

CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS: A BILL OF RIGHTS

FROM RIGHTS TO REALITIES— AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership

- 1. I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest.**
 - Develop arrest protocols that support and protect children.
 - Offer children and/or their caregivers basic information about the post-arrest process.

- 2. I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me.**
 - Train staff at institutions whose constituency includes children of incarcerated parents to recognize and address these children's needs and concerns.
 - Tell the truth.
 - Listen.

- 3. I have the right to be considered when decisions are made about my parent.**
 - Review current sentencing law in terms of its impact on children and families.
 - Turn arrest into an opportunity for family preservation.
 - Include a family impact statement in pre-sentence investigation reports.

- 4. I have the right to be well cared for in my parent's absence.**
 - Support children by supporting their caretakers.
 - Offer subsidized guardianship.

- 5. I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent.**
 - Provide access to visiting rooms that are child-centered, non-intimidating and conducive to bonding.
 - Consider proximity to family when siting prisons and assigning prisoners.
 - Encourage child welfare departments to facilitate contact.

- 6. I have the right to support as I face my parent's incarceration.**
 - Train adults who work with young people to recognize the needs and concerns of children whose parents are incarcerated.
 - Provide access to specially trained therapists, counselors, and/or mentors.
 - Save five percent for families.

- 7. I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated.**
 - Create opportunities for children of incarcerated parents to communicate with and support each other.
 - Create a truth fit to tell.
 - Consider differential response when a parent is arrested.

- 8. I have the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent.**
 - Re-examine the Adoption and Safe Families Act.
 - Designate a family services coordinator at prisons and jails.
 - Support incarcerated parents upon reentry.
 - Focus on rehabilitation and alternatives to incarceration.