



**September/October 2015**

## **About Kids-A-Part**

Kids-A-Part (KAP) – KAP is a program at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility delivered contractually by Lund. The Program partners with the VT Department of Corrections to reduce the trauma children experience as a result of their mother's incarceration by using a unique family-centered model within a regional correctional facility. The program involves intensive facility-based visitation and parenting programming, facility and community-based case management, as well as wide ranging collaboration with community providers to involve the children and families of incarcerated mothers in every step of the process. KAP is funded partially by DOC, and partially with private foundation grants.

### **Child Programs**

#### **@ CRCF**

Mother/Child visits three  
Saturdays a month  
Parent/Child/Caregiver visits  
Create 'flipbooks' for all facilities  
Storybook Program

#### **In the community**

Collaborate with community partners about  
children who experience their parents' incarceration  
Organize youth component of program  
Provide Case Management for  
children who have an  
incarcerated mother  
Referral and information services

### **Parent Programs**

#### **@ CRCF**

Offer direct services  
Case coordination  
Survey women about  
wants and needs  
Train DOC staff re: family  
Connectedness, recidivism

#### **@ Northern Lights**

Offer direct service  
Participate in weekly  
treatment team meeting

### **Caregiver Programs**

#### **@ CRCF**

Triad visits  
Organize programming  
Develop volunteer pool to  
staff visits

#### **In the community**

Work w/VT Kin as Parents  
Work w/Foster and Adoptive  
Family Association  
Offer trainings at conferences  
and within the community  
Provide referrals and info  
Disseminate *Survival Guide*

**Did you know: In 2010 1.5 million people were in State or Federal prison in the U.S., and 750,000 were in jails. More than 2.7 million children in the U.S. have an incarcerated parent, that is 1 in 28 children. Approximately 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives.**

## Children of Incarcerated Parents- A Bill of Rights

Provided by the San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents

- 1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.*
- 2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.*
- 3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.*
- 4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent's absence.*
- 5. I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent.*
- 6. I have the right to support, as I struggle with my parent's incarceration.*
- 7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because of my parent's incarceration.*
- 8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.*

### **The Kids-A-Part program offers education, advocacy and direct service focused on the following three rights:**

*Children are safe and informed at the time of their parent's arrest and incarceration.*

*Children speak with, see and touch their incarcerated parents.*

*Children have access to quality services and relationships that they can count on as they face their parent's incarceration.*

### **KAP's Partnership with Bobby Blanchard and Columbia University**

For the past three years KAP has been implementing an innovative parenting support program for incarcerated mothers at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. The group is called *Shared Parenting* and focuses on helping the incarcerated mothers become more reflective and insightful about the experiences of their children and those caring for them during separations resulting from incarceration and residential treatment. KAP social workers facilitate the group sessions, which the participating mothers commit to attending once a week, for 10 weeks. *Shared Parenting* is being evaluated by researchers from the Center for Children and Families, at the Columbia University School of Nursing.

## **Kids-A-Part Community Based Trainings and Presentations**

### **Kids-A-Part: A program for children of mothers in prison**

*This presentation of our Kids-A-Part Program explains the services for mothers at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility, as well the supports offered to children and caregivers in the community. Basic data on our VT Corrections involved families will be presented, as well as information about the impact of incarceration on children. Participants will be asked to identify areas for greater support and collaboration for this population.*

*(Abbreviated informational presentation: ½ hour or work group for community planning: 2 hours)*

### **Children of Incarcerated Parents: Understanding the Impact of Parental Incarceration**

*This presentation will increase your understanding of the impact of incarceration on the family systems; promote skill development for the most effective response for professionals working with family and community systems in regard to the impact of incarceration on families. Participants will increase awareness of stigma, biases, and how those impact practice decisions. (Informational presentation: 1 hour)*

### **Children Affected by the Criminal Justice System: An Invisible Population**

*This presentation is geared toward school-based and Family Services professionals, and courts, and will increase awareness of the emotional, physical and behavioral impact caused by the stress of parental incarceration. Participants will gain an understanding of issues related to 'at time of arrest', 'trial/sentencing phases', and the impact of 'long-term or re-occurring incarceration'. Parental substance abuse, family violence, and mental health disorders will be discussed in regard to their impact on the family system, as well as contributing factors for incarceration. (Informational presentation: 2 hours)*

### **Planting the Seeds: Growing Partnerships That Support Children and Families Affected by Parental Incarceration**

*This community dialogue is an opportunity to follow up any previous Kids-A-Part presentation and will provide your agency/community partners with the opportunity to engage in a facilitated workshop to take action to best support Corrections involved families within your region. Participants will use a strengths based approach to identifying natural community supports, communicate for service coordination to address needs, and set a regional goal for supporting our VT Corrections Involved Families. (Two facilitated work group sessions: 2 hours each)*

### **Critical Time Support: Responding to a High profile Arrest In Your Community**

*Practical information to advise staff in effectively addressing the confusion, anxiety and fear that can be related to a high profile arrest within the community. Staff will receive support in effectively managing their own emotions, and be guided in developing useful conversational threads that can address concerns within school and childcare settings. (Planning is flexible to meet immediate needs within our Vermont communities)*

*Contact Heidi Wener, Kids-A-Part Community Case Manager 802-861-2561  
heidew@lundvt.org*

**“We have replaced the concept of having a job with the concept of having a mission.” John Meyers**

**I feel like this quote is at the essence of the work that we do with our Kids-A-Part mothers, their children, caregivers, and the broader community. Our job is to follow up on referrals, complete paperwork, meet deadlines, report to funders, and better inform the public of the impact of parental incarceration. Certainly a meaningful way to fill 40 hours a week. But the tasks associated with this role are more far reaching than just getting the work done. Sitting with a mother in jail who is weeping with devastation through her words over a child that she has not seen in 7 months is more than just taking information to make a plan. It is truly hearing her fears and regrets. It is hearing how her shame guides her behaviors, and guards her from seeking any sense of relief and healing. And often she is speaking of a hopelessness that even a strong heart would find overwhelming to overcome. Hearing her pain reinforces my obligation to not only ‘do my job’, but to do my job in a manner that makes a real difference. As a case manager the quality of my effort on her behalf could mean the difference between her receiving compassion and understanding, as well as services- or being viewed through a lens of offending behaviors and bad choices. And even IF it is difficult to see past the history and choices that have led to an incarceration, know this to be true; there is a child out there desperately missing his or her mother. It may be a blessing of childhood to know such non-judgmental love and devotion. Or maybe an aspect of human nature that wears thin as we live and learn our way through the world. Regardless, when that connection exists we should consider our obligation to these children, their mothers, and our communities to offer the support that not only mends broken places, but makes them stronger.**

**Heidi Wener**

Shared From Behind the Locked Doors

Question: What would you say to all of the mothers who are home with their children every night?

*“To not take one moment for granted. And to make good memories.” mother to 8 yr. old boy*  
*“Never take these moments for granted, hug them, hold them, read them a story. Cherish today, because tomorrow id unpromised.” mother to 8 yr. old girl and 4 yr. old boy*

A Message for Caregivers

The stress of unexpectedly caring for a child while managing your own life can be overwhelming. And many caregivers have been in this role for a great deal of time, or find themselves moving into and out of this role again and again depending on circumstances. In addition to physical care, children who lose a parent to incarceration need extra emotional support to help grieve their loss. Your relationship with the child’s incarcerated parent may be an added source of stress. It is important for you to take care of yourself as best as you can. Help, such as counseling, support groups for kinship caregivers, and childcare, is available in your community; please reach out if you would like help accessing any of these supports.

Contact The Kids-A-Part Program Staff

<u>Jess Kell</u> KAP Parenting Program Coordinator 802-859-3227	jessk@lundvt.org
<u>Heidi Wener</u> KAP Community Case Manager 802-861-2561	heidew@lundvt.org
<u>Crystal Fisher</u> KAP Clinician 802-861-2564	crystalf@lundvt.org