



ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION FOR PARENTS

Increasingly, children will experience the incarceration of a parent at some point in their lives. Now more than ever, it is crucial to consider innovative alternatives that strengthen families, promote public safety, and reduce the costs of criminal justice and corrections.

1 in 6

Minnesota youth has experienced parental incarceration¹.

10,000

children in Minnesota currently have a parent in prison or jail¹.

TYPES OF ALTERNATIVES



Problem-Solving Courts



Community Corrections



Diversion Programs



Sentencing/Policy Reform

WHY DO WE NEED ALTERNATIVES?

- Avoid the stressful & destabilizing effects of incarceration on children
- Provide necessary treatment and assistance to parents
- Promote sustainable community-based services and supports
- Reduce recidivism in a cost-effective way
- Offset the growing costs of corrections
- Interrupt intergenerational cycles of trauma & incarceration

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ALTERNATIVES?

Reduce recidivism: Compared to traditional incarceration, successful examples of alternatives have lower recidivism rates.^{2, 3, 4, 5} By providing supervision, treatment, and connections to support services, alternative programs address the root causes of crime and create pathways for people to become successful members of their communities.

Improve outcomes for children & families: Diverting parents into alternative programs has a positive spillover effect for children. When parents receive necessary treatment and support services, they are able to provide safer and more stable environments for their children.^{6, 7} Compared to children of incarcerated parents, children whose parents receive alternative sentences have better mental and behavioral health outcomes⁸, better access to health care,⁹ and less foster care involvement.⁵

Save money: Most alternative programs cost less per person per day than jail or prison.³ Successful alternatives also save money by diverting families from foster care involvement.¹⁰ When parents are connected with services such as education, employment training, and housing they are more likely to remain in their communities and contribute to their local economies.^{2, 3, 9}

Long term benefits for parents: Many diversion programs offer individuals the chance to live with their children. This can be a powerful motivational factor for continued success after re-entry into independent living.^{9, 11} By providing parenting skills and support, alternative programs improve the security of parent-child attachments.^{5, 6, 8, 9}

Sources

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