



Little Giants Preschool Office 750 W. 26th St. Marion, IN, 46953

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Head Start is offering a program for families with incarcerated parents. Our goal is to help incarcerated parents stay involved in their child's education by connecting them with what's happening in their child's classroom. Engaging parents who are incarcerated isn't always easy, but doing so can pay off in a big way for the incarcerated parent, your child, and your entire family.

There are many benefits to allowing contact between your child and their incarcerated parent. Some of these benefits include:

- Allowing children to express their emotional reactions to the separation from their parent
- Helping children develop a more realistic understanding of their parents' circumstances and allowing parents to model appropriate interaction
- Allowing children to maintain existing relationships with their parent
- Helping children preserve important connections

This program will involve writing or dictating letters, drawings, photos, copies of school work and reports cards, etc. from the child to the incarcerated parent. Information, pictures, and so on will only be shared with your written permission. Personal addresses, phone numbers, and information will never be divulged without your consent. Any contact will go directly through Head Start staff and Head Start interns. **We will never take a child to a jail/prison or to visit a parent at any time.**

Communication between your child and the incarcerated parent will happen through Head Start while your child is at school. It will involve letters written to your child and/or Head Start staff. Any letters received from the incarcerated parent will be read to your child at school and sent home with them for you to see.

If you are interested in allowing your child to participate in this program, please fill out and return the attached permission slip. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

XXX
XXX



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Dear Parents/Guardians:

Head Start is offering a program to help incarcerated parents connect with what's happening in their child's classroom. This program consists of writing letters/drawing pictures and facilitating written communication between your child and their incarcerated parent. Information, pictures, class newsletters, report cards, copies of their work, etc., will only be shared with your written permission. Personal addresses, phone numbers, and information will never be divulged without your consent. All contact will go directly through Head Start staff and our social service interns. We will never take your child to the jail/prison.

If you give permission for your child to participate in our Incarcerated Parent's Program, please fill out the bottom portion of this sheet and return to your child's teacher ASAP. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
xxx
contact info xxx

I, _____, give permission for the staff of Marion Community Schools
(PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME)

Head Start program to contact _____, the incarcerated parent of my child,
(INCARCERATED PARENT'S NAME)

_____. I understand that all contact will be at my discretion/consent and will
(CHILD'S NAME)

include activities that I have pre-approved.

I approve of the following activities (Please check each you approve):

- _____ Contact between my child and their incarcerated parent may be established
- _____ My child is allowed to send letters/pictures/photos to their incarcerated parent while at school
- _____ Letters may be sent to my child by incarcerated parent and read to my child at school
- _____ Head Start staff may share a copy of my child's report card/school work/class newsletters/etc. with their incarcerated parent

What is your child's understanding of the incarcerated parent's situation (i.e. does your child know they are in jail/prison, or where does your child believe the incarcerated parent to be?)

Full name of incarcerated parent, their birthdate (with year) & location/address of facility where incarcerated parent is being held: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



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Offender name, DOC#
Facility name
Street Address or PO Box
City, IN ZIP code

DATE

Dear **INCARCERATED PARENT'S NAME**,

My name is **INTERN NAME**. I am an intern for the Marion Community Schools Head Start program working on the Incarcerated Parent Program. **PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME** has given me permission to contact you and to provide a way for you to be more involved in your child's education.

Through the Incarcerated Parent Program, you can exchange letters with **CHILD'S NAME**. We can also send you pictures, photos, and drawings to keep you updated on what is happening here at school with **CHILD'S NAME**. If you are interested, I can also provide education information for you on many topics such as financial management, resume writing, dealing with stress, fatherhood issues, and educational issues.

We hope to connect you with **CHILD'S NAME** while **HE/SHE** is here at Head Start. Letters will provide a way for you to stay connected with **HIM/HER**, and I am sure **HE/SHE** would really enjoy receiving letters from you here at school. If you are not interested, you can send a letter stating your response to the mailing address below.

Attached is the first picture from as well as a letter from **HIM/HER**. Please send your response to the address below and we will share it with **CHILD'S NAME**. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

INTERN'S NAME
Head Start Intern
Mailing Address



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Offender name, DOC#
Facility name
Street Address or PO Box
City, IN ZIP code

DATE

Dear **Incarcerated Parent's Name**,

Parent-teacher conferences at Head Start are finishing up, and **Child's Name** report card has been completed. **Child's Name's** teacher gave us a copy of **his/her** report card so that we could send it to you. This is the first parent-teacher conference of the year, and there will be a second one during the second half of the school year.

We hope to hear from you again soon. Please include any questions you may have in your next letter.

Thanks,

INTERN'S NAME
Head Start Intern
Mailing Address



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Letters

If a child's parent has sent them a letter, make responding to questions or topics in that letter their first priority. If there is nothing to respond to or the child doesn't know what to write about, have the child discuss what they are currently learning in school or use any of the topics below.

Write about your family

Write about your friends

Write about your favorite things to play

Write about your pets

Write about your favorite toys

Write about the outdoors

Write about your favorite games

Write about yourself

Write about what you love

Write about what makes you happy

Write about what you like to do on a rainy day



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Pictures

Allow the child freedom to drawing whatever they want to draw for their parent. If they are unsure about what to draw, consider using the ideas on the list or utilizing coloring pages. Upcoming holidays serve as great drawing prompts as well. For example, in October have a child draw or color a jack-o-lantern.

Draw Your Favorite Season

Draw the outdoors

Draw something that breathes fire

Draw your special super power if you were a superhero.

Draw your own special birthday cake

Draw what it would be like to live with dinosaurs

Trace your hand and then turn it into something else

Draw your favorite movie

Draw your favorite food

Draw your best friend

Draw a picture of your school

Draw a picture of your favorite candy

Draw your favorite holiday

Draw a family portrait

Draw what you did this weekend

Draw your favorite superhero

Draw your name with crazy letters



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Incarcerated Parents Program Instructions & Mailing Instructions

- First, get written permission (via the permission slip) from the custodial parent for a child to participate in the Incarcerated Parents Program
- Get info on the Incarcerated Parent & look the person up online & get their DOC # (print this info out for the Incarcerated Parent Program Binder). Put address & DOC # in Child Plus.
- Find out the rules of what is allowed to be mailed to the prison you're sending.
- Make sure to learn from the custodial parent what the child's understanding of the situation with the other parent is (i.e. does the child know the parent is in prison, or do they think the other parent is just away on a long trip?)
- Try to meet with your student every week and to mail something every week, whether or not you receive correspondence back.
- Log all meetings with the child and correspondence sent and received in Child Plus.
- Keep a copy of everything sent, and everything received. Send all original letters home with the student after you read them to the student at school. (If requested, send a copy of everything SENT to the Incarcerated Parent to the custodial parent).
- Examples of things you can send: letter written by the child, letter written by you, with statements dictated by the child, pictures drawn by the child, photos you take of the child, copies of school work and artwork, copies of class newsletters, copies of report cards, etc. Letters and mail should not include any personal information such as the child's current home address or telephone number.

The Indiana Department of Corrections does not accept any mail on colored paper or enclosed in colored envelopes. Incoming mail to offenders must be in a plain white envelope and the letter/mail inside the envelope must be on originally purchased, plain white, lined paper. Photos are acceptable in most prisons. Look up the specific guidelines from the prison where the parent is incarcerated before you send mail.

To write to an offender, you need the offender's name and DOC number and the name and address of the correctional facility where they are housed.

You can look up an offender's DOC number and location at: <http://www.in.gov/apps/indcorrection/ofs/ofs>

You can look up correctional facility addresses at: <https://www.in.gov/idoc/2861.htm>

Address **both the letter and envelope** as follows:

Offender name, DOC#

Facility name

Street Address or PO Box

City, IN ZIP code

Even if an incarcerated parent does not send mail back after agreeing to participate, please continue to send mail.



Incarceration Research/Info:

Transforming Parent-Child Connections in Incarceration

<http://earlylearningnation.com/2019/06/transforming-parent-child-connections-in-incarceration/>

Parenting is stressful and overwhelming for nearly all parents, and those who are incarcerated face even greater obstacles. The numbers of incarcerated women have been increasing drastically over the last several decades, and more than 60 percent of women in state prisons have children under age 18. In addition, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that roughly half of incarcerated mothers were single parents at the time of their arrest, meaning these children are now in relative or foster care.

While children of incarcerated parents are at higher risk for issues at school and criminal activity, a continued bond with their parent may reduce such risk. One program that connects a child to their incarcerated parent is Nurturing Healthy Attachments, a three strand approach that includes Circle of Security, Vroom and the CDC's Act Early program. This program primarily focuses on processing the effects of the parents actions and teaching proper child development. This project has seen great success and could be implemented in other prisons.

Hidden Consequences: The Impact of Incarceration on Dependent Children

<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/hidden-consequences-impact-incarceration-dependent-children>

Family members, especially children, are often seen as the hidden victims of the criminal justice system. One report shows that there could be anywhere from 1.7 to 2.7 million children with parents who are incarcerated. In addition, children from minority families are 7.5 times more likely to have incarcerated parents. These family members are left voiceless and without access to many resources. The risk these individuals face may be lessened by a strong parent-child bond and a system of support around the child.



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Statistics show that children of incarcerated parents are six times more likely to become incarcerated themselves. Many studies have been conducted each with varying results. Some showed a correlation with incarcerated parents and increased depression in African American children. Another study indicated links in aggression. While it depends on the child, there are definitely psychological consequences.

Strengthening Bonds Between Incarcerated Mothers and Their Young Children

<https://childinst.org/strengthening-bonds-between-incarcerated-mothers-and-their-young-children/>

In 2007, nearly 150,000 children in the U.S. had a mother who was incarcerated, according to a study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The same study identified that 64 percent of moms in state prison had custody of their children before their arrest. And 42 percent of mothers who are imprisoned were single parents before their arrest. In addition, roughly 50% of mothers receive no visits from their children while they are incarcerated.

Incarceration Trends in Indiana

<https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-indiana.pdf>

- 261% increase in incarceration since 1983
- 34% of prison population is black
- No. 4 in the country for prison population

Kids Count Data Book 2020

https://iyi-website.s3.amazonaws.com/data-book/2021_IYI_Databook_Web_FINAL+to+upload.pdf

As of July 1, 2020, 25,884 adults were incarcerated in Indiana's institutions and 9.8% of children in Indiana have one or both parents incarcerated. Having an incarcerated parent can have many devastating effects on both the child and the family. There is a loss of income, a social stigma, and an unstable environment. Statistics show that men have a higher incarceration rate than women, so young boys are at risk for losing a role model.

It can also be difficult for the family once the incarcerated parent is released. There is another change in structure and in parenting (Mark). Those who displayed adverse



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behavior while their parent was incarcerated, may not just leave the behaviors once the parent is out.

Resources for Incarcerated Parents or Children

Staying Involved with your Children while Incarcerated

http://prisonfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ATPMBR-Mothers-Brochure_2016.pdf

Sesame Street

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/incarceration/>

Sesame Street offers great resources for talking with kids about their incarcerated parent. They have videos, worksheets, and articles that help kids to understand what's happening and process their emotions. I found a great video that talks about how its okay to miss our mommy or daddy while they are away.

Incarcerated Parent Look-up for Indiana:

<https://public.courts.in.gov/mycase/#/vw/Search>