

Children of Prisoners Fact Sheet

The Legacy of Crime

- More than one-third of prison inmates are the child of an offender. Eighty per cent have an incarcerated family member.
- Sixty per cent of children of prisoners become involved in crime.
- Two-thirds of female prisoners are mothers. The vast majority are sole caregivers and live below the poverty line.
- Most children of male prisoners live with their mothers. Most children of female prisoners live with extended family or are placed in foster care.
- Children of prisoners report peer ridicule and feelings of shame, abandonment, isolation, concern they are inherently “bad” and anxiety over their parent’s welfare.
- Children of prisoners experience much higher than normal incidences of gang involvement, truancy, low academic achievement, addiction and mental illness.
- Each day, 5,000 BC children have a parent in prison (2,160 in the Lower Mainland).
- Nearly 98,000 BC minors have had a parent incarcerated. Nearly 44,000 of those are in the Lower Mainland.

Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (EFry)’s Role

- Until EFry identified children of prisoners as a distinct subgroup in 2002, they were unrecognized and unsupported in Canada.
- EFry created in-prison programs such as the Storybook Program to provide increased contact between parent and child.
- EFry worked with government to help prisoners designate familial caregivers and assist them in accessing a care stipend.
- In 2008, EFry launched OURS (Opportunity, Understanding, Respect, Success) a program to research and develop initiatives to build awareness of these children’s unique needs and help professionals address the trauma and shame of parental incarceration.
- In 2010, EFry introduced free summer day camp for children with a parent in the justice system.