Genesee County's Project S.E.E.K.:
Longitudinal Study on Children of Incarcerated Parents

Evaluation Report

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Table of Contents

Project S.E.E.K. Executive Summary 4
Background 5
Methodology 8
Key Findings 10
Limitations 15
Recommendations 16
Conclusions 17
Next Steps 18
Project S.E.E.K. study team 19
Funding 20
Appendix 21

PROJECT S.E.E.K. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

From 1989-2004, Genesee County, Michigan was home to Project S.E.E.K. (Services to Enable and Empower Kids), the country's first and only comprehensive service provider and longitudinal study focused on children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers. With funding from the Ruth Mott Foundation, we conducted a pilot study that involved key informant interviews among a small sample of former Project S.E.E.K. participants who experienced parental incarceration as a minor child and their former caregivers. This project attempted to explore risk and resilience among the two populations to determine how Project S.E.E.K. influenced the life course of its participants.

Findings

Through key informant interviews with former Project S.E.E.K. participants, several important themes emerged.

- Incarceration matters—parental incarceration had a significant impact on the lives of the children and caregiver.
- Children and caregivers experienced mixed emotions, including disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss pertaining to their family member's incarceration.
- Communicating with an incarcerated parent was important but could be challenging.
- There was a conspiracy of silence where children were not given information on their parent's incarceration; some children also experienced shame and stigma pertaining to their parent's incarceration.
- Parental incarceration often led to financial instability for the remaining family members
- Children and caregivers reported a variety of experiences during their family member's incarceration and transition back into the community
- Project SEEK provided skill building and support that helped to minimize the negative effects of incarceration
- Respondents had a low to medium risk of involvement with the justice system.
- Long-term outcomes included both successes and challenges.

Recommendations

Study results lead to several recommendations for service providers, caregivers of children of incarcerated parents, the Department of Corrections, and other policy makers. For service providers and others interested in replicating the Project S.E.E.K. model, respondents suggested that programs use former Project S.E.E.K. participants, or children whose parents were incarcerated as mentors. Other suggestions include providing phone cards to participants so that cost of telephone calls did not prohibit communication with incarcerated family members, providing employment assistance and other tangible needs. Providers also should recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with children of incarcerated parents and their complicated feelings. Communication with incarcerated parents is important. We recommend that caregivers support children in writing letters, making phone calls and visiting their incarcerated parent. We also recommend that the Department of Corrections provide additional resources for family strengthening policies and practices within corrections facilities. Additionally, policy makers should provide more systemic support for mental health care and struggles with addiction, which may help families to avoid incarceration or prevent recidivism.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, national and local leaders have begun to recognize the issues and needs of children of incarcerated parents. Despite a rise in political will, we have very little data on what types of interventions best serve children and families impacted by incarceration. From the White House to the municipal level, government officials and service providers are clamoring for evidence-based research on best practices in this area. Fortunately, Genesee County is in a position to provide data that can enhance policy and practice not only in Michigan, but across the country. From 1989-2004, Genesee County was home to Project S.E.E.K. (Services to Enable and Empower Kids), the country's only comprehensive service provider and longitudinal study focused on children of incarcerated parents.

Project S.E.E.K. was an innovative prevention program designed to serve children with a parent in prison, developed by the Michigan Department of Community Health with the Department of Corrections and the Family Independence Agency. Initiated as a pilot demonstration in Genesee County in 1988, services were delivered by Mott Children's Health Center under contract with Genesee County Mental Health.

As the country's first (and only) comprehensive program and longitudinal study for children of incarcerated parents, the program was designed to address the risk and protective factors associated with delinquency and criminal behavior at both individual and family levels. The program operated for 15 years and evaluation data were collected for 8 years. Early evaluation reports were prepared by Michigan Department of Mental Health under the leadership of Betty Tableman and Dr. Cynthia Cameron. In 1999, a report from the Institute for Children, Youth and Families at Michigan State University demonstrated: less delinquent and antisocial behavior; fewer depressive symptoms; and reduced stress among Project SEEK participants compared to the control group.

The experimental design included 675 children, who at intake ranged from 0-10 years of age, and 215 families living in Genesee County. Each family was randomly assigned to control or services groups with data collection occurring at 6, 12, 24, 36 and 48 months. The study consisted of children with incarcerated fathers (85%) and mothers (15%) and, in some cases, both parents were incarcerated. Today, the majority of these children are between 16-25 years of age. This vulnerable population can provide meaningful information to inform policies and programs that address health, violence prevention, and early interventions.

Needs of children of incarcerated parents in the U.S.

Crime and punishment policies have soared over the past thirty years resulting in nearly 7 million people living in the United States who are under some form of correctional supervision. More than 2.7 million children in the U.S. have an incarcerated parent and approximately 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point.

Today, we have more children with an incarcerated parent in the U.S. than are diagnosed with autism or juvenile diabetes. In addition, the incarceration of a household member is included as one of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) in the groundbreaking study by Anda and Felitti, which links childhood trauma to an extensive list of negative health outcomes including higher rates of heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Despite this, parental incarceration and its effects on children and families have received relatively little attention from scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. In 2003, Eddy and Reid noted that one of the fundamental challenges with research focusing on this topic is that none of the relevant academic disciplines (i.e., child development, psychology, sociology, social work, criminology, nursing, public health) have identified children of incarcerated parents as a population of particular interest, and as such, this population has

remained largely "invisible." Ten years later, we have considerably more research on the topic, but relatively little describing long-term outcomes.

Additionally, we are also just beginning to see the extensive body of literature on resiliency and protective factors applied to this population. The resilience literature has consistently pointed to relationships, skills, and the ability to understand and make meaning of others and the world at large as key resilience factors. More specifically, a recent publication looking at resilience and children of the incarcerated identifies empathy, close relationships with caregivers, and the ability to manage teasing as protective factors. Project S.E.E.K. components provided opportunities for children to develop all of these protective factors.

Project S.E.E.K. is the country's only study that has the potential to provide data on this population from both a risk and resilience perspective. This can inform Genesee County, the State of Michigan and the U.S. regarding effective interventions and policies that will lead to improved outcomes for children, a reduction in crime, stabilized communities, and stronger families.

Children of incarcerated parents in Michigan and existing efforts

In Michigan, over 45,000 children have a father in state prison and at least 3,000 children have a mother in state prison. The burdens of incarceration are heavily concentrated on southeast Michigan families; each year, 49% of people released from prisons statewide return to Wayne and Genesee Counties. Confronting enormous need, initiatives are underway in Michigan to serve children of incarcerated parents and their families. These efforts can benefit from the study's findings on how to promote positive outcomes for families, and will provide institutional partnerships for acting on the findings:

- *Genesee County:* In Genesee County, home of Project S.E.E.K., Motherly Intercession provides academic and socio-emotional support to children of incarcerated parents as well as parenting support to incarcerated mothers.
- *Wayne and Washtenaw Counties:* The Soros Prison & Family Justice Project at University of Michigan Law School provides legal assistance to incarcerated parents and caregivers to reduce the likelihood that families will be permanently separated by a prison term. 2013 Soros Fellow Amanda Alexander is also building a Detroit chapter of Project WHAT!, a youth-led organization that offers organizing and advocacy training for children of incarcerated parents. In Wayne County, VIP Mentoring and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit provide specialized mentoring programs for children with an incarcerated parent.
- *Oakland County:* Oakland Livingston Human Services (OLHSA) runs a HeadStart Connections Program at Macomb Prison and Oakland County Jail, promoting positive interactions between parents and children, while maintaining and strengthening the bond between incarcerated or recently released parents and their school-aged children.
- *Cass County:* In southwest Michigan, the Cass County jail recently installed Skype stations to support communication between incarcerated parents and their children. Cass County also runs a Family Treatment Court, providing parents who have concurrent criminal and family court cases with substance abuse treatment, family therapy, and intensive case management.
- *Kent County:* The Guiding Light Mission is providing reunification assistance for formerly incarcerated men and their families. In collaboration with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Community Foundation, K-Connect has focused on children who come from multiple systems (foster care and juvenile justice) and have incarcerated parents.

These efforts across Michigan and within Genesee County can be greatly influenced by understanding the experiences of participants in Project S.E.E.K. and the impact on those who

participated in the comprehensive service delivery system. Ultimately, exploring relationship processes and resilience in children with incarcerated parents can lead to more effective interventions.

Purpose

With this project, we proposed a 15-year follow up study that would ultimately provide guidelines for best practices for serving children of incarcerated parents—here in Flint and in cities and counties across the nation. This large-scale study will be designed to identify differences between S.E.E.K. participants and the control group established for the original project evaluation. Long term outcomes such as incarceration, employment, education status, health status, and coping techniques will be explored. As a first step toward preparing to complete this longitudinal study, the current research project served as a pilot study and involved engaging a small sample of former participants who were included in Project S.E.E.K.'s initial longitudinal study. This project explored risk and resilience among children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers and answered the following questions:

1) How did participation in Project S.E.E.K. influence the life course of participants? What needs did the program meet, and what needs were left unmet?
2) What other factors influenced the life course of caregivers? What factors supported positive outcomes? What factors created greater risk?

Objectives

1) *To collect pilot data for the first phase of a 15-year follow-up study of Project S.E.E.K.* Current understanding of the factors that produce pro-social behavior and resiliency within this fragile population of children impacted by parental incarceration is limited. S.E.E.K. is the nation's most innovative and theoretically sound study that examines the problem of early adolescent delinquency prevention. The program was structured with the foresight to implement an experimental design that allows for strong evaluation.
2) *To produce preliminary guidelines for best practices in serving children/caregivers of incarcerated parents.* Currently there is no single evidence-based practice that addresses the unique needs, complexities and multiple risks factors for these children or their caregivers.
3) *To disseminate findings and establish local and state partnerships to build upon lessons learned.*

METHODOLOGY

Recruitment

We recruited two sets of former Project S.E.E.K. participants: adults who experienced parental incarceration as a minor child and their former caregivers to share their experiences in focus group and key informant interviews. We relied on advertisements and word of mouth to reach study participants. In order to ensure that individuals participated voluntarily and protect the privacy and confidence of former Project SEEK participants, we also required individuals who were interested in participating in the study to contact us via text, email or phone. We used the following means to recruit participants:

- Placed advertisements in area newspapers and church newsletters; posted flyers in local community centers and the lobbies of Social Services, and Public Health.
- Placed advertisements on social media via new Project S.E.E.K. Twitter and Facebook pages dedicated to recruiting participants.
- Raised awareness about the project through media (TV, radio, and print) interviews with Carol Burton, former Director of Project S.E.E.K.

When a potential participant contacted Project S.E.E.K. researchers directly via phone, text or email, the study team member read the recruitment script (Appendix) to describe the study and ask if they were interested in participating in the key informant interview. Participants who responded in the affirmative completed a screener to determine eligibility (Appendix).

Data Collection

Focus groups and key informant interviews are important ways to gather information on the lived experiences of children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers. Our intent was to conduct focus groups with caregivers and key informant interviews with the adult children, however we didn't receive enough caregiver participants to conduct focus groups, so both caregivers and adult children of incarcerated parents received key informant interviews.

An interview protocol comprised of instructions, resources and questions was developed in collaboration with the study team. Interview staff were trained by MPHI on how to conduct key informant interviews at a two-hour training in Genesee County. Follow up consultation and individual technical assistance was also made available to interviewers. To ensure confidentiality, participants' names were not associated with their interview responses. The interviews took 45 minutes and individuals received a $50 incentive for their participation.

We took several measures to ensure that participants were offered emotional support if needed. Participants were told that some questions might trigger old feelings or trauma, that they could stop the interview at any time, and that they did not have to answer any question they did not wish to answer. Participants were provided with a phone number, along with a list of service providers who work with families impacted by incarceration, that they could use if they experienced surprising feelings in the days following the interview that they wished to discuss with someone. Participants were also asked if the researchers could call to check in on them about how they were feeling. All interview and recruitment materials underwent a full Human Subjects and Privacy review by the Michigan Public Health Institute Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

This study included caregivers and adult children who experienced parental incarceration as a minor child (with one or more incarcerated parent), who were enrolled in Project S.E.E.K., assigned a case manager, and received Project S.E.E.K. services. We excluded adult children with incarcerated parents and their caregivers who were enrolled in the Project S.E.E.K. longitudinal study, but who were not assigned a case manager and did not receive the Project S.E.E.K

intervention; and caregivers and adult children who experienced parental incarceration as a minor child but were not enrolled in Project S.E.E.K.

Data Analysis

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, key informant interviews were not recorded and transcribed; however the interviewer took detailed notes on each question. Responses from each of the interviews were compiled and analyzed by the MPHI research team using qualitative analytic techniques over the course of five meetings. First, the research team read the key informant interview notes for a broad understanding of the impact of parental incarceration on the family and Project S.E.E.K. as a program. Next, the team individually developed a draft set of initial codes and definitions based on significant, reoccurring statements. The research team then met to discuss and refine the coding scheme. Next after reading the key informant interview responses again, the team coded the interview notes and extracted significant statements and phrases and formulated meanings for each statement. Significant statements were compiled and organized into common themes and clusters of themes. When disagreement occurred between researchers, clarification was achieved by referring to the original text. Data were discussed until consensus was achieved.

Community Forums

Results from the Project S.E.E.K. study were presented at two community forums on November 21, 2014 in Genesee County and Lansing, Michigan. Attendees included representatives from the Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services, Service Providers, and the Ruth Mott Foundation (appendix).

KEY FINDINGS

Although we anticipated recruiting 50 Project S.E.E.K. participants, we were only able to recruit 13 former participants. The Project S.E.E.K team conducted key informant interviews among 8 children (7 females and 1 male), and 5 caregivers (all mothers). Several themes emerged across our caregiver and child interviews. Our discussion of key findings is organized around these 9 themes.

Theme 1: Incarceration matters.

Prior to incarceration, several children had strong relationships with their parents; however, a number of those relationships were negatively impacted by incarceration. One child remembered his father picking him up from school every day prior to going to prison. After his dad went to prison, he stated "It was hard at that time, because you go through the years seeing them every day, then to not seeing him at all." Other children described their relationship with their incarcerated parent as limited or strained. "What was bad was that I never got to see him. We are not close like we should be." Several children remembered feeling depressed during their parent's incarceration because they didn't have both a mother and father to come home to. One child thought that their parent didn't know them the way that they should have because they were incarcerated. "[Remember] him sending a toy earlier but it was a baby toy so [I] was angry at him for not knowing [me]."

One child who was not close with their incarcerated parent prior to the incarceration, felt that prison didn't have an impact on their relationship. "I did not feel like it was different because dad was incarcerated. He had 12 kids….[I] don't feel dad would have taken care of [me] anyway or visited."

Theme 2: Mixed emotions on incarceration

The concepts of disenfranchised grief (loss that cannot be socially sanctioned, openly acknowledged or publicly mourned), and ambiguous loss (grief or distress associated with the loss of a person or relationship in which there is confusion or uncertainty about that person or relationship—in this case when the incarcerated parent is physically absent but psychologically present) were commonly noted throughout. Respondents experienced anger and abandonment around their family member's incarceration, but also felt conflicted because they still loved and missed their incarcerated relative. Several children felt a sense of separation because they were unable to receive love and affection from their incarcerated parent. Abandonment was prominent emotion experienced by a caregiver who indicated that her partner went to jail in the same day that their child was born.

Two children viewed parental incarceration from a positive lens. For parents who were constantly in and out of trouble, those children felt comforted by knowing where their parent was and that they were being taken care of. One child remarked that prison helped her mom become more stable. "When [she] got out, [she] wanted to focus more on us and make a better life…she learned more about me." Another child expressed relief because their parent wasn't around to abuse them. "Not having him around was better. He was abusive to me and mom." However, this same child still reported missed her incarcerated parent when he was gone. "But I missed him. When he was sober he would play with me."

Theme 3: Communicating and visiting with the incarcerated parent was important but could be challenging.

For most, visits allow children and caregivers to form a bond or maintain the bond they had before incarceration. Many children and caregivers felt that communicating and spending time with their parent while they were incarcerated was beneficial. One respondent said that since her father has a life prison sentence, she would have never known who her father was or even what he looked like had it not been for the prison visits. Another respondent described visits with her mother as opportunities for her to "learn more about me." Through these visits, she realized that she had a lot in common with her mother.

Even with the perceived value of visitation, many children viewed prison visits with mixed emotions. Many said they felt happy or excited to be able to visit their parent but were also sad or angry because the parent was not able to come home or because they were not able to interact with them the way they wanted. One daughter said she was often nervous about seeing her father during visits because she felt "weird being around people in jail." Another child said that it was hard seeing her father in prison clothes. One child said that there were some good moments when visiting her father but other times he would "be mean" and they would leave.

Several barriers to prison visits were noted throughout the interviews. One caregiver revealed that she was unwilling to allow her daughter to visit her father. Two children indicated that their parents had their visiting privileges revoked. One child said that during the visits, he felt like the security guards were "watching your every move." Both children and caregivers also indicated that being processed for the visit made them feel uncomfortable. One caregiver described the prison guards searching her child's diaper prior to each visit.

Mail and phone calls were an important form of communication between the incarcerated parent and children and caregivers. Most interviewees reported maintaining contact with the incarcerated parent through mail, phone calls, or both. Many of the children recall receiving letters or birthday cards from their parent or writing letters or drawing pictures and sending them to their parent in prison. One caregiver reports that when she received calls and letters from her incarcerated husband that "things feel much better in life." One daughter stated that her dad, calls every now and then to check on her and that they have a positive relationship despite his long prison sentence.

Communication with the incarcerated parent could also be difficult because of the expense of phone calls, transportation to and from the prison, and permission to visit the incarcerated parent.

<u>Theme 4: Conspiracy of silence, shame and stigma</u>

In all cases, the child knew that his/her parent was in prison, however, the children received few details. Most children were told that their parent made a bad choice or was getting their life together, while some children were not given an explanation as to why their parent was gone or what being in prison meant. One daughter recalled that she didn't know her dad was in prison until she visited him in jail, and didn't know what jail was until she saw it for the first time. Several children recalled the shame and stigma of having to deal with others outside their family knowing about or discussing their parents' incarceration.

Loyalty conflicts were present in at least one household. One caregiver recalls that when her daughter would ask about her dad, she would tell her daughter not to worry about her dad because she was there for her. In some cases, the relationship between the mother and father was a barrier for the child-parent communication. One child reported being frustrated to hear her father talk about her mother and that she wished that she could have had visitation with her incarcerated father without her mother present. One caregiver was unwilling to allow her daughter to visit her incarcerated father and reported that she "accepted his phone calls sometimes."

<u>Theme 5: Parental incarceration often led to financial instability for the remaining family members</u>

For some families parental incarceration increased financial insecurity, but for others it alleviated the problem of family funds being used for drugs. In several interviews, the respondents stated that they moved residences or schools at least once during their family member's incarceration. One caregiver mentioned a period of homelessness. Another child said that they (her mother, brothers, and herself) were evicted at some point because their mother lost both of her jobs. One caregiver respondent said she and her family moved twice, both times in the same neighborhood, but the children did not have to transfer schools because of the move.

For one child finances stabilized during their parent's incarceration. "Not having him around was better. He was on drugs and caused problems. Money problems were gone when he was gone. We didn't have to hide money anymore because of his habit." Another child stated that moving to a different school made her feel as if she had started a "new life" because the kids in her new school didn't know her mom had been incarcerated.

Theme 6: Children and caregivers reported a variety of experiences during their family member's incarceration and transition back into the community

For some children there were experiences of witnessing drug use in the home during and after their parent's incarceration. One child reported experiencing sexual abuse while her parent was incarcerated, and another experienced physical abuse at the hands of their incarcerated parent. Several children also experiencing bullying during their parent's incarceration—although it's unclear if this was due to parental incarceration.

Caregivers experienced the loss of a partner and second parent. One respondent stated that her partner's transition into the prison system was hard because he went in the same day that their child was born. Another caregiver discussed her dreams of raising her daughter in a two-parent household.

Reentry into the prison system was noted several times throughout the interviews, but it was unclear if reentry was due to technical violations or due to re-engaging in criminal behavior. In one caregiver interview, the respondent stated her partner was in and out of jail so much that she never told her children why he was in prison. In other child interviews, children echoed the same thoughts and that included their once incarcerated parent back-and-forth to prison, and the impact on their daily routine. One child revealed that she was still afraid that her mother would relapse again, as she did two years previous.

Theme 7: Project S.E.E.K. provided skill building and support that helped minimize the negative impacts of incarceration.

Most of the respondents felt that Project SEEK played a large part in their ability to cope both during their family member's incarceration and now. One child said that Project S.E.E.K helped her learn what to avoid such as drug use and criminal activity. Additionally, the same respondent (like many others) stated that attending group sessions at the Mott Children's Health Center (MCHC) through Project S.E.E.K. helped them deal with the stress, frustration, and isolation they experienced while their loved one was incarcerated. Another child said that she gained other friends with incarcerated parents who she was able to discuss her frustrations with.

The case worker who conducted the home visits was the single Project SEEK resource that caregivers found to be the most helpful to them. Other resources included the support groups, stress management, help with transportation, assistance with visitation documents, tangible needs, gift cards, and referrals to other sources like church or counseling. Many of the caregivers looked to the case worker as an adviser and valued the advice they received from them. They also spoke of the encouragement they received from the case worker that helped them get through the difficult

times during their partner's incarceration. One caregiver recalled the help she received from the case worker as a young mother and stated that she "soothed her" and that "time went faster" when she was around. Another caregiver stated that with the help and encouragement from the case worker she believed she could "do this without crumbling."

Not only did the caregivers bond with the case workers but several children reported on the special relationship they had with them. Several of the children recalled the case workers transporting them to visit their incarcerated parent or taking them out for activities. One child considered the case worker to be "like a mother to me" and recalled several instances when she provided support and encouragement to her and to her ailing grandmother who was caring for her and her siblings while her mother was incarcerated. One respondent said that when her mother was released from prison, the Project S.E.E.K. staff helped her become a better parent by assisting with employment, personal transportation, and housing. By achieving these tasks, the mother was able to form a better bond with children who formerly had some resentment toward her. One respondent recalled seeing a Project S.E.E.K. case worker in the grocery store several years later while in the grocery store and told her that he "would never forget her." Project S.E.E.K. case workers also provided referral services. One respondent and her child received grief services after her husband passed away.

Activities and group sessions offered by the Project S.E.E.K program were very helpful to several respondents. Specific activities mentioned included board games, African dance classes, swimming, going to movies, going on trips, going out for meals, learning activities and help with homework. Many of the children stated that the activities kept them busy and took their mind off of their parent being gone. Another benefit of the activities was that it allowed the children to learn and excel in school because case workers "would stay on you about doing your homework." Many of the children credit group sessions with teaching them how to interact and get along with others. Children felt that the group support in Project S.E.E.K. was a place where they could be listened to, ask questions, and not be judged. Several children stated that their group was like a family to them. One child praised group sessions for giving her the confidence to speak in front of a group at her school. Another child said that group was great because it was "all equal kids going through the same things" and that it helped her know that she "was not the only one in [her] community with problems."

Other extracurricular activities that helped participants cope included the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program and church groups.

Several caregivers reported that phone calls and visits were limited due to expense. In many cases, Project S.E.E.K. facilitated visitation with the incarcerated family member by providing transportation and many children recalled a Project S.E.E.K. case worker driving them to visit their parent. One caregiver stated that without the help of the case worker, visits would not have happened. In some instances where the caregiver chose to avoid contact with the incarcerated parent, the child was able to visit the parent with a Project S.E.E.K. case worker.

<u>Theme 8: Low to medium risk of involvement with the justice system.</u>

Two children had their own minor experiences with the justice system. In one respondent interview, the child said that she had been arrested once in her lifetime for fighting. Another respondent indicated that she had a run-in with the law when she was caught in a stolen vehicle with her friends but states that she did not receive any legal punishment from the action.

<u>Theme 9: Outcomes included successes and challenges.</u>

Adult children experienced a myriad of successes both educationally and occupationally. Several children are currently in high school or taking college courses. Careers varied from

working in fast food to working as a nail technician and in clothing stores. The children had several triumphs that they were proud of. Children who reported never being involved with law enforcement viewed that as a triumph. Other triumphs include graduating from high school on time, despite having a child; helping siblings or other family members out; doing well in athletics and in school; having a job; and having a car.

All children discussed future aspirations such as opening their own business, or even just being able to live on their own "I want to have a good house, money, food for my child; live alone with [my] daughter." But all express monetary struggles. One who received public assistance remarked "Money from DHS is only rent money, not enough for other life [essentials]." In addition to financial instability, other challenges include housing insecurity, and feeling depressed. Several children reported having employment issues and the majority of the children that we spoke with became parents during their teenage years. Each of the teen parents discussed how difficult being a teenage parent was and most felt that they did not have enough support from their significant others and family members. Despite the difficulty of being a teen parent, many children viewed their child as motivation them to do better with their own life.

A few respondents currently struggle with self-medication through the use of drugs or alcohol to cope with the stress experienced during the incarcerated relative's time in prison. One child said that she sometimes consumed alcohol as a coping technique, and that once she began drinking, she would often go over the limit. Another child stated that she used pills once but thought of her daughter and decided that form of self-medication was not worth it. At least two other respondents said that while they had never tried drugs or alcohol, they witnessed an adult in their life using stimulants (crack/cocaine) or other recreational drugs.

LIMITATIONS

The results of this report are subject to at least three limitations. The first is that we were limited in our ability to draw conclusions about all participants in the Project S.E.E.K program due to the small sample size. Over 600 children and caregivers participated in Project S.E.E.K., however we were only able to interview 13. Next, we were unable to compare the outcomes of Project S.E.E.K. participants to those of a control group, so we are not able to definitively say whether or not Project S.E.E.K. improved the long-term outcomes of its participants. Finally there was a plethora of historical data collected during the Project S.E.E.K. study period that we were unable to access, We hope that we will be able to access this historical information during the next study round.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the limitations, there are several recommendations for service providers, caregivers of children of incarcerated parents, the Department of Corrections, and other policy makers that emerged from our study data. For service providers and others interested in replicating the Project S.E.E.K. model, respondents suggested that programs use former Project S.E.E.K. participants, or children whose parents were incarcerated as mentors. Other suggestions include offering the program in schools, providing phone cards to participants so that cost of telephone calls did not prohibit communication with incarcerated family members, providing employment assistance, and other tangible needs. Service providers should also recognize that there is no one size fits all approach to dealing with children and their complicated feelings. Making room for complicated feelings avoids assuming that a child has an entirely positive or entirely negative opinion on their parent's incarceration.

Communication with incarcerated parents is important. We recommend that caregivers support children in writing letters, making phone calls, and visiting their incarcerated parent. We also recommend that the Department of Corrections provide additional resources for family strengthening policies and practices within corrections facilities. This includes, but is not limited to, jail/prison visit programs that offer a supportive case worker who knows the child and can serve as an escort and help process the experience; programs that allow for extended socialization time/interaction between the kids and their incarcerated parent, and; visiting areas and procedures that consider the needs of children. An example of this is the Oakland Livingston Human Service's program that includes a HeadStart lesson during the visit at the prison, and extended "socialization" visits where children can have extended visits with games and sports. We also recommend that the Department of Corrections provide materials that give caregivers information about visiting procedures, rules, and transportation options on their website; tools to minimize confusion by helping them to tell the truth and answer children's questions about incarceration honestly, and; programs that aids incarcerated parents with understanding their children's needs.

Additionally, policy makers should provide more systemic support for mental health care and struggles with addiction, which may help families to avoid incarceration or prevent recidivism.

CONCLUSIONS

There were several themes that emerged from our key informant interviews and community forums. Parental incarceration affects children. Children are dependent on their parents and caregivers to give them information and support; lack of this support can create emotional distress for their child. Children need other caring adults to *join* with their caregivers and incarcerated parents to provide support during the difficult time of incarceration. Communication and visits with the incarcerated parent are helpful but can be challenging. Additional supports are needed to both prepare children and caregivers for visits and other communication means (e.g., phone calls). Supports are also needed in the prison system to ensure that visits are comfortable for both the child and caregiver. Few children had criminal justice involvement or substance abuse issues. Finally, Project S.E.E.K. provided the people, skills and tools for coping that seemed to increase resilience during the study period, but a larger sample size and a control group are needed to determine if Project S.E.E.K, had the desired long term outcomes. Other unanswered questions pertained to preparing a child for prison visits, and gender differences in study outcomes.

NEXT STEPS

The Project S.E.E.K. study team, developed a series of next steps that we hope to pursue in the coming months. We will continue to explore funding options for these next steps and welcome any suggestions on how to move this agenda forward.

1. Use media campaigns to increase public awareness of the impact of parental incarceration on children and families.
2. Establish local and statewide partnerships and coalitions to build upon lessons learned. Partnerships are beginning to grow and strengthen among those who serve children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers. Several of these partnerships are a direct result of our community forums to communicate the results of the Project S.E.E.K. pilot study. Our targets for partnerships and dissemination include public health, prison/jail and law enforcement officials, health and human services providers, early childhood educators and providers, public schools and health care administrators. There is a need for on-going training that addresses this population from arrest through reentry and the examination of programs and policies that may impact children and youth negatively and those that promote resiliency in children.
3. Improve policies of both the Department of Corrections and service providers who interact with children of the incarcerated.
4. Increase and enhance service delivery for children of incarcerated parents (includes replication studies).
5. Further the research and evaluation agenda to ensure that programs and interventions for children of incarcerated parents are evidence-based.

PROJECT S.E.E.K. STUDY TEAM

Carol F. Burton (Project Director and Principal Investigator) is advisor for Sesame Street's "Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration" and is a White House Champion of Change for her outstanding work on behalf of children of incarcerated parents. Currently she is the Principal Consultant and CEO for JEWELD Legacy Group and Coordinator of Alameda County Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership. For 13 years, she served as the Project Director and Principal Investigator of S.E.E.K. at Mott Children's Health Center in Flint, MI. Ms. Burton will have responsibility for the overall direction of the project. She will oversee the recruitment of activities, data collection, and analysis and lead instrument development. She will also conduct interviews and focus groups as needed. Ms. Burton will lead dissemination efforts, community presentations, and production of the final report.

Dr. Crystal Tyler (Co-Principal Investigator) is the Director of the Center for Child and Family Health at MPHI. She has several years of experience in research and program evaluation in many areas of public health. Dr. Tyler will be responsible for the evaluation plan and the analysis of the data. Specific responsibilities include the design and content for the data collection instruments, determining the protocol for administration of the instruments, overseeing the data entry and management of the data, conducting statistical analysis, and preparing summaries of findings for written and oral presentations.

Ann Adalist-Estrin (Consultant: Assessment Tools, Qualitative Interviews, Dissemination and Analysis) is Director of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Rutgers University Camden, New Jersey. Under Ann's leadership, NRCCFI has provided consultation to government and non-government agencies and community programs in 47 states. Ms. Adalist-Estrin will help design and then conduct qualitative interviews and provide clinical consultation during the development of assessment tools and focus group questions. She will assist in recruitment and dissemination through the NRCCFI's website and provide input on the final report.

Amanda Alexander (Participating Investigator & Project Assistant) is a Soros Justice Fellow at the University of Michigan Law School where she has launched a Prison & Family Justice Project to serve Michigan families divided by incarceration. Ms. Alexander will lead recruiters' efforts, co-facilitate focus groups, contribute to data collection and analysis, and coordinate the recruitment of young adult and caregiver study participants. She will assist in writing the final report.

Deborah Reynolds (Interviewer) is responsible for responding to calls and inquiries from potential participants, screening participants and conducting interviews after participants have been assigned by a PI or consultant.

Dorothy Sanders (Interviewer) is responsible for responding to calls and inquiries from potential participants, screening participants and conducting interviews after participants have been assigned by a PI or consultant.

Diane Wing (Research Scientist) is responsible for coding and analyzing focus group and key informant interview data, and assisting with the final report and presentation.

Taylor Flynn (Research Assistant) is responsible for coding and analyzing focus group and key informant interview data, assisting with the final report and presentation, and other administrative tasks as needed.

FUNDING

Funding for the Genesee County's Project SEEK – Longitudinal Study on Children of Incarcerated Patents (grant # 1963) was provided by the Ruth Mott Foundation.

APPENDIX

Caregiver Script to determine participation in Focus Groups or Interviews

Three screening questions were used during the invitation phone call to help us get a sense for whether or not someone participated in the project SEEK study. Since individuals may have a difficult time remembering the answers to many of the below questions, we will take a response to either of the below questions to indicate that they actually participated in the study.

Hello, my name is _____, is this _____? Thank you for contacting us about Project SEEK via _____ (email or telephone)—we received your message and are returning your (call). As you likely know, Project SEEK was a program of the Mott Children's Health Center that provided services to children with a parent in prison. Project SEEK closed in 2004 but, while it operated, it provided services including prison visits, bus passes, fun activities for children, support groups, referrals for tutoring, and more. Do you remember Project SEEK?

Well, I am working with the Michigan Public Health Institute to learn more about the experiences of parents and caregivers raising children with a parent in prison. If you participated in Project SEEK, we want to learn more about your experience. We want to understand whether Project SEEK was helpful to you and use the information we gather to decide whether this kind of program is useful for parents and caregivers. I'm going to ask you a few questions to determine if your family participated in project SEEK.

1. Have you ever cared for a child whose parents were incarcerated?
2. Who was your Project SEEK case manager?
3. What year(s) did you participate in the program?
4. Did you participate in Project Seek activities? If so, which ones?
    a. If they did not participate in Project SEEK: Do you know anyone in the Genesee County area who cared for a child whose parents were incarcerated? If so, can you ask them to give us a call or email us?
    b. If they participated in project SEEK: We will be holding focus groups and interviews about Project SEEK later this week (month). Focus group or interview participants will receive dinner and a $50 gift card.
5. Are you interested in sharing your experiences with us?
    a. If yes: We have focus groups scheduled at the Christ Enrichment Center on _____ which date works best for you?
    b. If no: Would you prefer a private interview? We can schedule an interview at your convenience. What date and time works best for you?

Ok. We are confirming that you will attend the focus group on _____ at _____ (date and time) or that you will meet with _____ (staff) for an interview at the Christ Enrichment Center on _____. If no, thank you for your time.

We will follow up with a confirmation phone call or text just prior to your scheduled focus group/interview day/time. Would you prefer a phone call or text [Confirm number]?

If date has been confirmed: Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you and learning more about how to improve programs for children with incarcerated parents and their caregivers.

Focus Group Reminder Texts

- Two days prior to event:
  This is a reminder that we are looking forward to speaking with you on [Date/Time] at [Location]. Please reply if this day/time no longer works for you.

- Day of event:
  This is a reminder that we are looking forward to speaking with you at [Time] today at [Location]. Please reply if you are no longer able to make it.

Focus Group Reminder Phone Call

- Two days prior to event:
  Hello, my name is _____, is this _____? Hi I'm calling in reference to Project SEEK. This is a reminder that we are looking forward to speaking with you on [Date/Time] at [Location]. Will this day/time still work for you?
  - If yes: Great! See you/talk to you then.
  - If no: Is there another day/time that works for you?

- Day of event:
  Hello, my name is _____, is this _____? Hi I'm calling in reference to Project SEEK. This is a reminder that we are looking forward to speaking with you at [Time] today at [Location]. Will this day/time still work for you?
  - If yes: Great! See you/talk to you later.
  - If no: Is there another day/time that works for you?

Messages will not be left on landlines or cell phones in order to minimize the potential for a breach of confidentiality.

Adult Child with Incarcerated Parent Script to determine participation in Interviews

Hello, my name is _____, is this _____? Thank you for contacting us about Project SEEK via _____ (email or telephone)—we received your message and are returning your (call). As you likely know, Project SEEK was a program of the Mott Children's Health Center that provided services to children with a parent in prison. Project SEEK closed in 2004 but, while it operated, it provided services including prison visits, bus passes, fun activities for children, support groups, referrals for tutoring, and more. Do you remember Project S.E.E.K.?

Well, I am working with the Michigan Public Health Institute to learn more about the experiences of children with a parent in prison. If you participated in Project SEEK, we want to learn more about your experience. We want to understand whether Project SEEK was helpful to you and use the information we gather to decide whether this kind of program is useful for youth whose parents were incarcerated. I am now going to ask you a few questions to determine if you participated in Project SEEK.

1. Did you have a parent who was incarcerated while you were growing up?
2. Who was your case manager for Project SEEK?
3. Did you participate in Project SEEK activities? If so, which ones?

We will be holding interviews about Project SEEK later this week (month). Focus group or interview participants will receive a $50 gift card.

Are you interested in sharing your experiences with us?
If yes: We can schedule an interview at your convenience. What date and time works best for you?

Ok. We are confirming that you will meet with _____ (staff) for an interview on _____.

If no, thank you for your time.

We will follow up with a confirmation phone call just prior to your interview day/time.

If date has been confirmed: Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you and learning more about how to improve programs for children with incarcerated parents and their caregivers.

Key Informant Interview Reminder Texts

Two days prior to event:
This is a reminder that we are looking forward to speaking with you on [Date/Time] at [Location]. Please reply if this day/time no longer works for you.

Day of event:
This is a reminder that we are looking forward to speaking with you at [Time] today at [Location]. Please reply if you are no longer able to make it.

Focus Group Reminder Phone Call

Two days prior to event:
Hello, my name is _____, is this _____? Hi I'm calling in reference to Project SEEK. This is a reminder that we are looking forward to speaking with you on [Date/Time] at [Location]. Will this day/time still work for you?

If yes: Great! See you/talk to you then.
If no: Is there another day/time that works for you?

Messages will not be left on landlines or cell phones in order to minimize the potential for a breach of confidentiality.

Key Informant Interview Sign In and Incentive Tracking Sheet

The following sign in sheet will be used to record participant attendance and incentive distribution.

Participant Name	Date	Time Arrived	Time Departed	Incentive Received	Incentive Number	Participant Initials

Caregiver Participant Interview

1. Review Purpose, Objective, and Scope of Interview

I am working with the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI). MPHI has begun a study to determine how your participation in Project S.E.E.K. helped you as a caregiver, if at all. We would like to understand the ways in which this program was helpful or supportive to caregivers of children with incarcerated parents. This information we gather today will be used to determine what things make a program like Project S.E.E.K. useful, and what improvements could be made. Your answers to our questions will help us with this.

I am [name], a [job title, credentials, etc.] and will interview you based on your experience in Project S.E.E.K. and ask questions on how you believe the program helped you as a caregiver, and how you think the program could be improved to help other caregivers of children with a dad or mom in prison or jail.

I will be taking notes during the interview, but everything you say will remain confidential, meaning your name and any other identifying information will not be recorded or shared. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer and can stop the interview at any time. The interview will take about [time] minutes. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Okay, first I'd like for you to take a couple of minutes to read this consent form. Please let me know if you have any questions. If you are okay with everything you've read, please sign.

Project SEEK
In Person Key Informant Interview Consent Form

The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the experiences of individuals who participated in the Project SEEK program, and to determine if programs like this are useful. This research is funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation and is carried out by the Michigan Public Health Institute.

We are asking you to consider volunteering to participate in an interview that will approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview questions will ask you about the impact of the Project SEEK program on your life, and about the impact that incarceration had on you and your family.

You may not benefit directly from participating in the interview. However, by participating, the information that you and others provide will help us gain a better understanding of the psychological state and harms children experience while their parent is incarcerated. Having this knowledge will assist in creating methods to intervene with children of incarcerated parents and encourage programs and studies that will keep parents out of prison.

We would also like permission to contact you in the future, if the need for more information pertaining to your experience as a Project SEEK participant arises.

Participating in this research project poses minimal risk to you. You may experience some loss of confidentiality since you are sharing your experiences with an interviewer. You may also experience possible discomfort in answering questions about your experiences with program. If there are any questions you do not want to answer, you don't have to: you can stop the interview at any time. If you experience some discomfort during the interview, we have a list of mental health resources that will be provided at the end of the interview.

All information collected for this project will be kept strictly confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The notes from your interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office and your name won't appear on the typewritten version of the interview. Only members of the evaluation team and MPHI officials who make sure that research is being done properly will have access to this form and to the typed version of your interview. Your identity will not be revealed in any reports of the evaluation findings. The information from this interview will be summarized and combined with other participants involved in the project. In some instances, we may use your quotes. The source of quotations will never be revealed.

Participation is voluntary. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits if you refuse to answer specific questions. However, if you end your interview early, you will not be eligible to receive your incentive.

If you have questions about this project, please contact Crystal Tyler, at 517-324-7393. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Michigan Public Health Institute Institutional Review Board at 517-324-7387.

Do you have any questions?

Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this research project?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Do you voluntarily consent to be contacted again by the Project SEEK research team?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Would you like us to mail or email you a copy of this consent form for your records?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Please Complete the following information:

Participant Name (Print)_____

Participant Signature _____

Date of Interview: _____ / _____ / _____

Interviewer Name (Print): _____

Project SEEK
Phone Key Informant Interview Consent Form

The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the experiences of individuals who participated in the Project SEEK program, and to determine if programs like this are useful. This research is funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation and is carried out by the Michigan Public Health Institute.

We are asking you to consider volunteering to participate in a phone interview that will approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview questions will ask you about the impact of the Project SEEK program on your life, and about the impact that incarceration had on you and your family.

You may not benefit directly from participating in the interview. However, by participating, the information that you and others provide will help us gain a better understanding of the psychological state and harms children experience while their parent is incarcerated. Having this knowledge will assist in creating methods to intervene with children of incarcerated parents and encourage programs and studies that will keep parents out of prison.

We would also like permission to contact you in the future, if the need for more information pertaining to your experience as a Project SEEK participant arises.

Participating in this research project poses minimal risk to you. You may experience some loss of confidentiality since you are sharing your experiences with an interviewer. You may also experience possible discomfort in answering questions about your experiences with program. If there are any questions you do not want to answer, you don't have to: you can stop the phone interview at any time. If you experience some discomfort during the interview, we have a list of mental health resources that will be provided at the end of the call.

All information collected for this project will be kept strictly confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The notes from your interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office and your name won't appear on the typewritten version of the interview. Only members of the evaluation team and MPHI officials who make sure that research is being done properly will have access to this form and to the typed version of your interview. Your identity will not be revealed in any reports of the evaluation findings. The information from this call will be summarized and combined with other participants involved in the project. In some instances, we may use your quotes. The source of quotations will never be revealed.

Participation is voluntary. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits if you refuse to answer specific questions. However, if you end your interview early, you will not be eligible to receive your incentive.

If you have questions about this project, please contact Crystal Tyler, at 517-324-7393. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Michigan Public Health Institute Institutional Review Board at 517-324-7387.

Do you have any questions?

Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this research project?
☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you voluntarily consent to be contacted again by the Project SEEK research team?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Would you like us to mail or email you a copy of this consent form for your records?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Please Complete the following information:

Participant Name (Print)_____

Participant Signature _____

Date of Interview: _____ / _____ / _____

Interviewer Name (Print): _____

Caregiver Interview Questions

1. I told you a little bit about myself. Please tell me a little bit about yourself.
   Probe:
   a) How many children do/did you care for?
   b) What do you do for a living?

2. When children experience stress and difficulties in life, they are often protected by families and caring adults that they trust and feel nurtured by. Providing this kind of environment consistently for children with a dad or mom in prison can be a challenge. Can you tell me what it was like for you as a caregiver of a child with a dad or mom in prison?
   Probe:
   a) What did you find most difficult?
   b) What did you find most rewarding?

3. Did the child you care for know that their dad or mom was in prison?
   Yes ( ) No ( )
   If yes:
   a) How did they know? Were they told by you? If so, what did you tell the child and when?
   If no:
   b) Why did you decide not to tell the child you cared for that their dad or mom was in prison?

4. Now I would like to ask you questions about Project S.E.E.K. What do you remember about this program?
   Probe:
   a) How often did a home visitor come by, if at all?
   b) What type of support groups did you attend that Project S.E.E.K offered or referred you to?
   c) What type of assistance did you receive with visitation with the child and his or her parent?
   d) What type of assistance did you receive when the parent returned home, if at all?

5. In what ways did Project S.E.E.K help or support your role as a caregiver?
   Probe:
   a) Of these ways, what was the most helpful tool that Project S.E.E.K. used to support your role?

6. One of the goals of Project S.E.E.K was to encourage and support a protective family environment for the child. Do you believe that Project S.E.E.K. helped you with this?
   Yes ( ) No ( )
   If yes:
   a) Why do you believe this?
   b) What specifically do you think helped you the most?
   If no:
   a) Why do you believe this?
   b) What do you think could have been done differently?

These questions can be asked more generally in focus groups but in the interviews can probe more deeply into life stressors that caregivers mention in question 1

II. Reflecting back on the impact that the incarceration /involvement in the justice system, of the parent of the child in your care, had on you and your family .

1. What were some of the life stressors or major challenges that you remember experiencing during this time
2. Did you have to change residence/move, at any time while you were caring for the child?
3. How many times? How far away?
4. If yes, did those moves mean that the child in your care had to change schools?
5. Did anyone in the family need to change their jobs or work schedules or add a job or lose a job because of the incarceration or because of the child care responsibilities?
6. What did you tell the children in your care about the incarceration?
7. How did the children react to the separation from their parent?
8. Were you/ the children able to visit the parent? Write letters? Accept phone calls?
9. Did the child /parent return home to your house? To another residence?
10. How was this transition? For you? Your child?

III. Reflecting on the role Project SEEK played in helping you to cope

1. In what way did Project S.E.E.K. enable you to provide support and protection to the child you were caring for?
2. Did project SEEK assist you with housing or other basic needs? If so, what?
3. What did you learn from Project S.E.E.K.?
4. Do you remember doing anything differently as a parent because of Project SEEK?
5. Do you think that Project SEEK had a long term effect on you? How?
6. What was the most helpful or supportive aspect of the program?
7. What was the least helpful or supportive aspect of the program?
8. What other programs, supports, or community resources did you access in addition to Project S.E.E.K during this time in your life?
9. What aspects of project SEEK should be repeated for children and families experiencing incarceration now?
10. What should be changed to make Project SEEK more effective?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to add about anything we talked about today or anything that we didn't discuss but you think is important?

3. Closing

Thank you for sharing your experience and opinions with me. I want to make sure that you have been paid for sharing your time today. You will be receiving [$50]. Please check the box to indicate that you received it and write your initials on the sheet. Doing this tells us that you received your money.

Children of Incarcerated Parents

1. Review Purpose, Objective, and Scope of Interview

I am working with the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI). MPHI has begun a study to determine if Project S.E.E.K. helped you, as a child and also if being a part of Project SEEK still influences you now that you are an adult. We would like to understand the ways in which this program was helpful or supportive to children with incarcerated parents. The information we gather today will be used to determine what things make a program like Project S.E.E.K useful, and what improvements could be made. Your answers to our questions will help us with this.

I am [name], a [job title, credentials, etc.] and will interview you based on your experience in Project S.E.E.K. and ask questions about how you believe the program helped you and how you think the program could be improved to help other children with a dad or mom in prison or jail.

I will be taking notes during the interview, but everything you say will remain confidential, meaning your name and any other identifying information will not be recorded or shared. Some of the questions might be hard to answer or raise up old feelings or trauma. Sometimes, talking about it actually helps but we can stop the interview at any time and you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. The interview will take about [time] minutes but we can take as long as you need to talk about the answers. Sometimes people have feelings that surprise them for a few days after the interview. If you agree, we will provide resources for individuals who will be available to talk to you over the next week. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Okay, first I'd like for you to take a couple of minutes to read this consent form. Please let me know if you have any questions. If you are okay with everything you've read, please sign.

Project SEEK
In Person Key Informant Interview Consent Form

The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the experiences of individuals who participated in the Project SEEK program, and to determine if programs like this are useful. This research is funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation and is carried out by the Michigan Public Health Institute.

We are asking you to consider volunteering to participate in an in-person interview that will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview questions will ask you about the impact of the Project SEEK program on your life, and about the impact that incarceration had on you and your family.

You may not benefit directly from participating in the interview. However, by participating, the information that you and others provide will help us gain a better understanding of the psychological state and harms children experience while their parent is incarcerated. Having this knowledge will assist in creating methods to intervene with children of incarcerated parents and encourage programs and studies that will keep parents out of prison.

Participating in this research project poses minimal risk to you. You may experience some loss of confidentiality since you are sharing your experiences with an interviewer. You may also experience possible discomfort in answering questions about your experiences with program. If there are any questions you do not want to answer, you don't have to: you can stop the interview at any time. If you experience some discomfort during the interview, we have a list of mental health resources that will be provided at the end of the interview.

All information collected for this project will be kept strictly confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The notes from your interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office and your name won't appear on the typewritten version of the interview. Only members of the evaluation team and MPHI officials who make sure that research is being done properly will have access to this form and to the typed version of your interview. Your identity will not be revealed in any reports of the evaluation findings. The information from this interview will be summarized and combined with other participants involved in the project. In some instances, we may use your quotes. The source of quotations will never be revealed.

Participation is voluntary. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits if you refuse to participate. You may change your mind and decide not to participate at any time. You may choose not to answer specific questions.

If you have questions about this project, please contact Crystal Tyler, at 517-324-7393. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Michigan Public Health Institute Institutional Review Board at 517-324-7387.

Do you have any questions?

Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this research project?
☐ Yes (*Proceed to next question)*
☐ No *(Thank the participant and conclude the call)*

Would you like us to mail or email you a copy of this consent form for your records?

☐ Yes *(Interviewer: Record contact information and send consent form)*
☐ No

Please Complete the following information:

Participant Name (Print)_____

Participant Signature _____

Date of Interview: _____ / _____ / _____

Interviewer Name (Print): _____

Project SEEK
Phone Key Informant Interview Consent Form

The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the experiences of individuals who participated in the Project SEEK program, and to determine if programs like this are useful. This research is funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation and is carried out by the Michigan Public Health Institute.

We are asking you to consider volunteering to participate in a phone interview that will approximately 60 minutes to complete. The interview questions will ask you about the impact of the Project SEEK program on your life, and about the impact that incarceration had on you and your family.

You may not benefit directly from participating in the interview. However, by participating, the information that you and others provide will help us gain a better understanding of the psychological state and harms children experience while their parent is incarcerated. Having this knowledge will assist in creating methods to intervene with children of incarcerated parents and encourage programs and studies that will keep parents out of prison.

Participating in this research project poses minimal risk to you. You may experience some loss of confidentiality since you are sharing your experiences with an interviewer. You may also experience possible discomfort in answering questions about your experiences with program. If there are any questions you do not want to answer, you don't have to: you can stop the phone interview at any time. If you experience some discomfort during the interview, we have a list of mental health resources that will be provided at the end of the call.

All information collected for this project will be kept strictly confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The notes from your interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office and your name won't appear on the typewritten version of the interview. Only members of the evaluation team and MPHI officials who make sure that research is being done properly will have access to this form and to the typed version of your interview. Your identity will not be revealed in any reports of the evaluation findings. The information from this call will be summarized and combined with other participants involved in the project. In some instances, we may use your quotes. The source of quotations will never be revealed.

Participation is voluntary. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits if you refuse to answer specific questions. However, if you end your interview early, you will not be eligible to receive your incentive.

If you have questions about this project, please contact Crystal Tyler, at 517-324-7393. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Michigan Public Health Institute Institutional Review Board at 517-324-7387.

Do you have any questions?

Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this research project?
☐ Yes (*Proceed to next question)*
☐ No *(Thank the participant and conclude the call)*

Would you like us to mail or email you a copy of this consent form for your records?

☐ Yes *(Interviewer: Record contact information and send consent form)*
☐ No

Please Complete the following information:

Participant Name (Print)_____

Participant Signature _____

Date of Interview: _____ / _____ / _____

Interviewer Name (Print): _____

Child of Incarcerated Parent Interview Questions

1. I told you a little bit about myself. Please tell me a little bit about yourself.
   Probe:
   a) What are you doing now? School? Work? Unemployed, etc.
   b) Are you married? Single/ Divorced?
   c) Have children?

2. Can you tell me a little bit about what you remember about your life at the time you participated in Project SEEK?
   Probe:
   How old you were?
   What life was like for you then? School? Friends? Siblings?

3. Many children of incarcerated parents say that there were really hard and challenging parts of that life and also some good things that happened then. Can you talk about the good and the bad things?
   Probes:
   Who was incarcerated? Mom, dad or both parents?
   Did you miss your parent?
   Did you have to change where you lived?
   Did you get along with your caregiver?
   Have to change schools?
   Did your family have less money and struggle to pay the bills?
   Was a move positive instead of negative? A better school district? More sport or activity opportunities?

4. There are lots of different ways that families deal with talking to their children about the incarcerated parent. We have a few questions about how that worked for your family. What were you told about your incarcerated parent? Who told you? When (how old were you ; how long after the parent was gone, etc.)

5. Did you maintain contact with your parent while they were incarcerated?
   Yes ( ) No ( )
   If yes:
   a) By letter? Phone? Visits?
   b) What were visits like for you?
   If no:
   a) Who made that choice? You? Your caregiver? Your incarcerated parent?
   b) Were you ok with the decision?

6. Now I would like to ask you questions about the role of Project S.E.E.K. in your life as you tried to cope with the incarceration of your parent. In what ways did Project S.E.E.K help or support you?
   Probe:
   Of these ways what was the most helpful activity or tool that Project S.E.E.K provided?

7. One of the goals of Project S.E.E.K was to encourage and support children. Do you believe that Project S.E.E.K. did this?

Yes ( ) No ( )

If yes:

a) Why do you believe this?

b) What specifically do you think helped you the most?

If no:

a) Why do you believe this?

b) What do you think could have been done differently?

8. Another goal of Project S.E.E.K was to encourage a child's physical and emotional well-being as well as to help them succeed in school, to build relationships with friends, and to succeed in life as an adult. Do you believe that Project S.E.E.K. helped you in any way to become who you are?

Yes ( ) No ( )

If yes:

a) Why do you believe this?

b) What specifically do you think helped you the most?

If no:

a) Why do you believe this?

b) What do you think could have been done differently?

9. Can you help us to know what things feel like triumphs or strengths in your life now and what things are challenges and difficulties?

Probes:

a) How was schooling for you? Did you graduate from High School? Go to College? Get a GED? Go to a technical or training school?
b) Where do you live now? Are you happy there?
c) Do you get along with your caregiver from that time?
d) Do you have a relationship with your parent that was incarcerated?
e) What are some things that you struggle with? Such as finances? Relationships? Bad habits? Substance use, abuse or addiction? Mental health issues/depression?

f) Were you ever arrested? Convicted? Have you had to spend time in jail or prison?

10. How do you cope with stress? Some people exercise or have hobbies. Others rely on friends and family and still others use alcohol or drugs to cope.

11. In what ways are you better off because of your parents incarceration?

12. In what ways did Project S.E.E.K provide support and help with coping, that impacts you still today?

a) What was the most helpful or supportive aspect of the program?
b) What was the least helpful or supportive aspect of the program?

c) What other programs, supports, or community resources did you access in addition to Project S.E.E.K during this time in your life?

13. What aspects of project SEEK should be repeated for children and families experiencing incarceration now?

14. What should be changed to make Project SEEK more effective?

15. Is there anything else that you would like to add about anything we talked about today or anything that we didn't discuss but you think is important?

Closing

Thank you for sharing your experience and opinions with me. I want to make sure that you have been paid for sharing your time today. You will be receiving [$50]. Please check the box to indicate that you received it and write your initials on the sheet. Doing this tells us that you received your money.

Non-Employee Related Incentive Plan

Genesee County's Project SEEK Longitudinal Study on Children of Incarcerated Parents

Project: G-20302

Program: Center for Child and Family Health
Responsible Program Personnel: Dr. Crystal P. Tyler
Card Distribution Dates: August 7-15, 2014

Type and Purpose of Incentive: The Center for Child and Family Health will conduct will engage a small sample of former participants who were included in Project S.E.E.K.'s initial longitudinal study on children of incarcerated parents. We will recruit former youth participants (all adults now) whose parents were incarcerated and former caregivers of those youth. This project will explore risk and resilience among the two populations by conducting focus groups and key informant interviews among both the intervention population and the control population from the Project SEEK study. We will give $50 Visa gift cards away to all individuals upon the completion of the focus group (caregivers) or key informant interviews (youth or caregivers). Gift cards are only available to participants who completed the focus groups and key informant interviews.

Purchasing and Tracking of Incentives: Dr. Crystal Tyler will purchase up to 50 $50 gift cards for individuals who participate in our focus groups and key informant interviews. The project lead (Dr. Tyler) will sign for the 10 - $50 Visa gift cards that the Finance and Contracts office has on hand. Additional $50 gift cards will be purchased by Dr. Tyler as needed in Flint from Wal-Mart. Payment will be made with Dr. Tyler's MPHI credit card. Each participant will sign once they receive their gift card. Gift cards will be tracked on an incentive tracking sheet developed by the program by gift card number.

Dr. Crystal Pirtle Tyler, Program Director

Signature of F & C Staff Disbursing Cards

Resource List

Genesee County Community Mental Health
www.gencmh.org
420 W. Fifth Avenue
Flint, MI 48503
810.257.3705
Toll Free: 866.211.5455
Crisis Line: 877.346.3648

Genesee County Department of Human Services
www.michigan.gov/dhs
P.O. Box 1628
125 E. Union St.
Flint, MI 48501
810.760.2200

Genesee County Community Health Center
www.genchc.org
422 W. 4th Avenue
Flint, MI 48503
810.496.5777

Genesee County Social Security Administration
www.socialsecurityoffices.info/details/flint_social_security_office_48503
1149 Robert T. Longway
Flint, MI 48503
888.318.7282.

Genesee County Health Department
www.gchd.us
Floyd J. McCree Courts
& Human Services Center
630 S. Saginaw St, Suite 4
Flint, MI 48502-1540
810.257.3612
810.257.3147 FAX

Genesee County Health Department
www.gchd.us
Burton Health Center
G-3373 S. Saginaw St.
Burton, MI 48529
810.742.2255
810.742.2561 FAX

See also: **http://www.gencmh.org/Portals/0/Provider%20Relations/ProviderDirectoryAdult20140425.pdf**
http://www.gencmh.org/Portals/0/Provider%20Relations/ProviderDirectorySUD20140425.pdf
http://www.gencmh.org/Portals/0/Provider%20Relations/ProviderDirectoryChild20140425.pdf

MPHI®

THE CENTER FOR CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH

2455 WOODLAKE CIRCLE

OKEMOS, MI 48864

PH: 517/324-7330 FX: 517/324-7365

Dear Colleague and Friend,

Please join us on Friday November 21, 2014 for a forum on Children of Incarcerated Parents: The Issues, Strategies and Interventions.

This forum will present emerging issues among children of incarcerated parents; communicate results from the Michigan longitudinal study, Project SEEK (Services to Enable and Empower Children of Incarcerated Parents); provide information on the federal government's response to children of incarcerated parents, and; solicit steps for local and state partnerships.

There is very little data on what types of interventions best serve children and families impacted by incarceration. Project S.E.E.K. - Services to Enable and Empower Kids, was developed in 1988 by the Michigan Department of Community Health and designed to address the risk and protective factors associated with delinquency and criminal behavior at both the individual and family level. This pioneering prevention program was the country's first and only comprehensive program and longitudinal study for children of incarcerated parents. Piloted in Genesee County to serve children with a parent in prison, Project S.E.E.K. operated for 16 years. Early findings of the study demonstrated less delinquent and antisocial behavior, fewer depressive symptoms and reduced stress for children of incarcerated parents.

Project S.E.E.K.'s data may provide invaluable information that can potentially enhance policy and offer guidelines for best practices for serving these populations across the nation. A summary of our findings in Phase Two of the study will be presented on the following dates. Details regarding the events are listed below:

First Forum:	Friday, November 21, 2014 9:00am-11:00am Genesee County Administration Building 1101 Beach Street (Ground Level) Flint, MI
Second Forum:	Friday, November 21, 2014 2:00pm-4:00pm Michigan Public Health Institute 2436 Woodlake Circle, Suite 380 Okemos, MI 48864

We would like to share our findings and receive your vital input on next steps. Please confirm your attendance today at projectseek15@gmail.com or call 517-324-7330 to be a part of this important discussion. Thanks for being a Champion for Children of Incarcerated Parents!

Sincerely,

Carol F. Burton, LMSW
Principal Consultant
JEWELD Legacy Group

Crystal P. Tyler, PhD, MPH
Program Director, Center for Child and Family Health
Michigan Public Health Institute

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2455 Woodlake Circle
Okemos, MI 48864
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Agenda

Flint, Michigan

Welcome Introduction	9:00-9:10	Carol F. Burton, Principal Consultant JEWELD Legacy Group Alameda County Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership Sesame Street Advisor
Federal initiatives	9:10-9:25	Eugene Schneedberg, Director Center for Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships United States Department of Justice
Challenges in the field	9:25-10:05	Ann Adalist-Estrin, Director National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated Rutgers University, Camden
Project SEEK results	10:05-10:25	Crystal P. Tyler, Program Director Center for Child and Family Health Michigan Public Health Institute
Facilitated discussion	10:25-10:55	Amanda Alexander, Soros Justice Fellow Prison & Family Justice Project Detroit Center for Family Advocacy, Child Advocacy Law Clinic University of Michigan Law School
Closing	10:55-11:00	Carol F. Burton, Principal Consultant JEWELD Legacy Group, Alameda County Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership Sesame Street Advisor

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Agenda

Okemos, Michigan

Welcome Introduction	2:00-2:10	Carol F. Burton, Principal Consultant JEWELD Legacy Group Alameda County Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership Sesame Street Advisor
Federal initiatives	2:10-2:25	Eugene Schneedberg, Director Center for Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships United States Department of Justice
Challenges in the field	2:25-3:05	Ann Adalist-Estrin, Director National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated Rutgers University, Camden
Project SEEK results	3:05-3:25	Crystal P. Tyler, Program Director Center for Child and Family Health Michigan Public Health Institute
Facilitated discussion	3:25-3:55	Amanda Alexander, Soros Justice Fellow Prison & Family Justice Project Detroit Center for Family Advocacy, Child Advocacy Law Clinic University of Michigan Law School
Closing	3:55-4:00	Carol F. Burton, Principal Consultant JEWELD Legacy Group, Alameda County Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership Sesame Street Advisor