

# Mentoring Children of Prisoners FACT SHEET



The mission of the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) is to provide national leadership on youth and family issues, promote positive outcomes for children, youth, and families, and support comprehensive services and collaborations at the local, Tribal, State, and national levels. FYSB programs provide positive alternatives for youth, ensure their safety, and maximize their potential to take advantage of available opportunities.

## PURPOSE

Through the **Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program**, FYSB awards grants to community organizations that provide mentors to children and youth with incarcerated parents. Each mentoring program is designed to ensure that mentors provide young people with safe and trusting relationships; healthy messages about life and social behavior; appropriate guidance from a positive adult role model; and opportunities for increased participation in education, civic service, and community activities.

## SERVICES

Grant recipients provide services, both directly and in collaboration with other local agencies, to strengthen and support children of incarcerated parents and their families. This includes connecting children with their imprisoned parent, when appropriate. Grantees also cultivate mentors from within the child's family and community through:

- **Recruiting.** Grantees are required to recruit a diverse group of mentors who are committed to spending at least an hour a week with their mentee for at least a year.
- **Screening.** Grant recipients are required to screen volunteers extensively through appropriate reference checks, criminal background checks, and child and domestic abuse record checks, to ensure that they pose no safety risk to the young people.
- **Training.** Mentors must attend an orientation and training in mentoring skills before being assigned to a young person.
- **Monitoring and Evaluating.** Grantees are required to provide ongoing support and oversight of the mentoring relationship to ensure that young people are receiving appropriate support and are benefiting from the mentor match. Outcomes for each participating youth are measured by such factors as academic achievement and avoidance of risky behaviors.



Grantees also incorporate the **Positive Youth Development**, or PYD, approach into their programs. PYD suggests that the best way to prevent risky behavior is to help youth achieve their full potential. Youth development strategies focus on giving young people the chance to exercise leadership, build skills and become involved in their communities.

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## HISTORY

Approximately two million children and youth in the United States have at least one parent in a correctional facility. In addition to suffering from the relationship disruption, these young people often struggle with the economic, social, and emotional burdens of the incarceration. Mentoring programs can help young people by reducing their first-time drug and alcohol use, improving their relationships and academic performance, and reducing the likelihood that they will initiate violence. Mentored young people also have opportunities to develop a trusting relationship with a supportive, caring adult in a stable environment that can promote healthy values and strong families.

FYSB began funding mentoring projects in 2003, under the provisions of the **Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001** (Public Law 107-133). Congress reauthorized the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program through the **Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006** (Public Law 109-288).



## GRANT AWARD PROCESS

In FY 2010, FYSB awarded \$49.3 million in funding to support 149 mentoring programs. Through the **New Service Delivery Demonstration Program**, it also supports the use of program vouchers to increase access to mentoring services nationwide.

FYSB solicits applications annually for the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program through funding announcements on the Grants.gov Web site at <http://www.grants.gov>. Grant awards are made on a competitive basis for a one-year budget period, for up to three years.

## CONTACT US



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