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# The Center on Parenting and Opioids

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## Service needs for corrections-involved parents with a history of problematic opioid use: A community needs assessment

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### INTRODUCTION

Incarcerated parents often face many challenges that make it difficult for them to raise their children effectively. Poverty, unstable housing, trauma, and abuse contribute to their challenging family situations and can increase the likelihood of problematic outcomes for children. When parents reenter their communities after incarceration, it can be an especially difficult time for both them and their children. In addition to caring for their child, parents may need to secure stable housing, search for a job, and reestablish relationships with their children.

For parents who have histories of problematic opioid use, this transition can be even more difficult. Often these parents were forced to detox without medical intervention or substance use treatment during prison. Without proper rehabilitation, they might struggle with opioid use after reentering their communities. In fact, immediately after release from prison, individuals with histories of problematic opioid use are at high risk of overdosing because of their lower drug tolerance combined with the inaccessibility of treatment. These risk factors can negatively impact them and their children.

This brief reports on the results from a recent community needs assessment. In this assessment, we sought to understand how to best support parents with histories of problematic opioid use who were reentering their communities after incarceration. The study used survey data from 48 community service providers who work with this population. The study investigated what the providers felt were the most pressing needs for these parents and the most critical topics to address in a short parenting intervention.

The results will be used to help inform the adaptation of a parenting intervention for corrections-involved parents with histories of problematic opioid use so that the parents can be supported in meaningful and effective ways.

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## KEY FINDINGS



### > Most important needs to address as reported by practitioners

Basic reentry needs including:

Housing | Mentors | Mental health support | Group therapy | Employment support

Problematic opioid use including:

Medication Assisted Treatment | Recovery plan | Understanding of addiction

Parenting specific needs including:

Parenting education & programs | Advocates | Childcare information | Family counseling

### > Most important topics to address in a parenting intervention

Problem solving | Impact of parents' addiction on children | Connecting/meeting children's needs

Managing impacts of trauma | Self-care | Mindfulness | Reentry process for families | Routines

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Reentry from prison into the community can be challenging for everyone, but particularly for parents with histories of problematic opioid use. Our findings provide valuable insight for the development of a treatment and prevention strategy to more effectively support these parents and their families. The surveyed community service providers highlighted the importance of addressing parenting with an eye towards each individual's reentry needs and context. Given the complex needs facing parents and families, this might be done most effectively through a collaborative approach across systems. Ideally, a reentry program for this population would begin supporting parents while they are still incarcerated. The program would provide key information, treatment, and transitional planning to ensure that each parent and their family have relevant tools, knowledge, and support before the parent leaves prison. Such assistance would then continue as the parents return and reintegrate into their communities and families. In doing so, parents would be better equipped to address both parenting and opioid use-related issues, leading to better outcomes for the parents, their children, and the community as a whole.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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