

In Support of Staff Training, Curriculum and Services to Meet the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents in San Francisco Unified School District

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WHEREAS, 2.7 million children currently have a parent in prison or jail nationwide, and over 7 million children have a parent that is under some form of correctional supervision; and

WHEREAS: Since 1991, the population of minor children with at least one incarcerated parent has increased by 80%; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2011 DCYF Community Needs Assessment, 17,993 children and youth were estimated to have had a parent who spent time in either county jail or state prison in 2010, and this number does not include youth and children who had a parent that was incarcerated at any time during their childhood, and does not include transitional age youth; and

WHEREAS: African American children are nine times more likely to have an incarcerated parent than white children. Latino children are three times more likely to have an imprisoned parent than white children. One in nine black children has an incarcerated parent, compared to one in 28 Latino children and one in 57 white children; and

WHEREAS, According to the Center for Youth Wellness' Kaiser Research Study, parental incarceration is one of 10 Adverse Childhood Experiences, which are traumas that can have a profound effect on a child's developing brain and body with lasting impacts on a person's health throughout his/her lifespan; AND

WHEREAS: A number of studies suggest that the effects of parental arrest and incarceration on a child's development are profound. Children may suffer from: trauma, anxiety, shame, guilt, sadness, withdrawal, low self-esteem, decline in school performance, truancy, use of drugs or alcohol, aggression, depression, difficulty in sleeping, and/or concentration problems; AND

WHEREAS: Starting from the time a parent is taken into custody, children may be traumatized by witnessing their parent's arrest, separation from them, and/or from reuniting with them; and

WHEREAS: Children with incarcerated parents face a wide range of challenges, and very few services are specifically designed to support youth with this unique but wide spread experience. Some of the challenges include having to move and change schools often, and a lack of stability and consistency; and

WHEREAS: The maintenance of family ties during incarceration is one possible means of lessening the negative impact of incarceration on families and children. Most

incarcerated parents want to maintain relationships with their children, including with their education; and

WHEREAS: Children with incarcerated parents face challenges in maintaining relationships with their incarcerated parents due to a lack of consistency in communication through phone calls, letters, and visits; and

WHEREAS: In 2003 the San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (SFCIPP) published the Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights, which includes, among others, a right to not be judged, blamed or labeled because of my parent's incarceration, a right to support as I struggle with my parent's incarceration, and the right to a lifelong relationship with my parent; and

WHEREAS: Project WHAT!, a youth-led program for teens with incarcerated parents, completed a survey of over 100 San Francisco youth between the ages of 12 and 25 years old. When asked what kind of support would have been helpful to you during your parent's incarceration, 25% said "Someone to talk to at school," 24% said a "Peer support group," and 33% said "Therapy or counseling;" and

WHEREAS: Children with incarcerated parents often times feel stigmatized and isolated at schools, which can be exacerbated by a lack of understanding and sensitivity to the experiences and needs of the children of incarcerated parents by school staff and peers; and

WHEREAS: School counselors, social workers, and wellness staff are in a unique position to provide support to the children of incarcerated parents and their families; and

WHEREAS: The only SFUSD school based program specifically for children with incarcerated parents in the 2015-2016 school year is the ROOTS theater program at the Academy of Arts and Sciences High School, a program that is in its second year at this site; and

WHEREAS: Children with incarcerated parents exhibit tremendous resilience and strength, and should be empowered and supported to speak about their experiences and needs, and shape the policies and programs that impact their lives; and

WHEREAS: In 2014-2015, for the first year, all middle and high school counselors and head counselors were trained by youth and leaders of Project WHAT! The goals of the training were for staff to obtain an increased understanding of how many children are impacted by parental incarceration and what challenges they face in school and in life, strategic and policy recommendations, and written resources to share with students; and

WHEREAS: There are age appropriate readings and curriculum at all grade levels available that can help to de-stigmatize parental incarceration and help children cope with the incarceration of a loved one; and

WHEREAS: Sesame Street developed “Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration,” which includes free multimedia, bilingual materials targeting young children of incarcerated parents, their families and caregivers, and the range of other professionals who interact with these children; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: SFUSD will continue to provide trainings for school counselors, social workers, nurses, wellness center staff, school resource officers, and other school staff on an annual basis on the needs and experiences of students with incarcerated parents; these trainings, wherever possible, should involve children with incarcerated parents who can speak to their experiences; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOVLED: SFUSD’s Department of Curriculum and Instruction will consolidate, and integrate curriculum relating to children with incarcerated parents, the impacts of incarceration more broadly, into the appropriate courses and grade levels, and make such curriculum available to schools; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: SFUSD will distribute informational and educational resources to teachers, counselors and school staff about how to support children with incarcerated parents; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: SFUSD will explore and pursue specific programming and services for children with incarcerated parents; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: SFUSD will research and provide support in best practices for counselors, teachers and school staff to maintain communication with the parents of incarcerated children, which may include written and verbal communication and materials, as permissible by law; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: SFUSD will collaborate and cooperate with “One Family,” which is the parent education and case management program in the San Francisco County Jail; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: SFUSD will seek to add questions specifically about incarceration and parental incarceration, including to the Youth Behavior Risk Survey, which will help SFUSD understand the experiences and needs of children with incarcerated parents. All survey data will remain confidential and anonymous.