

Jailed teens with incarcerated parents unlikely to find success without help

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Without intervention, jailed teens whose parents have a history of incarceration are doomed to struggle for the rest of their lives, a new study says.

Researchers examined the extent to which various risk factors experienced by youths in eight juvenile and adult correctional facilities in Michigan are related to having a parent who served time in jail. The

[median age](#) at first arrest for the group was 13 and a majority were males and minorities.

The researchers analyzed 10 factors showing differences among low, medium and high rates of [parents](#) in prison.

Kids whose incarcerated parents abused drugs and had experience with public assistance and foster care, poor neighborhood quality and instability, and stigma were most affected. Most youths in this cluster grew up without both [biological parents](#), says Rosemary Sarri, professor emerita at the U-M Institute for Social Research and School of Social Work.

Although the overwhelming majority of these [teens](#) lived in low-income, single-parent households, those with incarcerated parents fared more poorly in terms of "negative life events" and overall quality of life than those without this disadvantage.

About 53 percent of the teens surveyed had children. Most teen fathers said they expected to have little future contact with their children, preventing them from being a positive influence in their lives.

The researchers say intervention is needed to help teens deal with time behind bars and its consequences more effectively.

"Most youths are likely to have troubled and unsuccessful lives unless there is significant intervention to provide them with safe and supportive living conditions, substantial education, viable employment options and adequate housing," Sarri said.

More information: Irene Y. H. Nga, Rosemary C. Sarrib, Elizabeth Stoffregen. "Intergenerational Incarceration: Risk Factors and Social Exclusion." *Journal of Poverty*. Volume 17, Issue 4, 2013. [DOI](#):

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