impact study	Level of Evidence: Demonstrated positive change on at least one outcome in a pre-post study	Level of Evidence: Did not examine any outcome over time	Total Number of Programs
Engages nonincarcerated caregivers	1	6	13	20
Considers children's ages in program design	3	12	6	21
Considers a parent's gender and role				
Mothers who are or were incarcerated	4	13	7	24
Fathers who are or were incarcerated	2	6	16	24
Engages in cross-system collaboration	0	3	2	5
Implements strategies to engage parents who are incarcerated and their families	5	15	14	34
Promotes families' financial stability	1	0	12	13
Implementation context				
Community only	2	5	5	12
Correctional institution	5	17	8	30
Community and correctional institution	0	3	14	17
Total	7	25	27	59

Of the six key focus areas, programs most frequently implemented strategies to engage parents and families and considered a parent's gender and role. There were fewer programs that considered children's ages in their program design or engaged nonincarcerated caregivers. And there were even fewer programs that promoted families' financial stability or engaged in cross-system collaboration.

Twenty-seven of the 59 programs included in the review were discussed and described in a published paper in which no evidence was presented on whether they improved outcomes for children and families. Instead, these papers tended to focus on describing the components of these programs and their

implementation without trying to link the programs to participant outcomes. For 25 of the programs, there was at least one published study showing a positive change in an outcome when comparing it before and after the program. However, for only seven programs was there demonstrated evidence that they improved at least one outcome in a published impact study.

The review also suggested that the majority of programs aimed to improve parenting skills among parents who are incarcerated or to support high-quality relationships between these parents and their children. Programs tended to fall into one of a few similar types of service delivery paradigms, such as visitation programs and curriculum-driven parenting programs delivered via group meetings, implemented during the period of incarceration.[61] Some of these models explicitly targeted outcomes for children, theorizing that programming that enhanced high-quality parent-child relationships would make children's attachment relationships with their parents more secure, reduce children's behavioral problems, and promote children's social-emotional and coping skills.

Family strengthening programs directed at fathers tended to be curriculum-driven parenting programs implemented in correctional facilities. Similar parenting programs were available to mothers, but these programs tended to include some components that allowed them to interact and connect with their children through in-person and virtual visits. Some programs for mothers incorporated prison nurseries or alternative sentencing models in an effort to reduce the negative effects of parent-child separations during infancy and toddlerhood. In addition, programs for mothers were more likely to address issues of trauma than programs for fathers.

As noted above, a smaller number of family strengthening programs addressed incarceration's financial burden on families. While there are programs with components that support financial stability, particularly those funded by the ACF Office of Family Assistance's (OFA) Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) grant program, few studies have explicitly tested the impacts of these programs on parent-child relationship quality or family strengthening and reintegration outcomes.

Finally, the bulk of family strengthening programs were administered while parents were incarcerated. Thirty of the 59 programs operated in correctional settings, and another 17 were hybrid programs operated across community and correctional facilities. The remaining 12 programs operated in the community only.

The following section presents highlights from studies of selected programs that explicitly addressed one or more of the six key focus areas described above.

[61]Visitation programs involve children visiting the parent at the correctional institution, while curriculum-driven programs are guided by information and group based and use a specific parenting curriculum to deliver content.

Section IV. Examining How Programs in the Field Address Key Focus Areas and Their Evidence of Effectiveness

The articles and reports included in the review indicated that a number of family strengthening program models address the six key focus areas of interest to the field discussed above. The following section provides more detail on the programs that the literature examined, describes how they address these six key focus areas, and summarizes the available evidence on the programs' effectiveness within the focus areas. The purpose of this section is to inform researchers about programs that address these key focus areas and their current evidence bases in order to help them identify program models for more rigorous research and evaluation.

HOW DO PROGRAMS ENGAGE NON-INCARCERATED CAREGIVERS?

Some programs include children's nonincarcerated caregivers in services aiming to strengthen families involved in the justice system, but these programs have tended to operate on a smaller scale. For example, curriculum developers at the Oregon Social Learning Center recently adapted the Parenting Inside Out program, which is typically administered when parents are incarcerated, to include caregivers and to be administered outside of correctional settings.[62] A novel feature of the adapted curriculum is that caregivers can participate in the program in the community, while the parent receives the original version of the curriculum in the jail or prison setting. However, the community-based version of the program has not yet been evaluated.

Caregivers' participation in family strengthening programs may increase when they are effectively engaged in services. The Family Connections Center (FCC) in New Hampshire implemented a program for both mothers and fathers who were incarcerated.[63] In promoting visitation between children and parents, the FCC found that the quality of the relationship between the parent and a child's caregiver was a key factor affecting consistent visitation. This finding led the FCC to prioritize interactions and engagement with caregivers as a critical component of parent-child visitation more broadly. Rather than promote parent-child visitation only, the program model shifted to its focus to facilitating whole-family visitation. Using a pre-post research design, researchers found that parents had reduced anxiety and showed improved confidence in their parenting skills and practices after completing this broader family-based program.[64]

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[62]See Oregon Social Learning Center (n.d.); Eddy, Martinez, and Burraston (2013).

[63]Toth and Kazura (2010).

[64]Toth and Kazura (2010).

Overall, the present literature review found that few family strengthening programs explicitly aim to include children's nonincarcerated caregivers in their models. Approaches that require children's involvement may need to engage caregivers directly to help ensure participation in the program. Further research is needed to understand the key facilitators and barriers to caregivers' engagement in family strengthening programs.

HOW DO PROGRAMS CONSIDER CHILDREN'S AGES IN THEIR PROGRAM DESIGN?

Family strengthening programs should match programming to children's ages and developmental needs. The review identified a number of programs that target children at specific developmental stages, including prison nursery and attachment-oriented programs during infancy and toddlerhood, programs that support parent-child visitation and remote interactions across childhood and adolescence, and programs that tailor parenting curricula to children's ages. The following describes notable components from each of these program types.

Prison Nursery and Attachment-Oriented Programs During Infancy and Toddlerhood

Prison nursery programs ensure that children are not separated from their mother during infancy (birth to about 18 months old), a critical time for supporting secure mother-child attachment.[65] Early mother-child separation is a traumatic event for children that can have broader implications for their attachment style and overall well-being into adulthood.[66] Prison nursery programs are usually directed at mothers to support early mother-child attachment relationships. This review did not find any examples of similar attachment-focused supports for fathers of very young children.

Prison nursery programs have shown some preliminary evidence of effectiveness in improving child outcomes and mother-child relationships. For example, these programs can support the development of a secure attachment style, limit a mother's use of harsh discipline, and help maintain a child's legal connection to his or her mother.[67] These programs have also shown benefits in terms of reducing recidivism among mothers. A Nebraska prison nursery program allowed women to live with their newborn infants while taking parenting classes and receiving hands-on parental training for up to 18 months following their child's birth.[68] The women, mostly White, who participated in the program had a lower recidivism rate compared with a group of women who were incarcerated prior to the program's implementation.

[65]Byrne, Goshin, and Joestl (2010); Feintuch (2010); Newman, Fowler, and Cashin (2011).

[66]Powell, Ciclitira, and Marzano (2017).

[67]Fritz and Whiteacre (2016); Kaminsky (2013); Kubiak, Kasiborski, and Schmittel (2010).

[68]Carlson (2009).

Another prison nursery program, New Beginnings, aimed to increase the quality of mother-infant attachment. Results from a randomized controlled trial of the program showed that levels of reflective functioning and behavioral interaction with their babies remained consistent for the mothers in the program group, but declined over time for mothers in the control group. Mothers in the program group also demonstrated improvements in maternal sensitivity and their ability to recognize and respond to their babies' internal states. However, the program had no significant effects on depression among mothers or mothers' self-reported descriptions of their babies' functioning over time.[69]

A recent small pre-post study examined the effects of Tamar's Children, a program for women and their infants living in a residential facility. Infants who participated in the program had similar rates and quality of attachment compared with infants belonging to middle-class women who were not incarcerated. In addition, mothers in the program had fewer symptoms of depression over time and had levels of maternal sensitivity comparable to those of mothers in a comparison group in the community.[70]

The Baby Elmo program (renamed Just Beginning) aims to help incarcerated teenage fathers engage in high-quality play during supervised visits with their infant and toddler children.[71] The curriculum's lessons cover such topics as attachment, dealing with stranger anxiety, child-directed play, labeling and language, appropriate praise, and affection. A pre-post evaluation of the program, including primarily men of color, showed significant growth in fathers' emotional responsiveness to their children.[72]

Programs That Support Parent-Child Visitation and Remote Interactions with Age-Specific Activities

Efforts to coach parents during visits with children in a way that is tailored to children's ages may help make the visits more productive and therapeutic.[73] For example, prison visitation programs that limit the amount of time and contact between parents and children may need to allow more time for older children, since parents may take longer to reconnect with adolescent children they have not seen recently. A recent study of an extended visiting program for mothers who were incarcerated found that mothers expressed a deep desire for longer and even overnight visits with their school-aged and adolescent children.[74]

Visitation programs that engage parents may support different types of activities depending on children's ages. One study summarized some attempts to adapt structured activities to children of different

[69]Sleed, Baradon, and Fonagy (2013).

[70]Cassidy et al. (2010).

[71]Barr et al. (2011)

[72]Barr et al. (2014).

[73]Beyer, Blumenthal-Guigui, and Krupat (2010).

[74]Schubert, Duinick, and Shlafer (2016).

ages in an extended visiting program, implemented with 24 mostly White mothers.[75] Whereas the program provided structured activities (such as crafts and games) for younger children, older children had more opportunities for free conversation, reading, doing homework, and playing outdoors. Even so, participating mothers believed that the program should consider further differentiating activities for children depending on their age.

Another set of programs for older children aids parents in supporting their children academically. For example, a program called Family Connections helps mothers read with their school-aged children.[76] This program helps the parents record themselves on a DVD reading an age-appropriate book to their child. The program then shares the DVD with the child. There is limited research, however, documenting the effects of family strengthening programs adapted for older children on parent, child, and family outcomes.

Curriculum-Based Programs for Parents That Consider Children's Ages

Programs that aim to provide parenting supports can also consider how parenting skills should vary depending on children's ages. An adaptation of the Strengthening Families Program, which included mothers in jail, their children, and their children's caregivers (45 mothers, 66 percent of whom were White and 26 percent Black), grouped children with similar-age peers. Some groups focused on issues that affect younger children (for example, sleeping, toilet training, early literacy, testing boundaries, and discipline), and other groups focused on issues affecting teens and older children (school-based issues, bullying, preventing risky behaviors, parental monitoring, and teenagers' developing autonomy).[77] By adapting the program for children of different ages, the curriculum was able to explicitly delve into the unique needs of parents and caregivers of older versus younger children. When programs deliver age-specific content to groups of similarly aged children, children also have the opportunity to build support networks with their peers.

In sum, a number of programs consider children's ages and development in their models. The majority of programs that do so target infants and very young children with mothers who are incarcerated through prison nurseries and alternative sentencing approaches. Fewer programs specifically target adolescents, but those that do aim to address the complex emotional needs of teenagers. Future research should consider strategies to better study differing approaches, their developmental appropriateness, and varying effects on younger and older children.

[75]Schubert, Duinick, and Shlafer (2016).

[76]Blumberg and Griffin (2013).

[77]Miller et al. (2014).

HOW DO PROGRAMS CONSIDER A PARENT'S GENDER AND ROLE?

Family strengthening programs should also explicitly consider the gender and role of the parent who is incarcerated. In other words, programs should adjust services depending on whether the parent is a mother or father, *and* whether he or she was his or her child's primary caregiver prior to incarceration. Some programs do tailor services to the distinct needs of mothers and fathers. However, this review did not find evidence that programs also adjust programming depending on whether the parent was the primary caregiver for the child before incarceration. Programs targeted at mothers largely assume that they were residential parents before incarceration and will be residential parents when they are released. Therefore, this review describes programs that have tailored services specifically for mothers and fathers who are incarcerated. In the future, programs should further consider differences in parental role, rather than gender alone.

Programs for Mothers

Women's correctional facilities are more likely than men's to have programming for parents, offering more parent-child programs inside and outside the facility, programs involving audio and video recordings to promote parent-child contact, parenting classes, transportation subsidies to support parent-child visitation, and family visiting areas separate from the prison or jail.[78] In addition, most programs that tailor services to the needs of mothers appear to be in the domain of prison nursery programs and parent visitation programs that allow extended visits with children and opportunities to interact outside of a typical visitation setting.[79] Researchers conducted a pilot evaluation of Extended Visiting, a prison visiting program for incarcerated mothers and their children ages 0 to 17 years that included facilitated activities and overnight stays. Mothers and children's caregivers participating in this study unanimously preferred Extended Visiting over typical visiting. However, researchers have yet to test the efficacy of the program.[80] A second type of program for mothers provides intensive therapy to help women process general trauma, including a history of physical or sexual abuse or assault. Such programs (for example, a work-release program coupled with community-based therapy sessions) allow for more visitation and contact with children. They also tend to allow increased time for discussion and interaction between participants.[81] Program models for incarcerated mothers have also conducted letter writing workshops as a therapeutic strategy to empower women as they attempt to strengthen their relationships with their

[78]Cramer, Goff, Peterson, and Sandstrom (2017); Hoffman, Byrd, and Kightlinger (2010).

[79]Discussed above; Byrne, Goshin, and Joestl (2010); Goshin (2014); Kotler et al. (2015); Kubiak, Kasiborski, and Schmittel (2010); Newman, Fowler and Cashin (2011).

[80] Schubert, Duinick, and Shlafer (2016).

[81]Robbins, Martin, and Surratt (2009); Cardaci (2013); Feintuch (2010), Schubert, Duinick, and Shlafer (2016).

children.[82] One study found that mothers who participated in these programs reported high levels of program satisfaction and engagement; however, researchers have yet to test the efficacy of the program.[83]

Programs designed for mothers may encounter the fewest obstacles when integrating caregivers into family strengthening services because caregivers are most likely to be their own mothers or other kin.[84] The Motherly Intercessions program is one example of such a model.[85] In this program, mothers participate in an adapted version of the Strengthening Families Program and have opportunities for regular visitation with their children and their children's caregivers. An implementation study of the program found high implementation fidelity and high participant satisfaction, engagement, and attendance. Data collected before and after the program showed that program participation was associated with improvements in family-level functioning, caregivers' positive parenting, and caregivers' symptoms of depression.[86]

Alternative sentencing models allow parents—typically mothers—to maintain relationships with their families outside of a typical prison context. A recent quasi-experimental study of pregnant women convicted of low-level offenses tested the effects of the program Women and Infants at Risk on outcomes for mothers and children.[87] The program permitted pregnant women entering their third trimester to serve their sentence in an alternative community setting rather than a prison. In doing so, they were allowed to live with their children and, if applicable, coparent with the children's caregivers similar to how they would outside of the prison system. Although the small sample limits the statistical power of the study, mothers in the program were less likely to be arrested in the 10 months following the program relative to mothers in the comparison group. The study's findings revealed the important role caregivers play in the successful implementation of the program: Mothers who had high-quality relationships with their children's caregivers were more likely to complete the program.[88]

Programs for Fathers

Some family strengthening programs have considered issues that fathers who are incarcerated may be more likely to face. Fathers are less likely than mothers to be the primary caregivers of their children and are more likely to have limited contact with their children.[89] Parenting programs tailored to fathers aim to help fathers engage in high-quality interactions with their children when they do get the opportunity

[82]Sparks, Strauss, and Grant (2017).

[83]Sparks, Strauss, and Grant (2017).

[84]Baker, McHale, Strozier, and Cecil (2010).

[85]Miller et al. (2014).

[86]Miller et al. (2013).

[87]Kubiak, Kasiborski, and Schmittel (2010).

[88]Kubiak, Kasiborski, and Schmittel (2010).

[89]Bloom and Phillips (2017).

to visit with them.[90] For example, the Baby Elmo program described earlier, which MDRC's Building Bridges and Bonds study is currently testing in community-based settings, intends to help incarcerated fathers engage in high-quality play during supervised visits with their infant and toddler children.[91]

Fathers may be more likely to have opportunities to connect with their children when they provide financially for them.[92] Accordingly, programs for fathers have begun to include both employment and parenting supports in their models. For example, ACF's Office of Family Assistance provides grants to Responsible Fatherhood programs that work directly with incarcerated and recently released fathers. These programs offer services and activities to support responsible parenting and economic stability, in addition to healthy marriage and relationship education. This review provides further detail on programs that support financial stability in a later section.

In sum, there are a number of programs whose models at least in part consider the parent's gender and role in the family. Programs for mothers tend to focus on processing prior trauma and supporting longer-term parent-child visitation. Programs for fathers focus a bit more on employment-related supports and address barriers to parent-child visitation. Little research, however, has explored key differences in the models and used data to determine whether these distinct approaches are the most effective way to deliver programming. Future research is needed that more thoroughly explores these issues and the efficacy of these programs for children and families.

HOW DO PROGRAMS ENGAGE IN CROSS-SYSTEM COLLABORATION?

Parents might find it difficult to participate in family strengthening programs when they are at the same time required to engage in a range of other services, including those related to their involvement in the justice system. This review found that family strengthening programs engage in two main types of cross-system collaboration—partnerships with social service agencies and collaborations involving drug courts and substance abuse treatment centers. This section highlights examples of each below.

Partnerships with Social Service Agencies

Prior implementation studies have documented the processes through which stakeholders have built cross-system collaborations to strengthen families. A number of programs that received funding from OFA through HMRF grants leveraged partnerships across organizations and programs, including faith-based organizations, human service agencies, domestic violence service providers, child support

[90]Block et al. (2014); McCrudden et al. (2014).

[91]Barr et al. (2011); Israel, Behrmann, and Wulfsohn (2017).

[92]Seymour (2017).

offices, and criminal justice departments.[93] In one example, several family strengthening programs connected fathers who were formerly incarcerated with local child support offices to provide them with child support education and counseling, modify child support orders, develop debt repayment plans, and reinstate drivers' licenses that had been suspended due to child support noncompliance.[94]

Drug Courts and Treatment Centers

Family treatment or drug courts show promising results related to family strengthening as an alternative to incarceration for many parents who have a history of involvement with the criminal justice system. One program in Colorado has achieved a high rate of keeping children with their parents or families while a parent receives treatment for substance use disorders.[95] In 1994, Colorado passed the Expedited Permanency Planning statute, which requires children under 6 years of age, who were removed from parental custody for any reason, to be placed in permanent family households in an expedited manner. In response, the El Paso County Department of Human Services partnered with multiple programs and a nonprofit organization to form a joint service management (JSM) team. The JSM team implemented a family preservation program for families affected by substance abuse, which ultimately led to the creation of the Family Treatment Drug Court in 2001. In the family preservation program, eligible parents who struggle with substance abuse can participate in intensive in-home family services, including drug screenings, sanctions and rewards systems, parenting classes, and child welfare assessments, all while remaining in the home with their children. In 2004, 98 percent of children in participating families remained with their parents or were in custody arrangements with other relatives. Although only descriptive, results from a study of the program suggest that the success rate was particularly high compared with families that did not participate in the Family Treatment Drug Court.[96]

Similarly, the Family Dependency Treatment Court in Hillsborough County, Florida, includes a judge, case managers, community substance abuse treatment providers, social workers, defense attorneys, and the state's Office of the Attorney General. Participants are involved in TRIAD, an evidence-based group counseling program, and Nurturing Parents, a parenting curriculum, as an alternative to incarceration. Participants also attend Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous groups, complete random drug screenings, and appear in court. A study evaluating participants before and after the program found that participants in the Hillsborough County Family Treatment Drug Court were more likely than a similar group in a nearby county lacking a similar court to be reunified with their children, and less likely to recidivate.[97]

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[93]Fontaine et al. (2017a); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015).

[94]Fontaine et al. (2017a).

[95]Rhodus and Roguski (2007).

[96]Rhodus and Roguski (2007).

[97]Chaung, Moore, Barrett, and Young (2012).

In sum, there are few instances of published research on cross-system collaboration to support family strengthening. However, family strengthening programs likely leverage cross-system collaborations that are not reflected in published literature. While examples of existing programs suggest that these efforts may be one possible mechanism for family strengthening, further study is needed to document and determine the best approaches for building such partnerships to support outcomes for families involved with the justice system.

HOW DO PROGRAMS IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE FAMILIES?

Programs use a range of creative approaches to get parents to participate in services, complete programs within institutions, and engage in programs following release. This section describes examples of these approaches.

Strategies to Promote Parents' Participation

Providing different types of incentives for participants is one key engagement strategy. For instance, one descriptive study examined a family strengthening program for mothers involved with drugs. It found that women who completed the program reported that receiving a reduction in their sentence was a key motivator for them to participate.[98] Another descriptive study found that offering incentives such as monetary payments, free time during incarceration, or more family visitation opportunities can be an effective engagement strategy in prison-based settings.[99]

It is also important to consider the backgrounds and experiences of program facilitators. Some programs have prioritized building strong relationships between facilitators and participants.[100] A descriptive study of a parenting program for mothers who were incarcerated found that using facilitators who shared experiences similar to those of the program's participants contributed to feelings of trust and understanding among participants.[101] A descriptive study of a parenting program for fathers that employed facilitators who shared ethnic and cultural identities with the participants yielded similar results.[102]

[98]Robbins, Martin, and Surratt (2009).

[99]Herman-Stahl, Kan, and McKay (2008).

[100]Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018); Rossiter et al. (2015); Rossiter et al. (2017).

[101]Rossiter et al. (2015).

[102]Rossiter et al. (2017).

Strategies to Address Program Attrition

Retention in family strengthening programs can be particularly difficult in correctional settings if participants are transferred to another facility or released before completing the program. Some studies have suggested strategies to address attrition. For instance, service providers should consider adapting programs based on the incarceration setting.[103] Parents incarcerated in prisons may benefit from long-term programs that take place over several weeks, while parents in local detention centers or jails may benefit more from short-term programs delivered over a few days. After conducting an implementation study on six reentry programs, one team of researchers suggested shortening the length of programs to accommodate the limited opportunities to provide services in local jails.[104]

Programs have made attempts to avoid attrition due to release by enrolling participants in services based on the time remaining on their prison sentences. For instance, a study of a program for mothers with young children excluded program applicants if they were set to be released before the planned follow-up assessment.[105] In another study, researchers described a parenting program for fathers who were incarcerated that only enrolled fathers who had at least six months remaining on their sentence.[106]

Although limited in number, some studies have attempted to reduce the effects of unexpected prison transfers by coordinating with the Department of Corrections (DOC). For instance, when recruiting prisons to implement the Parenting Inside Out program, one study included only sites that were willing to limit transfers to other prisons participating in the study.[107] Although this collaboration was made purely for research purposes, programs within facilities may benefit similarly from strong collaborations with the DOC's leadership.

Strategies to Engage Families in Community Settings

Even using the strategies described above, it may be easiest to engage parents in family strengthening programs while they are incarcerated. Programs in community settings have faced challenges related to low buy-in from family members and the many competing demands for newly released parents' time.[108] Indeed, following release from jail or prison, parents have many priorities, including finding employment and housing. They may also have court-ordered requirements to fulfill, such as substance use disorder treatment and meetings with parole officers.[109] Furthermore, a range of restrictions in some states can prohibit people with felony convictions from living in public housing or receiving SNAP and

[103]Tremblay and Sutherland (2017).

[104]Fontaine et al. (2017a).

[105] Sleed, Baradon, and Fonagy (2013).

[106]McCrudden et al. (2014).

[107]Eddy, Martinez, and Burraston (2013).

[108]Fontaine et al. (2017a).

[109]Herman-Stahl, Kan, and McKay (2008); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015).

TANF benefits. Accordingly, individuals may not be permitted to live with their families following release, if they reside in public housing, presenting a significant barrier to family strengthening.[110] All of these possible scenarios may make participating in a family strengthening program a challenge for parents once they are released from incarceration.

Some programs have made efforts to engage nonincarcerated caregivers in family strengthening programs in the community, although these programs have yet to be evaluated.[111] For instance, they may organize special events, including family outings and holiday celebrations, as well as support groups that provide complimentary dinners.[112] Conducting a thorough needs assessment coupled with the provision of wraparound services can be an effective engagement strategy for program participants and their families.[113]

In sum, programs face significant challenges when trying to engage families in services. Participation tends to be higher when parents are incarcerated compared with when they are in the community after release. Future research that seeks to better understand the key barriers affecting program engagement may help improve parents' participation in programs after they are released.

HOW DO PROGRAMS PROMOTE FAMILIES' FINANCIAL STABILITY?

Family strengthening programs may also want to consider incorporating supports to help promote participants' financial stability. This can be a powerful tool for engaging parents and can help ensure that economic stressors do not undermine improvements in parent-child relationship quality. Although family strengthening components are typically distinct from the types of services that support financial stability (for example, job training and employment services), some programs integrate the two. Examples of these programs are highlighted below.

Combining Financial and Family Strengthening Supports

One program identified in the review combined family strengthening support with job training and employment assistance. Specifically, Researchers from Child Trends used a randomized controlled trial to examine the effects of the Strengthening Families Program combined with employment assistance and job training on outcomes for fathers who were recently incarcerated and their children.[114] The program included children and their caregivers, who participated in parenting sessions with fathers. The researchers compared a group that received the full suite of program services, including the parenting

[110]Keene et al. (2018); Warner (2015).

[111]McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015); Fontaine et al. (2017a).

[112]Fontaine et al. (2017a).

[113]McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015); Fontaine et al. (2017a).

[114]Scott et al. (2017).

sessions, with a group receiving only the employment and job-training components. Although the economic support services were equivalent across the groups, the fathers who received the parenting supports were more likely to be employed and pay child support at the time of the follow-up.

Although few family strengthening programs addressing financial stability have been evaluated in an impact study, implementation studies have examined numerous strategies for combining program components that target economic, parenting, and healthy relationship outcomes. For instance, reports from the Urban Institute and RTI International describe several programs funded by ACF targeting fathers who are currently or formerly incarcerated.[115] These programs implement a range of components, including economic literacy education, supports for résumé writing, and vocational training prior to release. They provide similar services to those who have been released, including training, certifications, and job placement assistance.

Programs that receive HMRF grants have made efforts to combine family strengthening and employment components.[116] Many HMRF grant recipients serve parents who have been involved with the criminal justice system, and ACF has awarded a small number of grants over time to Responsible Fatherhood programs that specifically target fathers who are currently incarcerated or have been recently released. ACF has also sponsored a demonstration called Building Bridges and Bonds within which a cognitive-behavioral employment curriculum is embedded in programs that serve fathers who were formerly incarcerated.[117] Results from this study may provide some insight into whether promoting self-sufficiency among fathers recently affected by incarceration can also have effects on family strengthening. In-depth interviews with fathers in the Parents and Children Together Evaluation found that many fathers come to programs seeking employment.[118] By offering supports that promote financial stability, programs may be better able to engage fathers in a broader suite of family strengthening services.

Further research is needed on this topic and on building programs that combine components that target financial stability with supports for family strengthening efforts.[119] Indeed, parents report that finding employment and housing and securing identification documentation are among their greatest needs after being released.[120] At the same time, they may be under tremendous pressure to continue to build relationships with their children and families, which may be contingent upon their ability to obtain employment and housing. Supports that directly address these stressors may have the potential to not only improve parents' financial stability but also to promote positive family strengthening outcomes. Further evaluation is needed to assess the impacts of these programs.

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[115]McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015); Fontaine et al. (2017b).

[116]Fontaine et al. (2017a); Lindquist, McKay, Steffey, and Bir (2016); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015).

[117]Israel, Behrmann, and Wulfsohn (2017); Manno, Brennan, and Cohn (2019).

[118]Holcomb et al. (2015).

[119]Kjellstrand (2017); Toth and Kazura (2010).

[120]Fontaine et al. (2017a).

Section V. Directions for Future Research

This literature review indicates that a number of programs help strengthen families involved with the criminal justice system, but the majority have shown only preliminary evidence of improving family strengthening outcomes. Having higher-quality evidence would better inform the field on how to serve such families and effectively invest resources in this kind of work.

Some of the programs studied in the literature have clear program models and theories of change. Descriptive and implementation research suggests that participants in these programs are generally engaged in and satisfied with the services and exhibit some positive change over time. These models appear to be promising candidates for more intensive examination in small-scale impact studies. Depending on results, future research should examine the long-term efficacy and costs of these programs and assess how these program models have been rolled out to their target participants. No studies identified in this review considered how key characteristics—of either programs or participants—moderated program effects. Future evaluation research should address this limitation by seeking to determine "what works for whom."

Additional strategies for strengthening families involved with the justice system are not included in this review because they have yet to be studied. For example, a number of programs aim to provide stable housing and high-quality child care for parents after release. Home-visiting services for families engage nonincarcerated caregivers, provide managed therapy for parents and children, and facilitate contact between parents and families via written letters and phone calls. Evaluations of these models and their effects on family strengthening outcomes are needed.

Furthermore, there is more to learn about the specific features of implementation that may be most important for family strengthening programs. For example, few programs have studied how the characteristics of program facilitators or providers affect implementation.[121] Facilitators who have been involved in the criminal justice system themselves may implement models differently than facilitators with little firsthand experience. In addition, few programs have highlighted any cultural adaptations made to their models to better serve racial and ethnic minority groups and acknowledge their lived experiences. Many programs likely do consider the match between the background characteristics of the participants and program facilitators when adopting new approaches to increase participants' engagement.[122] Yet, few studies have empirically examined these features of implementation. More research examining the needed frequency and intensity of services can also inform the field about what set of resources must be in place for the successful implementation of family strengthening programs.

[121]For exception, see Rossiter et al. (2017).

[122]Holcomb et al. (2015).

More research is also needed on how family strengthening programs can support families' financial stability and how employment programs might integrate family strengthening supports. For example, future work may consider the effects of subsidized and transitional jobs programs on family strengthening outcomes, and the potential pairing of subsidized or transitional jobs and family strengthening programming. This review did not consider subsidized and transitional jobs programs because they do not explicitly aim to improve the quality of family relationships. Even so, prior studies have shown that programs providing temporary employment, job-readiness assistance, case management, and job coaching can reduce incarceration and improve overall well-being.[123] If formerly incarcerated individuals are able to find secure employment and provide financial support to their children and families, positive outcomes for children and families may be more likely. Moreover, as noted earlier, family strengthening programs may be better able to engage participants when they are paired with employment supports such as a transitional job. The field would benefit from additional research explicitly testing these hypotheses.

Finally, future research can build directly on this review's findings about innovative practices that programs are using to address the six key focus areas of interest to the field. For example, researchers might test whether behavioral interventions such as text message reminders can increase participants' engagement or the involvement of nonincarcerated caregivers. In addition, future research could explicitly test the impact of programs designed for mothers who are incarcerated to determine whether they improve outcomes for children. Box 3 present potential tips for practitioners implementing family strengthening programs.

[123]Barden et al. (2018); Williams and Hendra (2018).

Box 3. Tips for Practitioners Implementing Family Strengthening Programs

Consider parents' roles prior to incarceration

- Programs working with parents who were primary caregivers before incarceration may consider integrating counseling into their services.
- Parents who were not the primary caregiver prior to incarceration may need support to connect with their child's caregiver, which may include developing a range of options for communicating with them and visitation.

Engage families while parents are still incarcerated

- Consider implementing strategies such as financial incentives and supports for transportation or wraparound services to engage children's nonincarcerated caregivers in services.
- Collaborate with prison or jail leadership to implement activities such as letter-writing programs, free virtual calling between incarcerated parents and their families, or customized visitation programs that involve family-friendly activities.
- When designing and structuring a program, consider jails' and prisons' institutional policies regarding transfers, lockdowns, or other procedures that may affect participation.
- Work collaboratively with the leadership in jails and prisons to build strong incentives for program participants, including more visitation opportunities and privileges.
- Tailor programs to the institutional context of the target population, specifically the type of correctional institution. For instance, prisons often include parents serving longer sentences, which may align better with a longer family strengthening program. However, short-duration programs may be more appropriate when implemented in jail settings, where incarcerated parents serve shorter sentences.

Engage children in family strengthening programs

- Design activities that are developmentally appropriate and tailored to children's ages.

Engage families in family strengthening programs implemented in community settings

- Improve engagement by implementing incentives, such family outings, holiday celebrations, and ongoing support groups that provide dinner for families.
- Consider the competing demands and priorities of individuals who have been released from prison or jail when planning program activities.
- Leverage partnerships with local service providers to integrate their services into existing ones for finding housing and employment and helping navigate requirements of the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

Although many family strengthening programs aim to improve outcomes for families involved in the justice system, there is little causal evidence demonstrating their ability to reduce the negative effects of incarceration on children and families. In addition, more evidence is needed on the components of program models that might be most important for promoting positive outcomes for these families. Programs should consider, and researchers should evaluate, how effectively they address the following six key areas of focus: (1) engaging caregivers who are not incarcerated, (2) considering children's ages in program design, (3) considering a parent's gender and role, (4) engaging in cross-system collaboration, (5) implementing strategies to engage parents who are incarcerated and their families, and (6) promoting families' financial stability. This review found a range of family strengthening programs that have been studied in published articles and reports. Descriptive evidence shows that programs can be implemented successfully and engage families, and that some programs are associated with more positive outcomes for parents, families, and children. Yet, there is limited causal evidence showing impacts of these programs on outcomes for children and families.

A number of innovative approaches appear ripe for future study, based on early descriptive research that suggests they may improve parent-child relationship quality—which is thought to be critical to reducing the negative effects of parental incarceration on children. Given the lack of impact studies in this area, however, it is important that family strengthening program operators and researchers forge and nurture partnerships to conduct more in-depth implementation studies and pilot efficacy evaluations. Such work can also include opportunities to learn about enhancing program engagement among parents who are incarcerated, children, and caregivers who are not incarcerated. Ongoing research should examine how programs can best serve families involved with the justice system within the broader context of barriers they face to financial stability and participation. By building partnerships with correctional institutions, nonprofits working with families, and departments of justice, programs can create opportunities for evaluation and promote continued program development. Evidence from current research can lead to larger-scale studies that can inform policy at a broader level.

Appendix A

Overview of Family Strengthening Programs, Organized by Strength of Evidence Base

Appendix Table A.1. Overview of Family Strengthening Programs, Organized by Strength of Evidence Base

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Demonstrated at least one positive effect in an impact study				
Incredible Years	Menting, Oroborio de Castro, Wijngaards-de Meij, and Matthys (2014), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017) and Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Mothers who were formerly incarcerated	Parenting intervention that includes four home visits after program completion	AC, ES
Indiana Department of Correction	Lindquist, McKay, Steffey, and Bir (2016); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples and men only; parenting classes for men only	ES
New Beginnings	Sleed, Baradon, and Fonagy (2013)	Mothers who are incarcerated and their children	Attachment-based group intervention for mothers and young children in prison	AC
Parent-Child Interaction Therapy	Scudder, McNeil, Chengappa, and Costello (2014), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017) and Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Parenting skills taught through role play and in-session coaching	ES
Parenting Inside Out	Eddy, Martinez, and Burraston (2013), as cited in Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Parents who are incarcerated	Parental training for parents who are incarcerated	ES
Parenting from Inside: Making the Mother-Child Connection	Loper and Tuerk (2011), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017) and Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Cognitive behavioral therapy-based parenting group	

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth	Scott et al. (2017)	Fathers who were formerly incarcerated, their children, and caregivers	Parental training program	EC, AC, FS, ES
Demonstrated positive change on at least one outcome in a pre-post study				
Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers	Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Mothers who are incarcerated, their children, and caregivers	Offers an after-school program for children, teen programming, and caregiver support groups; provides transportation assistance for visitation and a parenting program	AC, EC, ES
Babiin-Miyagang (meaning “Dad” and “Family”)	Rossiter et al. (2017)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Parenting program for Indigenous fathers	ES
Being a Dad Program	McCrudden et al. (2014)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Parenting program focused on family life and relationships for fathers	AC, ES
Tamar’s Children	Cassidy et al. (2010)	Mothers who are incarcerated and their children	Residential program for mothers and their infant children	AC
CREST Outreach Center Treatment Program	Robbins, Martin, and Surratt (2009)	Mothers who are incarcerated and their children	Intensive support program for mothers in work release with a history of drug offenses	EC, CS, ES
Emotions: Taking Care of Yourself and Your Child When You Go Home	Shortt, Eddy, Sheeber, and Davis (2014), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017) and Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Program focused on emotion regulation and emotion skills coaching for mothers; mothers participate after completing Parenting Inside Out	
Extended Visiting	Schubert, Duinick, and Shlafer (2016)	Mothers who are incarcerated, their children, and caregivers	Visitation program for mothers and their children; includes highly structured, child-centered visits	EC, AC

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Family Connections Center	Toth and Kazura (2010)	Parents who are incarcerated and their children	Parent-child visitation program with other family supports, including parenting and economic skills classes	AC, CS
Family Dependency Treatment Court	Chaung, Moore, Barrett, and Young (2012)	Parents who are at risk of incarceration	Outpatient services including counseling, parenting classes, Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous group, drug screenings, and court appearances	CS, ES
Family Justice's La Bodega de la Familia	Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Parents who are at risk of incarceration	Reentry program incorporating elements of family supports	ES
Family Matters	Lindfield (2009), as cited in Buston et al. (2012)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Parental training program for fathers	
FamilyWorks; Osborne Association	Lindquist, McKay, Steffey, and Bir (2016); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015); Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Prisoner reentry program incorporating elements of family supports	EC, ES
Girl Scouts Beyond Bars	Meyerson and Otteson (2009) and Colanese (2017)	Mothers who are incarcerated and their children	Girl Scout mother-daughter troop meetings, girls-only troop meetings held in the community, and onsite enrichment activities for mothers	AC, ES
InsideOut Dad	Block et al. (2014), as cited in Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Program focusing on pro-fathering attitudes, knowledge, and skills	ES
Mentoring Connections (MC)	Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, and Hanneman (2009)	Children with a parent who is incarcerated and their caregivers	Services for children 4 to 16 years of age with an incarcerated parent	AC, EC
Moms, Inc.	Kennon, Mackintosh, and Myers (2009), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Prison-based biweekly parenting group; participants eligible to join visitation program after completion	ES
Mothering at a Distance	Rossiter et al. (2015)	Mothers who are incarcerated and their children	Parenting program for mothers; includes contact with children	AC, ES

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Nebraska Prison Nursery Program	Carlson (2009)	Mothers who are incarcerated and their children	Residential program for mothers who are incarcerated and their infant children; mothers participate in parenting classes and hands-on parental training	AC
Parenting from Prison	Wilson et al. (2010), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017) and Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Parents who are incarcerated	Parenting program based on the Nurturing Parent curriculum	ES
Parenting Under Pressure	Frye and Dawe (2008), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017) and Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Mothers who were formerly incarcerated and their children	Home-based parenting program	
Parenting While Incarcerated; Motherly Intercession	Miller et al. (2014)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Tailored version of Strengthening Families Program for mothers; paired with visitation	ES
Rebonding and Rebuilding: A Parenting Curriculum	Sandifer (2008), as cited in Tremblay and Sutherland (2017) and Troy, McPherson, Emslie, and Gilchrist (2018)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Parenting program for mothers; extended visitation allowed after program completion	ES
Strengthening Families Program; Motherly Intercession	Miller et al. (2013)	Children with an incarcerated mother and their caregivers	Tailored version of Strengthening Families Program for caregivers	EC, AC, ES
The Baby Elmo Program	Barr et al. (2011)	Fathers who are incarcerated and their children	Facility-based parenting program for young fathers and their children	AC
Women and Infants at Risk	Kubiak, Kasiborski, and Schmittel (2010)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Alternative sentencing program for women imprisoned for low-level offenses	AC

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Did not examine any family strengthening outcome over time				
Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (CCIP) Prison Parent Education Project	Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Parents who are incarcerated	Parent-family education services; family reunification services; therapy; general information	EC
Center for Employment Opportunities	Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Fathers who were formerly incarcerated and their children	Employment services; responsible fatherhood programming; child support assistance; family events	FS
Centerforce	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples; parenting classes for men only and partners only	EC, ES
Child and Family Services of New Hampshire	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples, men only, and partners only; parenting classes for men only; visitation and in-prison contact assistance	EC, FS, ES
Engaging the Family; New Jersey Department of Corrections	Fontaine et al. (2017a); Lindquist, McKay, Steffey, and Bir (2016); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated and caregivers	Relationship classes for couples and men only; parenting classes for couples; visitation and in-prison contact assistance	EC, FS, ES
Families in Crisis	Merenstein et al. (2011)	Children with a parent who is incarcerated	Support services for children with an incarcerated parent	AC
Family Connections	Blumberg and Griffin (2013)	Parent who is incarcerated	Reading program for parents and their children to improve parental skills and attributes	AC

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Family Life Center (Rhode Island)	Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Parent who is incarcerated	Family-focused, holistic reentry support for families affected by incarceration, including employment services, case management, and family supports	FS
Fatherhood and Families; Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015); Fontaine et al. (2017a)	Fathers who are incarcerated or were formerly incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples and men only; visitation and in-prison contact assistance	EC, ES
Fatherhood Reentry Program; PB&J Family Services, Inc. (PB&J)	Fontaine et al. (2017a)	Fathers who are incarcerated or were formerly incarcerated	Parenting program (Inside Out Dads) during incarceration and after release; post-release supports related to healthy relationships (home visits) and economic stability	EC, FS, ES
John Inmann Work and Family Center (WFC)	Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Parents who were formerly incarcerated	Employment services; advice on child support issues; support for family reintegration through professional mediation services; consultation with a family law attorney; facilitation of supervised visits	FS
Letters to Children Project	Sparks, Strauss, and Grant (2017)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Letter-writing program for mothers who are incarcerated	
Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE)	Meyerson and Otteson (2009)	Fathers who are incarcerated and their children	Monthly parent-child meetings held at the correctional facility; parenting training modules	
Maryland Department of Human Services, Montgomery County and Adam's House	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated and or were formerly incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples; parenting classes for men only	EC, FS, ES

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Relationship classes for men only and partners only; parenting classes for men only and partners only	EC, FS, ES
MOMobile Program; Maternity Care Coalition	Kotlar et al. (2015)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Peer education program for incarcerated pregnant women and new mothers	EC, AC
Motherhood Beyond Bars	Kotlar et al. (2015)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Support program for mothers that includes Mothering from the Start, prenatal yoga, and Healthy New Mothers	AC
Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters	Merenstein et al. (2011)	Children with a parent who is incarcerated	Mentoring program for children with an incarcerated parent	AC
Oakland Livingston Human Services Association	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated or were formerly incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples, men only, and partners only; parenting classes for men only	EC, ES
Promoting Advances in Paternal Accountability and Success in Work; Rubicon Programs, Inc. (Rubicon)	Fontaine et al. (2017a)	Fathers who are incarcerated or were formerly incarcerated	Parenting and family programs (Parenting Inside Out, Back to Family, and Couples Enhancement); economic stability services; domestic violence services and treatment	FS, ES
Reading Unites Family	Gardner (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated and their children	Program that allows fathers to read to their children in person	AC, CS
Savio Direct Link Program and Family Treatment Drug Court	Rhodus and Roguski (2007)	Parents who are at risk of incarceration	Agency and program service partnership to keep the children of parents struggling with substance abuse in the home	CS, ES

(continued)

Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Program Name	Citation	Program Targets	Program Description	Key Focus Areas, if Applicable
Shelby County Division of Correction	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples and men only; parenting classes for men only; visitation and in-prison contact assistance; in-person or videoconferencing for the whole family	EC, FS, ES
Texas Arms of Love, d.b.a. People of Principle	McKay, Lindquist, Corwin, and Bir (2015)	Fathers who were formerly incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples	EC, ES
The Storybook Project	Potok (2012)	Mothers who are incarcerated	Program that records mothers who are incarcerated reading books and sends recordings to children	
TYRO; The RIDGE Project	Fontaine et al. (2017a); Lindquist McKay, Steffey, and Bir (2016); McKay, Lindquist, Corwin and Bir (2015)	Fathers who are incarcerated	Relationship classes for couples; parenting classes for men only; visitation and in-prison contact assistance	EC, FS, ES
West Virginia Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood Initiative; Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action, Inc. (KISRA)	Fontaine et al. (2017a)	Fathers who are incarcerated or were formerly incarcerated	Facility-based and post-release parenting, healthy relationship, and economic stability programming; also offers child support modification and domestic violence services and workforce-readiness assessments and other employment supports following release	FS, ES

NOTES: EC = engages nonincarcerated caregivers; AC = considers age of child; FS = targets families' financial stability; CS = implements cross-system collaboration; ES = considers engagement strategies.

The focus area "considers a parent's gender" is included in the "Program Targets" column.

For a program to have been counted in the "ES" group, a published report or journal article must have described its approach for engaging families. There may be programs in this list that used engagement strategies, but written reports or articles did not highlight them.

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