

**The University of Oklahoma**

Department of Sociology

**Oklahoma Study of Incarcerated Mothers and  
Their Children – Phase II**

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Presented to the Oklahoma Commission on Children  
and Youth

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## Description of the Study

Oklahoma's female prison population is the largest per capita in the country, with 2,048 prisoners as of February 7, 2005. In the second phase of the study, 54 female prisoners were administered a survey containing questions on demographics, criminal record, and information about families such as contact with children, placement of children, and problems with children. Additionally, the women were asked in-depth questions about their own life experiences. The subjects were drawn from those who had volunteered during Phase I of the study. Subjects came from three facilities: Hillside Community Correctional Center (n=9, 16.7%), Eddie Warrior Correctional Center (n=28, 51.9%), and Mabel Bassett Correctional Center (n=17, 31.5%). The Phase I sample was stratified to get a representative number of prisoners from each level of incarceration. Those with children living with them prior to their incarceration were asked if they were willing to participate in a second survey at a later date. There were ninety-six volunteers from Phase I, but examination of the surveys indicated some did not qualify. Additional subjects were no longer at the facilities at which they had been surveyed.<sup>1</sup> Two refused after examining the survey, leaving fifty-four completed surveys. Unfortunately, the survey was administered at Mabel

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<sup>1</sup> Only one of the women survey at Turley in Phase I had left the facility. Therefore, Turley was not included in this Phase.

Bassett on a day when a staff member fell and had to be removed by ambulance, throwing the schedule off. Some of the women did not want to participate since it cut into their meal time.

## **Demographics**

The demographic data of the sample are presented in Table 1. The subjects in Phase 1 ranged in age from 21 to 62, with a mean age of 36.8 and a median age of 35. Almost one-third (31.5%) of the women were between the ages of 30 and 40. More than half of the sample was white (n=31, 57.4%), and an additional 8 (14.8%) were African American. The sample contained seven Native Americans (13.0%) and three Hispanics (5.6%). The remaining subjects described their race as “other” (n=5, 9.3%).

In terms of education, fourteen subjects had not completed high school (25.9%), five of whom (9.3%) reported an eighth grade education or less. An additional fourteen (25.9%) reported that high school graduation or a GED represented their highest educational attainment. Additionally, 13 women (24.1%) reported vocational or technical training, and 12 (23.2%) had some college. Clearly, the majority of these women have low educational attainment. Reasons given for dropping out of school included pregnancy (34.2%), getting married (1.1%), boredom with school (28.6%), inability to keep up in school

(14.3%), legal problems (2.9%), family moving often (2.9%), having to support self (2.9%), and other (2.9%).

**Table 1. Demographics**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative* Percent</b>
<b><i>FACILITY</i></b>			
Hillside	9	16.7%	16.7%
Eddie Warrior	28	51.9%	68.6%
Mabel Bassett	17	31.5%	100%
<b><i>AGE</i></b>			
21-30	15	27.8%	27.8%
31-40	17	31.5%	59.3%
41-50	20	37.0%	96.3%
50 and older	2	3.7%	100.0%
<b><i>RACE/ETHNICITY</i></b>			
African American	8	14.8%	14.8%
Hispanic	3	5.6%	20.4%
White	31	57.4%	77.8%
Native American	7	13.0%	90.7%
Other	5	9.3%	100.0%
<b><i>EDUCATION*</i></b>			
Less than HS	14	25.9%	25.9%
HS Grad/GED	14	25.9%	51.8%
Some college	12	22.2%	74.0%
Vo-Tech	13	24.1%	98.1%
BA degree or higher	1	1.9%	100.0%

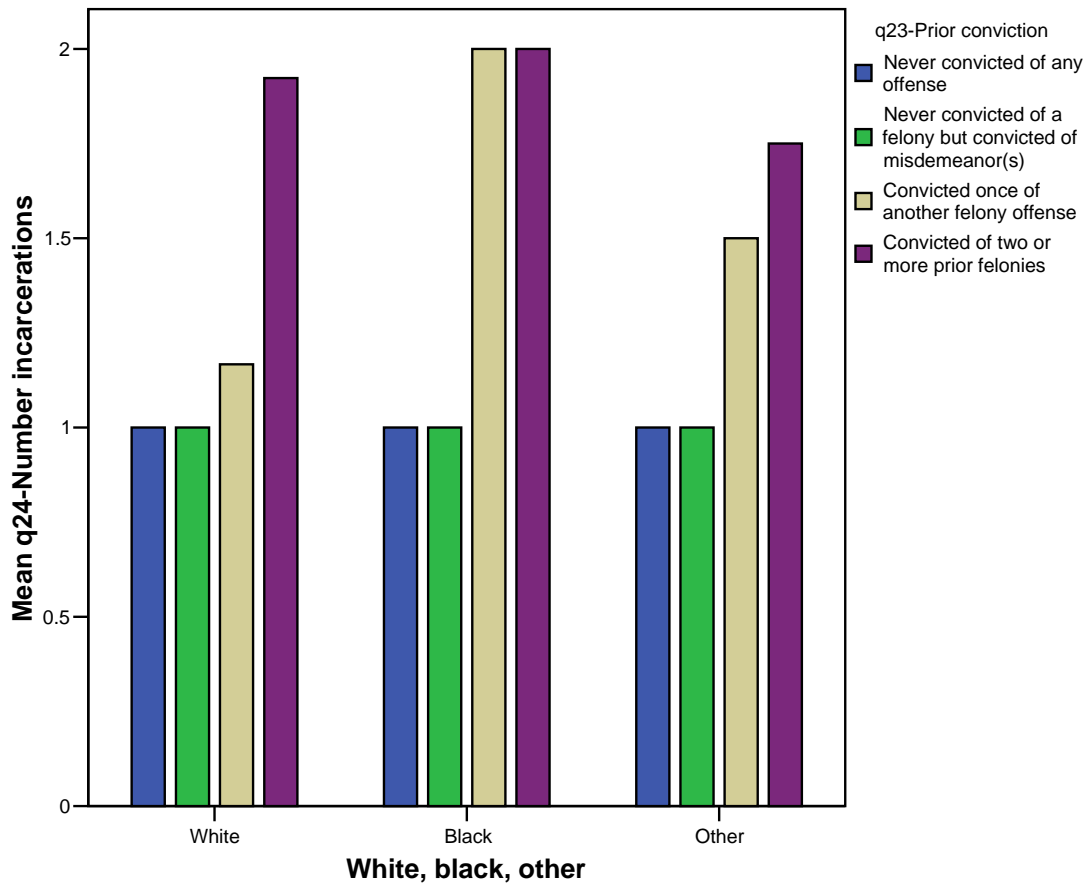
\* Some categories do not total 100% due to rounding error.

Thirty-seven (68.5%) of the women reported they supported themselves and their children at least in part through their own employment prior to arrest. An additional nineteen (35.2%) reported their spouse or partner worked. Other sources of support included help from family or friends (n=19, 35.2%), child support (n=6, 11.1%), TANF (n=8, 14.8%), social security (n=2, 3.7%) and unemployment compensation (n=2, 3.7%). Eleven women (20.4%) reported other income. Most did not specify the source, but a few did indicate that drug sales were a source of income.

In terms of the offenses for which they are in prison, more than half (n=31, 57.4%) reported drug offenses as the controlling offense. Three women (5.6%) were incarcerated for murder or manslaughter, three (5.6%) for assault, and one (1.8%) was incarcerated for motor vehicle theft. Most of the remaining women were incarcerated for some type of theft or fraud except for one who was incarcerated for a DUI.

Race appears to be a factor in the likelihood of incarceration. More than two-thirds of the white women in the sample and almost three-fourths of the other non-black women were in prison for the first time. In comparison, only half of the black women were serving their first prison term. Furthermore, this race effect was independent of prior convictions. In Figure 1, the graph illustrates that white women with two convictions were likely to be incarcerated

Figure 1. Number of Incarcerations by Prior Felony Convictions





for the first time. In contrast, if the current offense was a second felony conviction, black women were likely to be serving a second prison term.

There continues to be evidence of intergenerational imprisonment in this phase. A total of 65 incarcerations of relatives were reported by the 54 women. Four (7.4%) reported their mother had gone to prison. Eleven (20.4%) reported their father had gone to prison. Three (5.6%) reported a grandparent had gone to prison. In one case, the prisoner reported both her mother and a grandparent had been to prison. A large number also reported that an aunt or uncle had been in prison. Twenty-four percent (n=13) of the sample reported either an aunt or an uncle had gone to prison, and two (3.7%) reported both an aunt and an uncle had gone to prison. Siblings also had been incarcerated, with three (5.6%) women reporting a sister had gone to prison and fourteen (25.9%) reporting a brother had gone to prison. It is very evident that for the majority of the women, imprisonment is somewhat familiar due to familial incarcerations.

The women also reported involvement with others in their offenses. The survey asked the women whether or not they had been involved with a fall partner and their relationship to the fall partners. The results are reported in Table 2. More than half of the women (n=28, 51.9%) reported no fall partner. Twelve women (22.2%) reported a male fall partner, and an additional ten (18.5%) reported a spouse or intimate partner as being involved in the offense.

Only six (11.1%) reported a female friend as being involved, and five (9.3%) reported family members.

**Table 2. Fall Partners Involved in Offense**

No fall partner	28 (51.9%)
Male fall partner	
Friend	12 (22.2%)
Spouse or partner	10 (18.5%)
Female fall partner	6 (11.1%)
Family members	5 (9.3%)

The women also reported whether or not they received the same sentence as their fall partners. The results are reported below in Table 3.

**Table 3. Sentence Received Compared with Sentence of Fall Partner**

Fall partner received same sentence	8 (14.8%)
Fall partner received shorter sentence	1 (1.9%)
Fall partner received longer sentence	15 (27.8%)
Fall partner received no sentence	6 (11.1%)

## **Abuse Histories of Women Prisoners**

The women in this survey have experienced considerable violence and abuse, both as children and as adults. More than half of the women (n=30, 55.6%) reported parental violence in their homes while growing up. Fifteen (27.8%) reported that only their father was violent around the family, while five (9.3%) reported that only their mother was violent around the family. Ten subjects (18.5%) reported both parents were violent around the family.

A vast majority of the women had experienced physical or sexual abuse before the age of eighteen. Forty-two (77.8%) of the women reported experiencing one or both kinds of abuse during their childhoods. Eight (14.8%) reported experiencing physical abuse only, and ten (18.5%) reported experiencing sexual abuse only. Almost half the subjects reported experiencing both physical and sexual abuse before age 18 (n=24, 44.5%).

Family members were likely to be perpetrators of both physical and sexual abuse. Twenty-six (48.1%) reported that a parent or step-parent had been the perpetrator of childhood sexual abuse, and an additional six subjects (11.1%) reported the perpetrator was another family member. Eleven (20.4%) of the women who had experienced sexual abuse reported that a parent or step-parent was the perpetrator. Seventeen (31.5%) reported another relative was the perpetrator.

**Table 4. Family Violence and Abuse Histories of Phase II Subjects**

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Childhood abuse	42 (77.8%)
<i>Physical abuse only</i>	8 (14.8%)
<i>Sexual abuse only</i>	10 (18.5%)
<i>Both sexual and physical abuse</i>	24 (44.5%)
Parental violence in home	30 (55.6%)
<i>Father violent around family</i>	15 (27.8%)
<i>Mother violent around family</i>	5 (9.3%)
<i>Both parents violent around family</i>	10 (18.5%)
Abuse experienced as adult	44 (81.5%)
<i>Physical abuse only</i>	25 (46.3%)
<i>Sexual abuse only</i>	1 (1.9%)
<i>Both physical and sexual abuse</i>	18 (33.3%)

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The women also reported experiencing abuse as adults. Forty-four (81.5%) had experienced some type of abuse. Twenty-five (46.3%) reported being the victims of domestic violence, and one woman reported sexual abuse only. An additional eighteen subjects (33.3%) reported they had experienced both domestic violence and sexual abuse.

However, the women were not as likely to report having received counseling for their past abuse. Only twenty women (37.0%) reported receiving any counseling for past physical or sexual abuse. However, twenty women (37.0%) reported receiving mental health treatment prior to their incarceration. Half of these subjects (n=10, 18.5%) reported one or more hospitalizations for mental health problems. The other ten reported receiving some type of outpatient counseling prior to their incarceration. Twenty women (37.0%) had also received some type of mental health treatment while in prison, including twelve (22.2%) who reported receiving some kind of counseling and eight (14.8%) who reported receiving some kind of psychotropic medication. Furthermore, seven of the twenty women who had received some type of mental health treatment prior to incarceration had received no services in prison, including five who had one or more mental health hospitalizations.

## Substance Abuse of Women Prisoners

We then created a variable to measure heavy drug use. Cases were coded 1 if the subject reported using any of the following drugs more than once per week: marijuana, crack, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, speedballs (cocaine and heroin), non-prescription methadone, other narcotics, barbiturates, tranquilizers, PCP, LSD or Ecstasy. All others were coded 0. Forty-one (75.9%) of the sample reported heavy drug use in the month prior to incarceration. Nineteen subjects (35.2%) reported heavy alcohol use. However, there was a large overlap between these two groups, with seventeen subjects reporting both heavy alcohol and heavy drug use. There were a total of forty-three subjects (79.6%) who reported heavy use of drugs, alcohol, or both.

**Table 5. Substance Abuse Histories of Phase II Subjects**

	Heavy Use (More than once a week)	Less than Once a Week
Drugs other than alcohol	41 (75.9%)	13 (24.1%)
Alcohol	19 (35.2%)	35 (54.8%)
Alcohol, drugs or both	43 (79.6%)	11 (20.4%)

In contrast, twenty-eight subjects (51.9%) reported they had never received any substance abuse treatment prior to their incarceration. Two others (3.7%) stated they had tried unsuccessfully to get substance abuse treatment prior to their incarceration. A total of forty-five subjects reported receiving some form of treatment in prison, including twenty-four (85.7%) of the twenty-eight subjects who had not received treatment prior to incarceration. However, eleven (39.3%) of the twenty-eight subjects without prior treatment reported twelve-step programs (AA/NA) as the only treatment they had received, and three additional subjects (10.7%) reported substance abuse education only. This means that only ten (35.7%) of the twenty-eight women who had received no treatment prior to their incarceration reported receiving formal substance abuse treatment while incarcerated.

**Table 6. Substance Abuse Treatment Received by Phase II Subjects**

	<u>Yes</u>
Treatment received prior to incarceration	26 (48.1%)
Attempted to get treatment prior to incarceration without success	2 (3.7%)
Any treatment received since incarceration	47 (87.0%)
<i>AA/NA only</i>	11 (20.4%)
<i>Substance abuse education only</i>	8 (14.8%)
<i>Other treatment in prison</i>	28 (51.8%)
Any treatment received since incarceration if no treatment received prior (n=28)	24 (85.7%)
<i>AA/NA only</i>	11 (39.3%)
<i>Substance abuse education only</i>	3 (10.7%)
<i>Other treatment in prison</i>	10 (35.7%)



**Table 7. Substance Abuse Treatment Received by Phase II Subjects Reporting Heavy Use of Alcohol and/or Drugs (n=43)**

	<u>Yes</u>
Treatment received prior to incarceration	23 (53.5%)
Attempted to get treatment prior to incarceration without success	2 (4.6%)
Any treatment receive since incarceration	39 (90.7%)
<i>AA/NA only in prison</i>	9 (20.9%)
<i>Substance abuse education only in prison</i>	2 (4.6%)
<i>Other treatment in prison</i>	28 (65.1%)

When examining the forty-three women who reported heavy use of drugs, alcohol or both, we found that eighteen (41.9%) reported no treatment prior to their incarceration, and an additional two (4.6%) reported unsuccessfully trying to get treatment prior to this incarceration. Four of the forty-three women (9.3%) reported not receiving treatment in prison. Nine (20.9%) reported AA or NA only, and two (4.6%) reported education only. This means that more than one third (34.9%) of those women with substance abuse problems as measured by heavy and frequent use had not received any formal substance abuse treatment at the time of the survey. It is evident that a significant number of women with

substance abuse problems may not be receiving adequate drug treatment while incarcerated.

## **Children of Incarcerated Mothers**

Female inmates are almost twice as likely as male inmates to report that they had a child of their own living with them prior to their arrest. Thus, their imprisonment is more likely to disrupt the children's living arrangements.

Females are also less likely than males to report that their children are now living with the other parent. Together, these two statistics emphasize the fact that children of incarcerated mothers may find themselves not only without their mother but also without their home (Mumola 2000).

### **Children Living With Mother Prior to Her Incarceration**

The number of children living with the women prisoners at time of arrest is reported in Table 8. Eight reported one child in the home, nine reported two children in the home, and nine reported three children in the home. Two subjects reported living with four children, two reported living with five children, and one reported living with six children in the home at the time of incarceration. The total number of children living with a mother at the time of her incarceration in this phase was 77 children. The minor children living with their mothers prior to incarceration ranged in age from 0 to 16.

**Table 8. Number of Children Living with Incarcerated Mother at the Time of Her Arrest**

<b>Number of Children in Home</b>	<b>Women Reporting Number</b>	<b>Cumulative Number of Children</b>
1	8	8
2	9	26
3	9	53
4	2	61
5	2	71
6	1	77

\*Four women did not report the number living with them in the home.

### **Placement of Children During Mother's Incarceration**

The children who had been living with their mothers prior to the mothers' imprisonment have had to be placed with others. Table 9 reports the placement of the children who were living with their mothers. Fifteen mothers reported that one or more of their children were living with the children's father, although in two cases there was another family member such as a grandparent in the home. Sixteen of the subjects reported one or more children living with their own mother, and five reported children living with both of their parents. Three lived with the subject's sister, and two lived with other relatives of the subject.

**Table 9. Mothers' Report of Placement of Children Who Were Living With Them Prior to Their Incarceration**

<b>Where Children are Currently Living</b>	<b>N*</b>
With Children's Father	13
With Subject's Mother	16
With Both of Subject's Parents	5
With Subject's Siblings	3
With Subject's Other Relatives	2
With Father's Grandparents	1
With Father's Other Relatives	1
With Friends	2
In Foster Care	3
State Agency	1
Unknown	1

\* Excludes overlapping placement, i.e. with mother and father, mother and siblings, etc. In six instances, some children were with living with subject's mother, and some were living with their other parent.

Only a few subjects reported children living with their father's family members. One lived with the father's grandparents, and one lived with other relatives of the father. Two women reported children living with friends, three reported children in a foster home, one reported children with a state agency, and one reported not knowing where the child was.

The living arrangements of the children were not always stable. The subjects reported that twenty-six children had to move around to more than one household since their incarceration.

The majority of the women planned to live with their children after their release. Thirty-six (66.7%) of the women reported they planned to live with their children. Thirty-one women reported they still had legal custody of at least one child. Seven women also reported that they had children living with them at the time of their incarceration that were not their own children.

### **Children Not Living With Their Mother Prior to Her Incarceration**

While the children that lived with their mothers prior to incarceration were most likely to be affected, children not living with their mothers at the time of incarceration may still be affected. Eight women reported their children had been living with the children's father, six reported one or more children living with their own mother, and an additional two reported having children living with both of their own parent's. Two also reported children who lived with a sibling, two reported children who lived with a grandparent, and two reported children living with other relatives. Five also reported children living with their paternal grandmother. One woman reported children living with friends, and one reported children in foster care.

**Table 10. Number of Children Not Living with Incarcerated Mother at the Time of Her Arrest**

<b>Where Children are Currently Living</b>	<b>N*</b>
With Children's Father	8
With Subject's Mother	6
With Both of Subject's Parents	2
With Subject's Siblings	2
With Subject's Grandparents	2
With Subject's Other Relatives	2
With Father's Mother	5
With Friends	1
In Foster Care	1

\* Excludes overlapping placement, i.e. with mother and father, mother and siblings, etc.

### **Issues with Children**

Children may be affected in many ways when a parent is incarcerated, leading to numerous problems. In Table 11, I report problems the children have had since the mother's incarceration, including a separate report of those among whom the problems occurred both before and since incarceration and those who had problems prior to incarceration of their mother.

Depression was the problem most often reported by the mothers. Twelve women reported one or more of their children had developed problems with

depression since their incarceration, while an additional three reported that depression had been a problem both before and since their incarceration. The women reported depression in a child prior to incarceration in only four cases. In three cases, the women reported a child being suicidal, with one woman reporting a suicidal child prior to her incarceration.

**Table 11. Problems Experienced by Children**

Problems Experienced By Children	Before Incarceration Only	Both Before and Since Incarceration	Since Incarceration <u>Only</u>
Bad Grades	6	7	13
Expelled from School	1	1	6
Dropped Out of School	2	1	5
Trouble with Friends	2	1	6
Trouble with Guardians	4	3	11
Running Away	2	0	6
Arrested	2	0	10
Incarcerated	0	0	2
Alcohol Problems	1	1	6
Drug Problems	1	0	7
Depression	4	3	12
Suicidal	1	0	3
Became pregnant or got someone else pregnant	0	0	2

A number of women also reported their children were having problems with school. Thirteen women reported that a child had developed bad grades since incarceration, with an additional seven reporting problems both before and since incarceration. Six women reported children having problems with bad grades prior to incarceration. Six women reported a child being expelled prior to her incarceration, with one reporting a child expelled both before and since incarceration, and one reporting a child expelled since her incarceration. Another five women reported a child had dropped out of school since her incarceration, one mother reported children who had dropped out both before and since her incarceration, and two mothers reported children who had dropped out prior to her incarceration.

Trouble with parents/guardians was also a frequent issue. Eleven subjects reported this had become a problem since their incarceration, compared to three who reported problems both before and since incarceration and four who reported problems prior to incarceration. Six reported a child who had run away since their incarceration, while two reported this as a problem prior to incarceration. Ten reported a child had been arrested since incarceration, and two reported a child had been incarcerated. In contrast, only two reported a child arrested prior to her incarceration, and none reported a child had been incarcerated prior to the subject's incarceration.



Six subjects reported alcohol problems in children since incarceration, and seven reported drug problems. In contrast, only one reported alcohol had been a problem both before and since her incarceration, one reported it had been a problem only prior to incarceration, and one reported drugs had been a problem prior to incarceration. Finally, two mothers reported a child became pregnant or got someone else pregnant since their incarceration.

Contact of mothers and children is problematic. Many of these mothers plan to reunite with their children upon release. With limited contact between mothers and children during the period, reintegration may be more difficult. Nineteen subjects (35.2%) reported receiving visits from their children less than once a month, with fourteen more (25.9%) reporting that they never received visits from their children. Twenty women (37.0%) reported they never received telephone calls from their children. Eight women (14.8%) reported never receiving mail from their children.

Prior research in Oklahoma suggests that children are being placed in homes with a history of abuse (Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza 2001). Therefore, it was important to examine whether children were being placed in homes where the inmate reported abuse or violence or abuse had occurred. The results are reported in Table 12.

Four subjects (7.4%) reported children now living with the inmate's parents while one or both of the inmate's parents had been violent around the family when the inmate was growing up. An additional three (5.6%) reported children living with other family members when the one or both of the inmate's parents had been violent.

**Table 12. History of Family Violence, Physical Abuse or Sexual Abuse and Placement of Children.**

	Children Live With One or <u>Both Parents</u>	Children Live With Other <u>Family Member</u>
<b>Parental Violence</b>		
<i>Mother Violent Around Family</i>	0	0
<i>Father Violent Around Family</i>	2	0
<i>Both Parents Violent Around Family</i>	2	3
<b>Physical Abuse as Child by Family</b>		
<i>Parent or Step-Parent Perpetrator</i>	6	4
<i>Other Relative Perpetrator</i>	6	6
<b>Sexual Abuse as Child by Family</b>		
<i>Parent or Step-Parent Perpetrator</i>	7	1
<i>Other Relative Perpetrator</i>	5	5

Turning to physical abuse, six subjects (11.1%) reported children living with one or both parents when a parent had been the perpetrator of their own

physical abuse. Four (7.4%) reported children living with another family member when a parent had been the perpetrator of the inmate's physical abuse as a child. Six (11.1%) reported children living with one or both of the inmate's parents when another family member had been the perpetrator of physical abuse during the inmate's childhood, and six (11.1%) reported children living with other family member's when other relatives had been perpetrators of physical abuse.

In terms of sexual abuse, seven women (13.0%) reported that children were living with one or both of the prisoner's parents when a parent had been the perpetrator of sexual abuse during the inmate's childhood. An additional five women (9.3%) reported that children were living with the inmate's parent when another relative had been the perpetrator of childhood abuse. Five (9.3%) reported that children were living with another relative and that a relative (non-parental) had been the perpetrator of sexual abuse. One more subject (1.9%) reported that children were living with other relatives when the inmate's parent had been the perpetrator of childhood abuse.

It is apparent that at least some children are living in situations with a relatively high potential for violence or abuse. While it is not possible with these data to determine whether or not the non-parental relatives who were

perpetrators are the same as the non-parental relatives with whom children are living, there is still reason for concern.

**Table 13. Programs Participated in by Children**

	Prior to <u>Incarceration</u>	Since <u>Incarceration</u>
Counseling	6 (11.1%)	15 (27.8%)
Special school programs	10 (18.5%)	9 (16.7%)
Free school lunches	19 (35.2%)	17 (31.5%)
Church programs	28 (51.9%)	27 (50%)
Scouts, etc.	5 (9.3%)	3 (5.6%)
Sports	16 (29.6%)	15 (27.8%)

Finally, I explored services the children may be receiving or have received in the past. The results are reported in Table 13. In most cases, there is a modest decrease in participation since incarceration, but this is not significant. One encouraging factor is the increase in counseling that has occurred since the mother's incarceration. Fifteen women (27.8%) reported that one or more of their children have received counseling since their incarceration. This compares to only six (11.1%) who reported counseling prior to incarceration. However, only

five women (9.3%) reported engaging in some kind of programs with family.

Three reported participation in the CAMP program, one reported counseling with the father of her child and the child, and one reported some type of mentoring program.

It is also noteworthy that eleven of the women ((20.4%) reported having concerns about where their children live. Some of their concerns were related to interference with their own relationships with the children.

*Three of my children I am not allowed contact with by the grandparents. The courts ordered weekly visitation but they don't uphold it. I worry if they are doing okay*

*To let them know I DO think of them. Be able to find them and at least hold them one more time. I don't want to disrupt their lives for they are already making it.*

*That they are not fostering a relationship between my son and myself. They don't seem to think it's important to have my son in my life.*

*Their dad & step-mom talk bad about me and won't allow my daughters to see my parents. They are treated bad if they talk about me.*

The majority of those with concerns, however, had concerns about the well-being of their children. These ranged from not knowing what was going on to concerns based on past experience with foster care.

*My children never get to go home because no one is there to take care of them. Their dad is gone 6 days a week, so they stay with their great-aunt who doesn't take good care of them at all.*

*My older 3 are in foster care. I had prior problems w/them (foster care), and I do worry what type of people my children are with.*

*I don't know if my daughter's dad is taking care of her if he is back on drugs. She stays with her friend half the time.*

*Because my youngest stays with my mother and up in age and I'm so scared something will happen to her while I'm gone and I don't know where that will leave my youngest*

*My daughter complains that her step-mom is mean to her. Her father is a good father but gone to work a lot. AI think her step-mom neglects her & how I heard was through an inmate here. Weather (sic) it's true or not I don't know but upon my release in 6 moths I will be following up on it.*

*She says she isn't happy. The environment is not clean, and unhappy.*

*My son is now in prison. I am concerned for his living arrangements upon release and job.*

## **Recommendations**

The data from Phase II indicate that there is the potential for significant problems among the children of incarcerated mothers. In Phase III, we will be asking caretakers about their perceptions of problems the children are experiencing as well as services they may have obtained for the children.

The women were asked to indicate with what problems the children might need assistance. Several indicated that anger was a problem, and others indicated a need to get better acquainted and to receive counseling together.

Comments about needed assistance included:

*Help working through his anger over what I did that brought me to prison. He was devastated when he found out that I had committed a robbery w/a gun. This was totally out of character for me and he was devastated.*

*Getting to know his mother before I get out and go to Project Protect*

*Church programs that will help both sides see that there is a side (me that wants to know our 5 children; know where they are at and rely by word of mouth.*

*To be able to see them more often, whether by video or personal;  
To know they are being taken care of*

When asked what kinds of programs might be most beneficial, they also offered suggestions.

*A program that gives a child and parent one-on-one time, more so, if the parent has a long incarceration period*

*Counseling, mother & child reintegration program*

The findings for Phase II again suggest that the state should consider focusing on alternative sanctions such as day reporting centers or nighttime incarceration when possible. Furthermore, the state should try to provide services to children to intervene before serious problems develop. When incarceration is the appropriate response to the crime, it is imperative to ensure that the provisions of Oklahoma Statute Title 22, Chapter 20 are being carried out. Thorough assessment of the homes where the mothers plan to place their children is needed. Furthermore, records of where the children are living will assist in providing services to the children.

Additionally, thorough assessment of the children themselves would be beneficial. Determination of the problems being experienced would assist the

state in providing services to these children. In order to break the cycle, early intervention is extremely important.

Depending on the crime committed by the mother, the length of sentence, and the mother's resources, some mothers and their children will be reunified after the mothers' sentences are served. The services required by families that will be reunified will probably differ in some ways from those that will not be reunified. Therefore, it would be beneficial to attempt to identify these two groups in order to focus on appropriate services and interventions from the children.

Contact between mothers and their children can be extremely beneficial to the child. For one thing, seeing the mother may help reassure a child about the mother's situation (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2003). Additionally, the mother-child bond can be better maintained with regular contact. Mother-child contact is most beneficial when the mother plans to live with her children after release. There are a number of churches and support groups that work to facilitate visitation between incarcerated parents and their children in Oklahoma. One recommendation is to network with these groups. Another recommendation is to ensure there are child-friendly visitation areas at the facilities in order to minimize the trauma to the children.



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