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Maintaining the Parent-
Child Attachment
Relationship for Children
of the Incarcerated
2023 WACAP
Conference
October 23, 2023



Objectives of Session

Understand and

Understand psychological impact of parental incarceration on children

Understand and

Understand the importance of focusing on the family system when parents are incarcerated

Understand and

Understand the disparate impact of parental incarceration on children and families of color

Understand and

Understand the significance of maintaining the parent-child attachment relationship when parents are incarcerated and ways to help children maintain this relationship

Children with
Parents in
Prison

Demographics

Impact

Child Welfare

Impact of Arrest on Children

Trauma for children

Economic, emotional and social effects

Experience a sense of abandonment

Changes in household dynamics and family income

Deception by relatives

Living
Arrangements
of Children

Parents

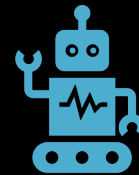
Relatives

Non-kin

Definitions of Attachment



In-born
system in
brain



Bio-
behavioral
system

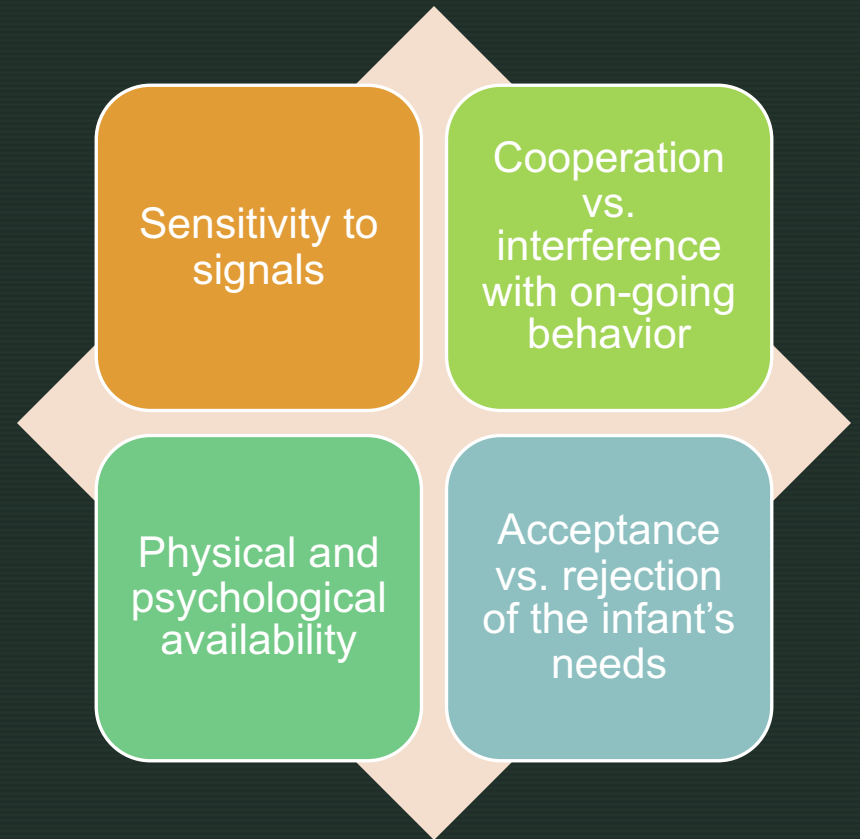
Significance of Parent-Child Relationship

Promotes child's healthy development

Crucial to child's lifelong physical and psychological well-being

Foundation on which children learn how to form and sustain healthy relationships

Four Caregiver Attachment Behaviors



Attachment Typology

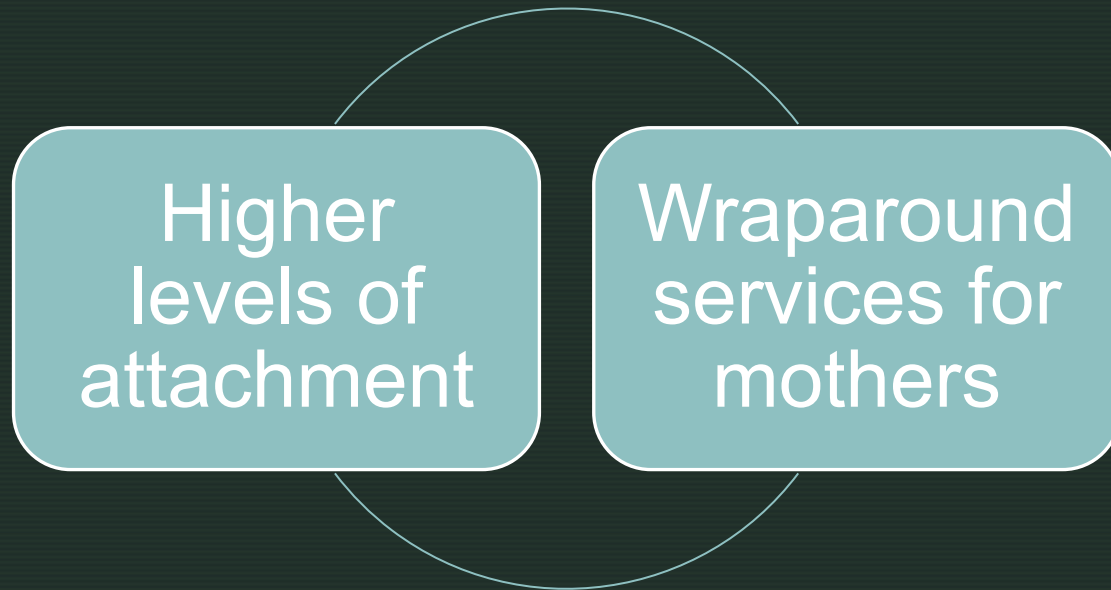
Secure attachment

Insecure – avoidant attachment

Insecure – ambivalent/resistant
attachment

Insecure – disorganized
attachment

Residential Nursery Programs



Residential Nursery Programs

California -24 bed facility. days and up to 6 years.	More than 90
Delaware-17 beds.	15 months
Illinois-8 mothers and infants.	24 months
Indiana-10 mothers and infants.	18 to 24 months
Nebraska-15 mothers and infants.	18 months
New York-29 mothers and infants.	12 to 18 months
Ohio-26 mothers and infants.	36 months
South Dakota –no limit.	30 days
Texas-15 mothers and infants.	12 months
Washington-20 mothers and infants.	30 months
West Virginia-5 mothers and infants	18 months

Attachment is a Life-Long Process

We don't stop attaching.

Attachment can change.

A child can attachment to more than one person.

A child can learn how to attach as a preschooler.

Recent research suggests people can change the security of their attachment style into adulthood.

Trauma-Based Paradigm

Trauma in relation to an attachment figure

When the trauma occurred in a person's life

Length of time for trauma

Severity of trauma (Cozolino, 2002; Brewin, 2003)



Manifestation of Trauma by Children

Depression

Aggression

Social isolation

Withdrawal

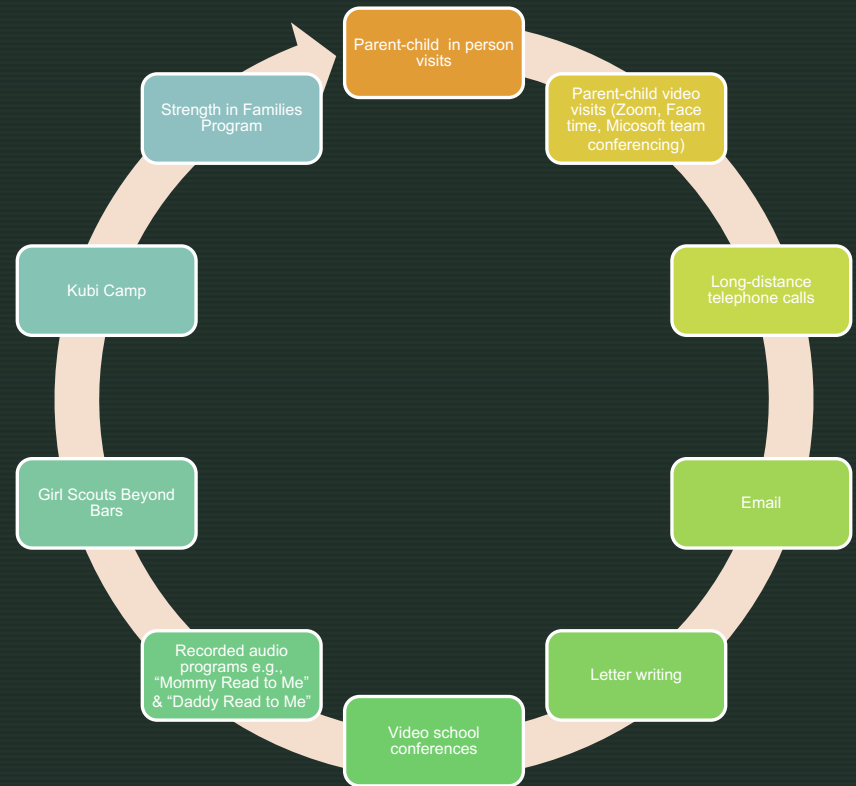
Persistent sadness

Anxiety

Behavioral regression
(especially in younger children)

Difficulty sleeping

Ways to Maintain Parent-Child Relationship



Role of Parent-Child Visits

- Physical interaction with children and other family members
- Help cope emotionally
- Reduce feelings of abandonment and anxiety
- Promote emotional security and attachment relationship
- Benefit children's overall well-being and social adjustment
- Express feelings about separation from parent
- Receive reassurance they are wanted and loved



Impact of Parent-Child Visits on Parents

- Support parental attachment
- Promote continued bond after release
- Motivate parents to comply with facility rules resulting in fewer disciplinary reports
- Lower rates of recidivism





Four Patterns of Visiting with Disparate Effects on Recidivism

- No visits (the person did not receive any visits while incarcerated)
- Near-entry visiting (visits were most frequent when someone was first incarcerated then tapered off)
- Near-release visiting (visits increased in the months before release)
- Sustained visiting (visits occurred regularly throughout incarceration)

Conversations with Fathers

Comments that have
negative effect

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graph TD; A[Comments that have negative effect] --> B[Differences in language]; B --> C[Concepts of time];
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Differences in
language

Concepts of time

Components of Parent-Child Visits

Type of visit

Structure of visit

Frequency of visit

Collaboration with correctional agencies, administrators, and staff

Role of primary caregivers

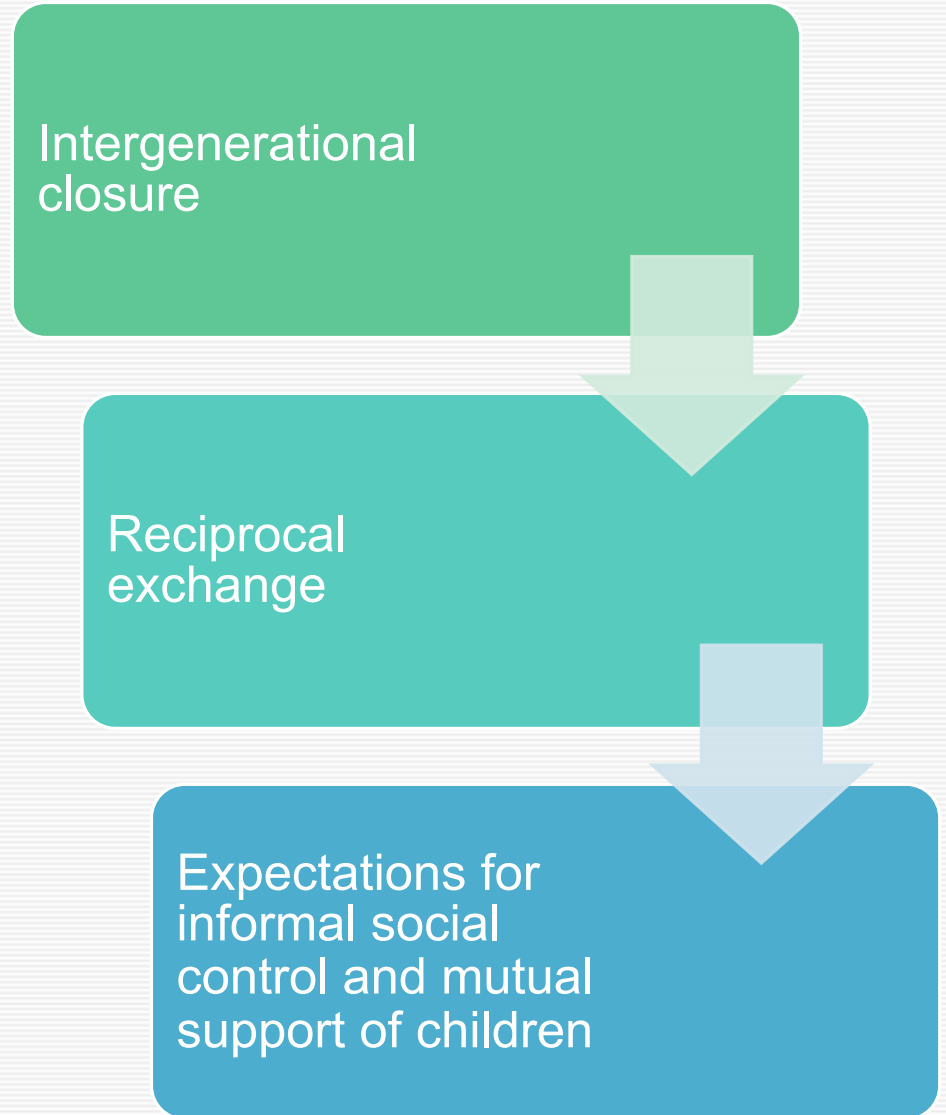
Respect for family dynamics

Reentry and Children

Intergenerational closure

Reciprocal exchange

Expectations for informal social control and mutual support of children





▼ QUESTION &
ANSWERS