

UNDER EMBARGO until Monday, April 25, 2016, 12:01 a.m. EDT

Contact: HyeSook Chung || 202.234.9404 || hchung@dckids.org

New Annie E. Casey Foundation report recommends policies to help millions of children with incarcerated parents

More than 9,000 D.C. kids have a parent who has served time

WASHINGTON – More than 8 percent of D.C. children have experienced the separation of a parent due to incarceration, according to the new [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) report, ***A Shared Sentence: The Devastating Toll of Parental Incarceration on Kids, Families and Communities***. Although the societal and financial implications of mass incarceration have prompted policy discussion, the needs of children who face increased risks and significant obstacles in life have largely been overlooked.

“Our ‘tough on crime’ policies put a tremendous amount of burden and trauma on more than nine thousand children in the District,” says HyeSook Chung, executive director of DC Action for Children. “In order for these children to succeed later in life, we must ensure that they are supported, both while their parents are incarcerated and after they return.”

While states spend heavily on correctional systems, few resources exist to support those left behind. In its new KIDS COUNT[®] policy report, the Casey Foundation offers commonsense steps city leaders can take to address the increased poverty and stress that children of incarcerated parents experience – stress that research shows can have as much impact on their well-being as abuse or domestic violence.

“The incarceration of a parent can be a devastating, traumatic event in the life of a child that can lead to a host of negative life outcomes for the child, like increased risk of disease and early death,” says Eduardo Ferrer, legal and policy director at DC Lawyers for Youth. “We must proactively invest in youth with incarcerated parents to ensure that the failed practice of mass incarceration does not leave wounds and scars on generations of D.C.’s children.”

Today, the Annie E. Casey Foundation proposes recommendations to support the 5.1 million children nationwide who struggle with emotional and financial instability linked to having had a parent incarcerated.

The Foundation’s three policy recommendations are:

1. Ensure children are supported both while parents are incarcerated and after they return.
2. Connect parents who have returned to the community with pathways to employment.
3. Strengthen communities, particularly those disproportionately affected by incarceration and reentry, to promote family stability and opportunity.

Detailed recommendations may be found in *A Shared Sentence*, which will be available April 25 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org/sharedsentence. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Founded in 1992, DC Action for Children (www.dckids.org) is a nonprofit organization focused on improving conditions and outcomes for the District's children, youth and families through public awareness, policy, research and technical assistance. DC Action is the KIDS COUNT grantee for the District, tracking key indicators of child and youth well-being and neighborhood well-being for children and youth. Follow us on Twitter at @ActforDChildren and like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/dcaction>.

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