



Health Policy Brief

Connections between criminal justice and health

Impacts on children and families

Safe, stable environments and nurturing relationships are essential for healthy child development. Criminal justice involvement disrupts family stability and strains relationships, exposing children to adversity and trauma at no fault of their own.

Incarceration of a household member is an adverse childhood experience (ACE) that can cause serious and long-lasting health and economic harms across generations and for individuals, families and communities. These harms include an increased likelihood of children becoming involved in the justice system (displayed in figure 1).¹

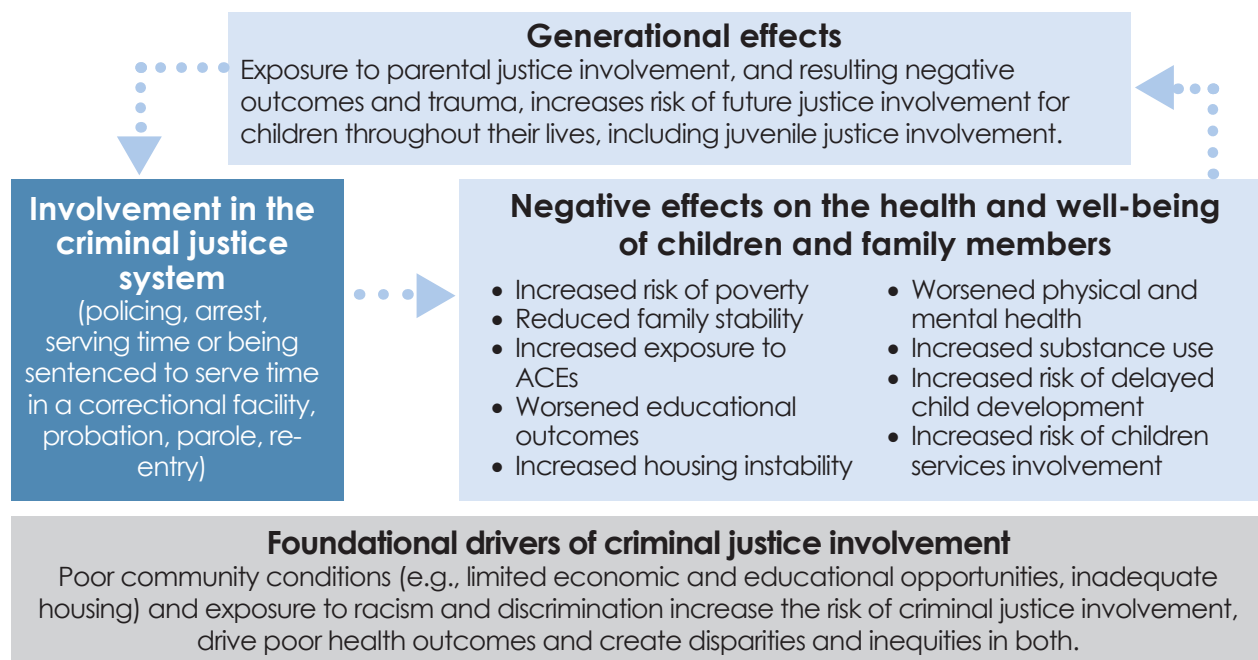
At the same time, children need to grow up in safe communities, free from crime and violence, requiring a balance between community safety, family stability and child well-being in Ohio's criminal justice policies.

Though Ohio ranked near the bottom (40th out of 50 states) on incarceration in HPIO's [2023 Health Value Dashboard](#), Ohioans are resilient and have a strong framework to support children whose family members are justice involved. Policymakers and other leaders can build upon this framework to prevent future involvement with the justice system and mitigate harm.

3 key findings for policymakers

- **Parental justice involvement negatively impacts the health, well-being and stability of children and families** and increases the likelihood that children will become incarcerated later in life.
- **Ohio has a strong foundation for supporting children and families**, including several policies, programs and practices that connect parents with their children during re-entry from incarceration. Still, more can be done to prevent and mitigate the impacts of parental justice involvement.
- **There are evidence-informed policy and program solutions** to prevent and break generational cycles of justice-involvement, support children and families who have an incarcerated parent, and improve community health and safety.

Figure 1. **Generational cycle of justice involvement**



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Key terms

- **Collateral sanctions:** Legal constraints on the rights and privileges of people who have had contact with the criminal justice system, particularly conviction.² Examples include reduced eligibility for quality housing, limited access to certain jobs and the inability to obtain certain professional licenses.³
- **Racism:** A system, built from policies, practices and beliefs, that unfairly distributes resources, power and opportunity.⁴
- **Recidivism:** The likelihood that a person will commit another criminal offense after release from jail or prison.⁵

How does parental justice involvement affect child and family health and well-being?

When parents are arrested or detained, their children's health and financial security is directly affected. Some families are more likely to be involved with the justice system because of their neighborhood, race, income or housing status (i.e., the foundational drivers described in figure 1). These challenges exist throughout all phases of parental criminal justice involvement, including:

- Policing and community surveillance
- Prison and jail incarceration
- Re-entry and collateral sanctions

The following sections describe the connections between parental justice involvement at each stage and the health and well-being of children and families.



Foundational drivers of justice involvement across generations

Community conditions and safety

Community conditions can either support or hinder health and well-being.⁶ Positive community conditions, including access to economic opportunity, high-quality education and safe and affordable housing, are key contributors to family health and well-being.⁷ On the other hand, exposure to violence and crime, low-quality housing, and limited access to high-quality education, health care and healthy, affordable food can lead to poor health outcomes and increase the chances of criminal justice involvement.⁸

People with low incomes, who are unemployed, have low educational attainment (i.e., have less than a high school diploma) and/or are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness are more likely to be incarcerated.⁹ People who have been incarcerated are more likely to face homelessness and limited educational and economic opportunity upon release due to collateral sanctions and prejudices against people with a history of justice involvement.¹⁰

Community safety is an important factor in the health and well-being of children, families and communities. Children may be directly or indirectly affected by crime, including being the victim of crime and/or living in unsafe neighborhoods. Children who have experienced abuse or neglect specifically are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors that could result in future justice involvement, continuing the generational cycle laid out in figure 1.¹¹ Therefore, it is important to

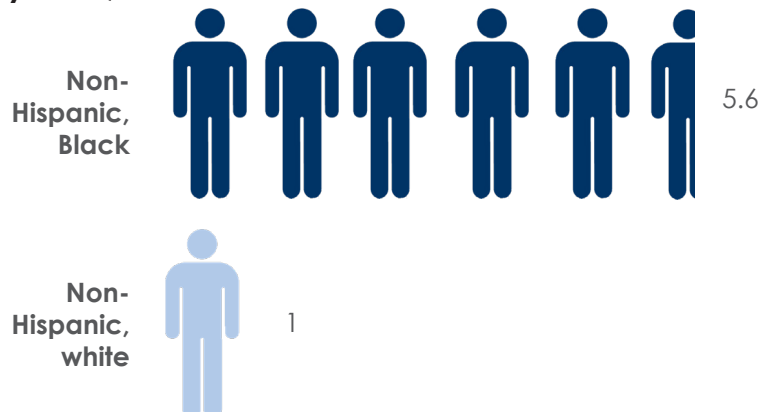
address the root causes of crime, including abuse and neglect, and ensure that families have the supports they need to be stable and thrive, while also achieving justice for victims, including rehabilitation for people convicted of an offense.¹² The next brief in HPIO's **Connections Between Criminal Justice and Health** series will focus on the social drivers of violent crime, including policy recommendations to support communities.

Structural racism and discrimination

Black Ohioans also are at a higher risk for justice involvement, due to historic and ongoing structural and interpersonal racism. Although current laws and policies are neutral in language regarding race, Black people and communities of color are more heavily policed and disproportionately incarcerated because of racial discrimination and longstanding practices in the criminal justice system.¹³ Because these biases have been built into the criminal justice system, unjust and inequitable outcomes can continue without individual-level racism.¹⁴

These biases, policies and structures result in stark racial disparities in criminal justice outcomes. For example, Black Ohioans are 5.6 times more likely to be incarcerated than white Ohioans (as shown in figure 2).¹⁵ Evidence demonstrates that this disparity is not due to inherent criminality but is instead shaped by poor community conditions and systemic biases.¹⁶ **Analysis by HPIO and Altarum** found that if these disparities were eliminated, 40% fewer Ohioans would be incarcerated, with a savings of \$638 million per year in corrections spending.¹⁷

Figure 2. **Ratio of people incarcerated in Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction prisons, per 100,000 population, by race, 2021**



Source: HPIO analysis of Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction annual report and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates

IMPACT EXAMPLE

If racial disparities were eliminated, **40% fewer** Ohioans would be incarcerated, with a savings of **\$638 million** per year in corrections spending

For more information on these foundational drivers, including discussion on the barriers to justice that exist for people of color (e.g., the ways that perceptions of behavior, institutional policies and systems and structures are influenced by racism and discrimination), refer to previous reports in the **Connections between Criminal Justice and Health** series.





Policing and community surveillance

Criminal justice involvement often begins with policing, which comes in many forms, including community surveillance.

Community surveillance is the monitoring of public activity by government agencies and the public, such as pedestrian police stops, traffic stops and closed-circuit cameras, among other practices.¹⁸ Surveillance can start in public spaces and extend into private family life, including by referrals to children services.¹⁹ For example, 394,852 (18%) of the 2.2 million investigated reports to child welfare agencies in 2015 originated through police surveillance.²⁰

Witnessing police interactions with family members, particularly the arrest of a parent, can be traumatic for children, especially younger children.²¹ Children may experience nightmares and flashbacks after witnessing a parent's arrest. They also experience chronic stress, which can have long-lasting negative effects on the body.²² Additionally, a lack of information, including uncertainty about a parent's living situation and incarceration status, can hamper coping abilities and cause anxiety in children.²³

Communities of color are more likely to be policed through community surveillance, while also being under-policed for emergency services.²⁴ Policing practices such as stop-and-frisk and racial profiling also cause families of color to become involved in the justice system at a higher rate.²⁵ These practices also lead to higher justice involvement for families of color, such as high incarceration rates shown in figure 2, and contributes to immediate and long-term health challenges for their children.

IMPACT EXAMPLE

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of the 2.2 million investigated reports to child welfare agencies in 2015 originated through police surveillance



Prison and jail incarceration

There are negative impacts on family well-being when a parent is in jail or prison, which can profoundly alter a child's chance of upward mobility. Parental involvement in the criminal justice system affects outcomes such as:

- **Education.** Children who have a parent in jail or prison are more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment.²⁶ Children may also experience school-related problems and problems with peer relationships, such as poor grades, instances of aggression, temporary fear of school, ostracization and higher suspension and dropout rates.²⁷
- **Family stability.** Incarceration significantly increases the risk of family instability (e.g., relationship dissolution or divorce) and child neglect.²⁸ It also impacts children's ability to securely bond with their parent and the parent's engagement in their children's lives.²⁹ Parental incarceration may lead to children being placed in children services custody, further separating them from their support systems (e.g., friends, classmates) and communities.³⁰ The risk of children services involvement is increased if the mother is the incarcerated parent.³¹ In 2022, 5,397 Ohio children were removed from the home due to parent/family issues, including parental incarceration.³²
- **Healthcare access.** Research has found that child uninsured rates are not significantly affected by a parent being in jail or prison. However, children whose parent(s) are in jail or prison are more likely to experience delayed care and unmet mental health needs.³³
- **Homelessness.** Formerly incarcerated people often struggle to find stable housing due to discrimination, collateral sanctions and a lack of financial resources.³⁴ Children of recently incarcerated fathers are three times more likely to experience homelessness than children of fathers who have not been incarcerated.³⁵

IMPACT EXAMPLE

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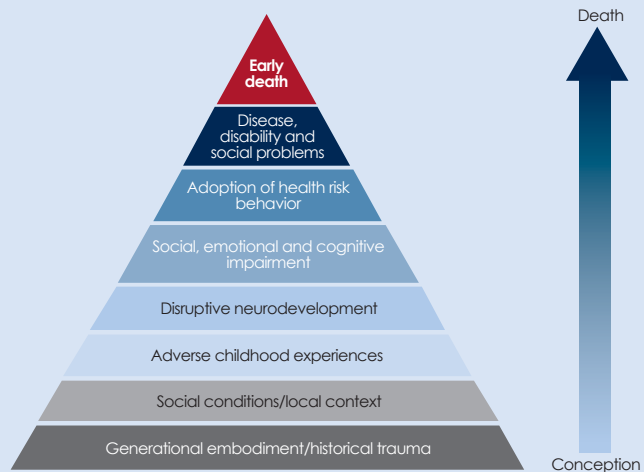
Familial justice involvement as an ACE

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are “potentially traumatic events” that occur during childhood (ages 0-17).³⁶ They are generally grouped into three categories: abuse, neglect and household challenges (which include incarceration of a household member).³⁷ Exposure to ACEs can result in a variety of negative mental and physical health and economic outcomes, such as increased smoking, inability to afford health care and depression.³⁸

ACEs impact children's health and development through a physiological reaction to toxic stress, which results from prolonged activation of the body's fight-or-flight stress response system. Children who experience prolonged or severe adversity are more susceptible to experiencing allostatic overload – the cumulative impact of chronic stress – which, over time, creates a “wear and tear” effect that contributes to poor health outcomes.³⁹

Other outcomes linked to ACEs exposure, such as engagement in unhealthy behaviors⁴⁰, lower educational attainment and unemployment⁴¹ can also negatively affect health. Figure 3 provides a framework to explain how these risk factors influence poor health and well-being in all stages of life.

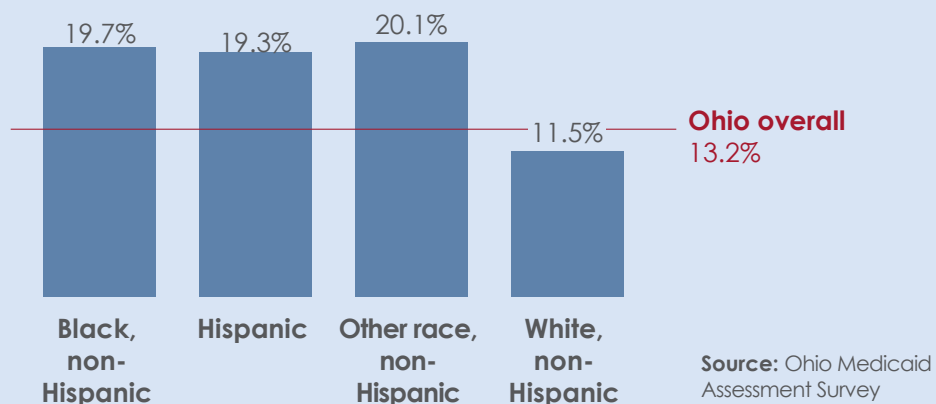
Figure 3. The ACE Pyramid: Mechanism by which ACEs influence health and well-being throughout the lifespan



Source: “About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed July 13, 2020.

According to HPIO's [Health Impacts of ACEs in Ohio](#) brief, incarceration of a household member is one of the ACEs that has the most significant impact on the health of Ohioans. In 2021, 13.2% of Ohio adults reported having a parent or guardian serve time in jail after they were born.⁴² However, due to systemic inequities (described in more detail on page 3), Black and Hispanic/Latino Ohioans were almost twice as likely as white Ohioans to report their child having a parent or guardian serve time in jail after they were born (displayed in figure 4).

Figure 4. Percent of adults who report having a parent or guardian serve time in jail after they were born, Ohio, by race, 2021



HPIO's [Ohio ACEs Impact Project](#) contains more information on the health and economic impacts of ACEs in Ohio.”

- **Poverty.** Many incarcerated parents were their households' primary earners prior to sentencing but are unable to provide economic support to their children and partners while incarcerated. Incarceration can also increase household expenses due to legal fees (e.g., court fees, restitution, fines) and the costs of phone calls, commissary accounts and visits to correctional facilities. As a result, families with a family member in jail or prison are significantly more likely to experience poverty, diminishing their chances for economic mobility and good health.⁴³ For example, **HPIO analysis** found that if household member incarceration was prevented, 12% fewer Ohioans would have limited healthcare access due to cost.⁴⁴

Research shows that parental incarceration and its effect on the above factors can lead to the following health challenges for their children.

- **Child physical and behavioral development.** Children whose parents are in jail or prison are more likely to develop a learning disability, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, behavioral or conduct problems, developmental delays and speech or language problems.⁴⁵
- **Mental health.** Parental incarceration in childhood is associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety during young adulthood.⁴⁶
- **Physical health.** Having a family member who is involved in the criminal justice system (i.e., in jail or prison) is linked to increased rates of hypertension, diabetes, obesity, HIV/AIDS and asthma in children of incarcerated parents.⁴⁷
- **Substance use.** Parental incarceration is associated with increased substance use and dependence, including excessive alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and prescription drug use among young adults.⁴⁸ **HPIO analysis** found that if Ohio children were not exposed to familial incarceration, Ohio's overall smoking rate would decrease by 7%.⁴⁹

IMPACT EXAMPLE

If household member incarceration was prevented, **12%** fewer Ohioans would have limited healthcare access due to cost

Juvenile justice and family well-being

Children with incarcerated parents have a higher risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system through increased risky behaviors and worse health outcomes, such as drug use and poor mental health, and increased interaction with the justice system itself. Risk of future juvenile justice involvement is also correlated with a history of children services involvement, particularly a history of experiencing abuse or neglect and out-of-home placement in a group setting (displayed in figure 1 on page 1).⁵⁰ Involvement with the juvenile justice system can lead to negative outcomes for the child, their family and any children that they have or may have. For example:

- Children who are involved with the juvenile justice system generally have lower educational attainment, higher rates of substance use and worse mental health and behavioral problems both prior to and following involvement with the system.⁵¹ These outcomes can be exacerbated by trauma experienced in juvenile detention, such as sexual abuse, solitary confinement and assault by other youth and staff.⁵²
- Juvenile detention can negatively impact the social, school and family life of siblings. Emotional distress and trauma experienced when a sibling is taken into custody may continue throughout the length of their detention.⁵³
- Costs related to visitation, truancy, probation and court can create financial hardships for families, especially families with low incomes.⁵⁴

Figure 5 shows that Ohio has a higher rate of juvenile detention than the U.S. overall, signaling that more can be done to prevent children from becoming justice-involved, including reducing the state's high adult incarceration rate and supporting families before and after they are engaged with the criminal justice system.

Figure 5. **Youth residing in juvenile detention, correctional and/or residential facilities, Ohio vs. United States, rate per 100,000, 2019**



Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center

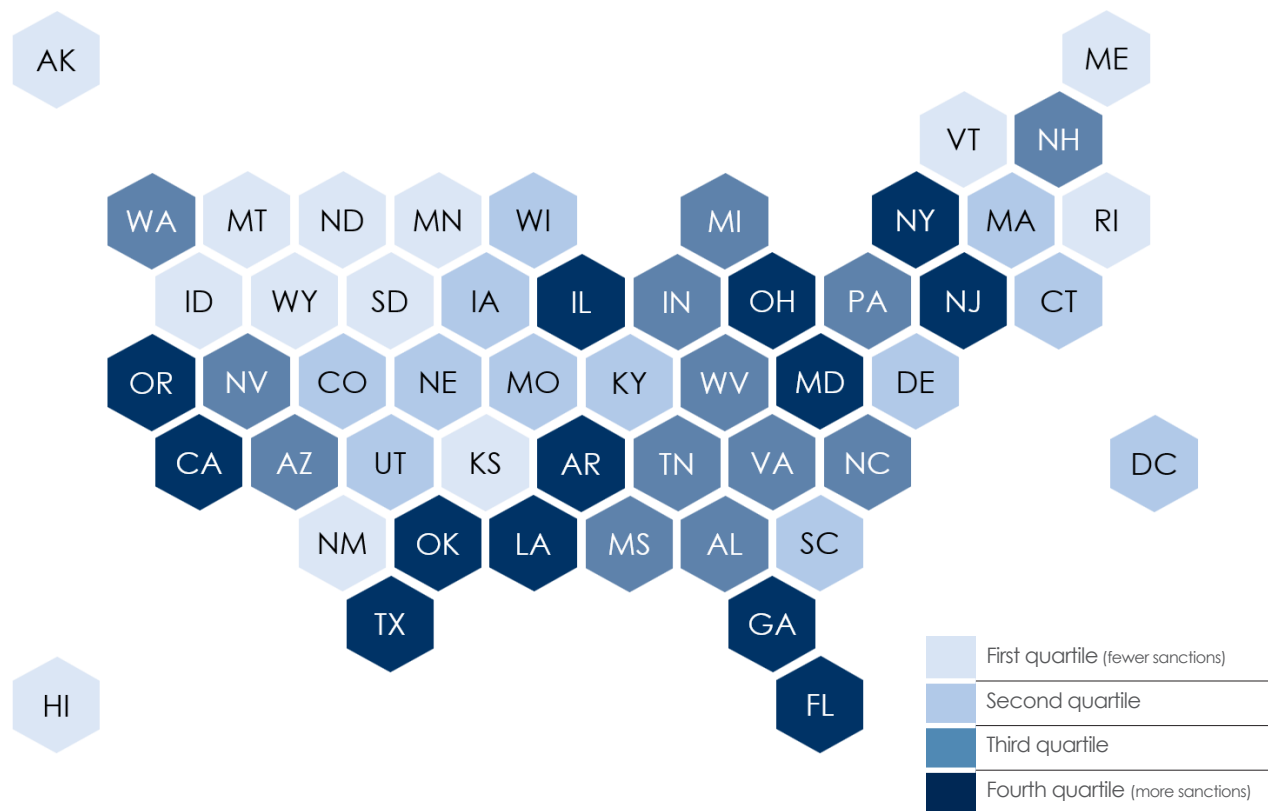
Re-entry and collateral sanctions

Parents face many legal barriers upon re-entry from imprisonment, also called collateral sanctions, that can hinder their financial security for decades, and thus their ability to provide for their children and families. Collateral sanctions can restrict:

- Employment and volunteering
- Education
- Occupational and professional licensure/certification
- Housing and residency
- Political and civic participation

These barriers can prolong many of the negative outcomes of parental arrest and incarceration on children, such as homelessness.⁵⁵ Ohio has a significantly high number of collateral sanctions compared to the rest of the country (displayed in figure 6). Several of these collateral sanctions are related to employment opportunities, limiting the chances for Ohioans to support their families and break generational cycles of poverty and incarceration.

Figure 6. **Number of collateral sanctions, by state, 2021**



Source: National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction, Collateral Consequences Inventory

What works to prevent and mitigate the harms of parental justice involvement?

In recent years, state policymakers in Ohio have increased their focus on supporting children and families. Some of these policy changes have addressed the intersection of family well-being and the criminal justice system.

HPIO conducted a structured review of policy changes that occurred at the state level from 2019–2023 (the 133rd, 134th and first half of the 135th General Assemblies). The review identified 171 policy changes from 2019 to 2023.⁵⁶ These policies include those that:

- Support family health and well-being
- Improve policing practice
- Divert individuals away from the justice system
- Support re-entry and reduce collateral sanctions

HPIO also reviewed the evidence of what works to prevent and mitigate the harms of parental justice involvement on children and families. Tables with identified evidence-informed strategies and examples of implementation in Ohio, as well as a list of major policy changes found in HPIO's review, are provided below. A complete list of identified policy changes, an analysis of policy trends and more information on process and methodology, is available in the [Detailed Policy Inventory](#).



Major policy changes

There are several notable policy changes identified in the policy inventory that were made over the past four years, including:

- **House Bill 263 (effective 2021, 133rd General Assembly [GA]).** Also titled the Fresh Start Act, the bill made several changes to how state licensing authorities (e.g., medical board, pharmacy board, department of commerce) balance criminal punishment with rehabilitation. These changes include adopting a list of specific criminal offenses that may disqualify an individual from obtaining an initial license and preventing licensing authorities from refusing to issue a license based solely on being charged with or convicted of a criminal offense or based on nonspecific qualifications (e.g., “lack of moral character”).
- **Senate Bill 288 (effective 2023, 134th GA).** The bill made several changes related to criminal records, including changes to the list of convictions that cannot be sealed and removes arrest or conviction for use or possession of marijuana from the list of disqualifying events for certain categories of service, employment, licensing or certification, among other revisions.
- **House Bill 33 (effective 2023, 135th GA).** The 2024-2025 State Operating Budget included several provisions impacting children with a justice-involved parent, such as adding trauma-informed services to the list of services on which schools can spend [disadvantaged pupil impact aid](#).
- **Second Chance Initiative (2020).** The Ohio Children of Incarcerated Parents Initiative (Ohio CIP) is a collaborative effort between the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS), Ohio University and local partners. Ohio CIP operates a cognitive-behavioral and skills-building program in partnership with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) called Creating Lasting Family Connections (CLFC) at eight correctional institutions. Ohio CIP has leveraged federal funding to build upon CLFC at three participating correctional institutions. The expansion, called the Second Chance Initiative, provides the opportunity to incorporate a virtual component to CLFC, allowing children and family members to participate alongside their incarcerated parent during five sessions.
- **Specialized Docket Subsidy Project (FY 2024).** The Specialized Docket Subsidy Project provides additional financial support to specialized dockets that meet certain criteria, including certification with the Ohio Supreme Court. 204 specialized dockets have received funding from the Project. The funds can be used for:
 - Personnel costs (e.g., salary, fringe benefits)
 - Substance use or mental health disorder treatment (except for certain offenses and programs)
 - Drug and alcohol testing (e.g., supplies)
 - Federal Drug Administration approved medication assisted treatment medications (e.g., Vivitrol, Suboxone)
 - Recovery supports (e.g., housing, food, clothing, transportation).

Family health and well-being

Figure 7 lists evidence-informed strategies that support child health and well-being and examples of how they have been implemented in Ohio. The strategies below address the health outcomes affected by parents being involved in the justice system (listed on pages 4-6).

Figure 7. **Family health and well-being strategies and examples**

What works	Examples of implementation in Ohio
<p>Mentoring programs. These programs help children build trust with adults and offer children guidance and support. For children with an incarcerated parent, mentors can help the child maintain and foster their relationship with their parent (e.g., assisting with communication, preparing for visits, processing emotions).⁵⁷</p>	<p>Student Wellness and Success Funds and Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid can be used by schools for mentoring programs. See HPIO's Strategies to prevent ACEs in Ohio: Building skills and strengthening connections to caring adults brief for more information on mentoring programs in Ohio.</p>
<p>Social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL programs teach and enhance critical life skills that enable children to handle stressful situations, manage emotions and tackle life's challenges. These programs mitigate the impacts of parental incarceration, including academic achievement and mental health.⁵⁸</p>	<p>Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid can be used by schools for SEL curricula to promote mental health and prevent substance use and suicide. See HPIO's Strategies to prevent ACEs in Ohio: Building skills and strengthening connections to caring adults brief for more information on SEL implementation.</p>
<p>Trauma-informed schools. Trauma-informed schools provide students with tiered programs that partner with law enforcement and children services and are particularly beneficial for students with an incarcerated parent.⁵⁹ Schools that are notified of a parent's incarceration can provide additional support to children to mitigate negative outcomes.⁶⁰</p>	<p>Student Wellness and Success funds and Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid can also be used by schools to support the mental health and well-being of students, including services that mitigate the impact of ACEs and trauma (e.g., low academic achievement).</p>

Policing practice

Figure 8 lists best practice for improving policing practices with examples of implementation in Ohio.

Figure 8. **Policing practice strategies and examples**

What works	Examples of implementation in Ohio
<p>Trauma-informed policing. Police play an important role in identifying those who have been exposed to trauma from crime, including children, and in protecting children present at a parent's arrest from the trauma of witnessing the arrest. Trauma-informed policing includes educating law enforcement on trauma and its effects on individuals, including children, reducing instances of traumatization and re-traumatization and connecting individuals who have experienced trauma to care.⁶¹ These policies can include guidance for protecting children present at a parent's arrest and implementing best practices, such as the Child Development-Community Policing program, to recognize trauma symptoms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ODRC and the Department of Public Safety (ODPS) updated their guidelines for working with third parties present at an arrest or minors who are justice involved (e.g., being interrogated, arrested). While these guidelines do not explicitly address children who are present at a parent's arrest, ODPS' guidelines encourage close coordination with children services. • Provisions regarding police interaction education and training were included in Senate Bill 68 (133rd GA). The bill required police officer training on interactions with civilians during traffic stops and de-escalation methods. It also required school districts to adopt a curriculum for high school students about interactions with police officers during traffic stops and other encounters.

Alternatives to incarceration and justice diversion

Figure 9 lists evidence-informed strategies to divert people away from the justice system with examples of how Ohio has implemented them.

Figure 9. Alternatives to incarceration and justice diversion strategies and examples

What works	Examples of implementation in Ohio
<p>Crisis intervention teams (CIT) and other pre-arrest diversion programs. Programs in which law enforcement officers give individuals accused of low-level criminal offenses the opportunity to engage in behavioral health intervention and/or community service in lieu of detention and trial, but accomplish the same goal of diverting people away from the criminal justice system.⁶² Some pre-arrest diversion programs do not involve law enforcement.</p>	<p>A training and technical assistance program, developed by Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED) with a grant from the state (using American Rescue Plan funding), will provide local communities with support as they develop and implement pre-arrest diversion and deflection programs (e.g., quick response teams). The grant will also be used by NEOMED to conduct research on enhancing the effectiveness of diversion and deflection programs.</p>
<p>Intervention in Lieu of Conviction (ILC) and other pretrial diversion programs. These programs allow people with a criminal offense to enter rehabilitation aimed at addressing the underlying causes of criminal behaviors to reduce recidivism and avoid the barriers associated with having a criminal record.⁶³ ILC offers court-ordered treatment and dismissal of all original charges upon successful completion of treatment to offenders with a documented history of mental illness and/or substance use.⁶⁴ ILC and similar programs are particularly effective for low-level, first-time offenders and for those with families.⁶⁵</p>	<p>House Bill 1 (133rd GA) expanded eligibility for Intervention in Lieu of Conviction to require a hearing for any case where drugs or alcohol were a factor in the underlying offense, except in cases of a felony sex offense.</p>
<p>Specialized dockets. A court session designed to provide defendants with clinically oriented interventions that reduce incidences of incarceration and give appropriate treatment alternatives to individuals with mental health and/or substance use problems. These dockets include drug courts and family treatment drug courts, mental health courts and dependency courts. The aim of specialized dockets is to address underlying behavioral health issues to produce better outcomes for participants.⁶⁶</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OhioMHAS created the Addiction Treatment Program in 2019. It provides funding to local alcohol, drug and mental health boards to support substance use disorder treatment and provide recovery supports, including child care, for people enrolled in a drug court. • The Specialized Docket Subsidy Project provides additional financial support to specialized dockets that meet certain criteria, including certification with the Ohio Supreme Court. Allowable costs for the Project are listed on page 8.

Re-entry supports and collateral sanctions

Figure 10 lists best practices from the literature to support parents and families during re-entry and after release with examples of how Ohio has implemented them.

Figure 10. Re-entry supports and collateral sanctions strategies and examples

What works	Examples of implementation in Ohio
<p>Family stability and parenting programs. Research shows that reentry programs, prison visitation guidance and parent programs can positively impact the children of incarcerated parents. Programs that connect parents and children while the parent is still incarcerated can maintain the relationship and facilitate reunification upon parent's release.⁶⁷ Programs that rehabilitate parent/child relationships are more beneficial at reunifying families and most effective when the parent/child relationship was positive prior to the parent's incarceration.⁶⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Second Chance Initiative allows children and family members to virtually join incarcerated parents who are participating in the Creating Lasting Family Connections program for five program sessions. • ODRC implemented guidance for programs to facilitate reunification between children and their incarcerated mother. The Ohio Commission on Fatherhood was charged with developing similar programs for incarcerated fathers.
<p>Re-entry programs. These types of programs support re-integration into the community, including making connections to services related to housing, employment and other supports to meet critical needs.⁶⁹ Including family members in these re-entry efforts as early as possible can lead to better outcomes for parents, including reduced recidivism.</p>	<p>Local re-entry coalitions promote the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated people, including assisting people with supporting their children and families. ODRC issued guidance for the creation of these coalitions.</p>
<p>Fair chance policies. These types of policies can increase employment by providing people who have a criminal record with the opportunity to reintegrate into the community and access housing, employment and education⁷⁰ Research recommends that background checks, specifically employment-related background checks, balance maintaining the integrity of certain professions and protecting workers from discrimination.⁷¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Bill 263 (133rd GA), made several changes to how state licensing authorities issue licenses and certifications to people with a history of justice involvement, including requiring each authority to draft a list of disqualifying offenses that prohibit someone from obtaining an initial license. • Re-entry employment grants. The 2022-2023 state operating budget allocated \$250,000 in each state fiscal year to ODRC to implement a grant program for nonprofit organizations that operate re-entry employment programs that provide job readiness training, transitional employment and other services and have been independently and rigorously evaluated and shown to reduce recidivism.

Federal and local decisions

Local governments oversee jails, county courts and local implementation of state and federal criminal justice policies and guidance. For example, local governments are responsible for developing a policy for working with youth to align with guidance from the Ohio Department of Public Safety. They also make decisions for their jurisdiction (e.g., municipality, county). The federal government issues criminal justice guidance and funding to state and local governments and oversees federal prisons. Thus, both local and federal government are valuable partners when making reforms to the criminal justice system.

What can Ohio do to give children and families the opportunities to thrive?

While Ohio has implemented or amended several policies since 2019 that align with the evidence for preventing and mitigating the impacts of parental justice involvement on children and families, there are additional opportunities for the state to accelerate its policy response. State and local policymakers and other public- and private-sector leaders can act on the following evidence-informed policy options to improve outcomes and advance equity in criminal justice and health outcomes.

► Foundational drivers of criminal justice involvement

State and local policymakers should consider the foundational drivers of criminal justice involvement, including racism and discrimination; income, employment and education; and housing and homelessness, when implementing and funding policies to support families and break generational cycles of incarceration and trauma.

Some additional considerations for integrating equity into policymaking include:

- Engaging with and listening to Ohioans who are most at risk of becoming involved in the justice system.
- Prioritizing strategies that have strong evidence of effectiveness for reducing disparities and/or strategies that have support in the communities most at risk of justice involvement.

► Family health and well-being

- ODRC facilities can connect individuals returning to the community and their family members with trauma-informed mental health treatment and other resources that promote healing and resilience.
- State and local policymakers and other stakeholders can expand and support local implementation of [Ohio Handle with Care](#), which notifies schools when a child has experienced an ACE (e.g., parental arrest or incarceration) and connects them with school-based supports.
- Schools can leverage remaining [Student Wellness and Success Funds](#) and [Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid](#) to provide allowable cost services to children who have an incarcerated parent.
- Children's health and other stakeholders can implement or expand implementation of strategies, such as medical-legal partnerships and mentoring programs, that prevent or mitigate the impact of ACEs, specifically incarceration of a household member, identified in HPIO's [A Strategic Approach to Prevent ACEs in Ohio](#).
- State and local policymakers can implement recommendations identified in HPIO's Addiction Evidence Project ([Phase 3: Law enforcement and the criminal justice system](#) and [Phase 4: Children, youth and families](#)) to prevent addiction-related incarceration and to support families.

► Policing practice

- ODPS can develop guidance for local law enforcement to implement policies and procedures for protecting children who are present at a parent's arrest. The International Association of Chiefs of Police developed a [model policy](#) in 2014 for safeguarding children and [a guide for police executives](#) in 2016.
- State agencies and local law enforcement can train law enforcement professionals on trauma-informed best practices and models for policing, such as [the Child Development-Community Policing program](#).

► Alternatives to incarceration and criminal justice diversion

- State policymakers can increase funding for the Addiction Treatment Program and Specialized Docket Subsidy Project so that all specialized dockets receive general revenue funding.
- State and local policymakers, including courts, can implement recommendations on Intervention in Lieu of Conviction from the Supreme Court of Ohio's [HB 1 Impact Study Report](#).
- State and local policymakers can provide support and technical assistance to behavioral health, law enforcement and other stakeholders to ensure high-quality implementation and expansion of mobile response and stabilization services and community service programs, including crisis response that does not include law enforcement, such as [Alternative Response to Crisis](#) (ARC) in Cincinnati and the [New Horizons Crisis Response Team](#) in Fairfield County.
- State and local policymakers can reduce the factors that make offenders ineligible for pretrial diversion, including the number of mandatory sentencing requirements in the Ohio Revised Code, which prevent the possibility of alternative sentencing programs and/or diversion to community corrections.
- The legislature can increase funding for the [Targeted Community Alternatives to Prison \(T-CAP\)](#) program so all Ohio counties can participate in the program.

► Incarceration

- The Ohio Children of Incarcerated Parents Initiative can leverage state and philanthropic funding for the evaluation and expansion of [Creating Lasting Family Connections](#) and the [Second Chance Initiative](#) to more prisons and other corrections facilities.
- ODRC and the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood can evaluate the effectiveness of prison-based family reunification and stabilization programming that they require and/or oversee, and the legislature can fund programs with demonstrated evidence of effectiveness for supporting family reunification.

► Re-entry and collateral sanctions

- ODRC facilities can connect people re-integrating into communities with local re-entry coalitions for support, including child reunification.
- ODRC and local governments can foster the development of local re-entry coalitions based on [guidance](#) from ODRC.
- The legislature can implement recommendations on record sealing from the Supreme Court of Ohio's [HB 1 Impact Study Report](#).
- Employers can implement best practices, such as taking into account whether an offense is related to the job position and evidence of applicant rehabilitation, identified in the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions](#).
- State policymakers can build upon the momentum of HB 263 of the 133rd General Assembly (Fresh Start Act) and look to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions](#) for best practices to guide future legislation regarding employment-related collateral sanctions.
- Criminal justice stakeholders can use public-private partnerships to expand employment, education and housing options for people post-release.

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