Activity to Extend the Learning

Title: Advocating for Children Experiencing the Incarceration of a Parent

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Based on Material From: Illinois STARnet, National Institute of Corrections and Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Audience:
- X Experienced CASA/GAL Volunteer
- X New CASA/GAL Volunteer
- O Other: ___________________

Estimated Time required for workshop:
60-90 minutes

Goal of Activity:
For participants to gain a better understanding of the issues facing the children of incarcerated parents.

Learning objectives:
For participants to be able to:
1. Identify 3 specific things to do as a CASA/GAL volunteer to help my child if their parent is incarcerated.
2. Recognize the special issues associated with children who have incarcerated parents (i.e., visitation, effect on school performance, etc.)
3. List ways the incarceration of a parent affects a child’s world.

Notes for the facilitator:
This continuing education topic can elicit very strong emotions and attitudes surrounding parents who are incarcerated. Individuals have strong opinions on children visiting prisons.
Materials and equipment needed:

One or more of the following DVD/VHS:

1. Children of Prisoners, Children of Promise (National Institute of Corrections, (http://nicic.org/Library/018895) – 1 hour – no charge

2. The Effects of Parental Incarceration on Young Children (Illinois STARnet, 800-227-7537 x 293, http://www.wiu.edu/starnet/resources/apples.php) – 30 minutes - $50.00

3. When Parents Are Incarcerated: Supporting Young Children in All Environments (Illinois STARnet, 800-227-7537 x 293 http://www.wiu.edu/starnet/resources/apples.php,, available 9/05) – 1 hour - $50.00

Outline of Activity:

1. Ask participants to think about a friend, family member, neighbor or co-worker who might have had to be in jail. What kind of effects did the incarceration have on the family, on the children? (Anchor/Auditory)

2. Watch the video. (Content/Visual)

3. Discuss the following questions with the group: (Application and Future Use/Kinesthetic)

   - How might your perceptions of individuals in prison affect your advocacy efforts?
   
   - If your CASA/GAL child had a parent who was incarcerated, how would you interact with your child in order to send the message that he/she is important?
   
   - Knowing that the communication is strained between the child and the parent who is incarcerated, what specific things from a CASA/GAL standpoint could you do to support the child’s relationship with the parent (as long as parental rights have not been terminated)?
   
   - After visiting with a parent who is incarcerated your CASA/GAL child may come to your next visit with a variety of emotions including anger, sadness, fearfulness, mistrust and rebellion. How would you respond to his/her emotions? What would you write for an upcoming court report?