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A non-profit partnership highlights the importance of supporting 22,000 dependents currently impacted by the incarceration of a caregiver in Connecticut

Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to suffer a range of emotional, physical and behavioral issues

HARTFORD, CONN. –As of April 1, 2016, 54% of those currently incarcerated in Connecticut report being a caregiver – leaving 17,929 dependents with a loved one behind bars. Over 75% of these youth are from single parent families. Furthermore, an additional 5,385 dependents have a caregiver in a Department of Correction supervised community program (e.g., parole, house arrest). Though this number is down from 19,177 dependents in 2014, there is still much to be done, particularly when it comes to introducing and passing supportive legislation directly informed by these youth and their families.

As a follow-up to the Annie E. Casey Foundation/ KIDS COUNT® policy report, *A Shared Sentence: The Devastating Toll of Parental Incarceration on Kids, Families, and Communities*, the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) and the Connecticut Children with Incarcerated Parents (CTCIP) Initiative are releasing a state specific report on children with incarcerated parents. To further highlight this report and the needs of these youth, presentations of 2016 data provided by the Connecticut Department of Correction and a panel discussion will be held at the Connecticut Capitol on May 26, 2016 from 1pm to 3pm in Room 310 (Old Appropriations).

Presenters:

- Scot Spencer, Associate Director of Advocacy and Influence from the Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Aileen Keays Yeager, Project Manager, Connecticut Children with Incarcerated Parents (CTCIP) Initiative
- Erica Dean, Policy Analyst, Connecticut Association for Human Services

Panelists:

- Scot Spencer, Associate Director of Advocacy and Influence from the Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Scott Semple, CT Commissioner for the Department of Correction
- Nishka Ayala, a current student at CCSU who has been impacted by parental incarceration
- Joyce Betts, CEO of Families in Crisis

- State Representative Douglas McCrory
- Elizabeth Duryea, Chief of Staff for the CT Department of Children and Families

“As research continues to demonstrate the increasing prevalence of parental incarceration, and the ripple effect of harm that parent-child separation can create for children, our responsibility to consider and meaningfully support these children becomes undeniable,” says Aileen Keays Yeager, project manager at the Connecticut Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative.

Although every child, and each parent-child relationship, is different, having a parent in jail or prison can be traumatic and result in long-term negative outcomes. A vast body of nationally published research has found that children with incarcerated parents (CIP) are more likely to suffer a range of emotional, physical and behavioral issues. These issues include anxiety, depression, underachievement in school, aggression and alcohol/substance abuse. Furthermore, separation due to parental incarceration can be just as painful as other forms of parental loss and are often more complicated because of the accompanied stigma, ambiguity and lack of compassion or other social supports.

“This first report is a snapshot covering what we currently know about CIP in our state. Although this is an insightful first glance, it leaves us wanting to know more! CAHS and CTCIP have developed broad goals that we, along with partners, would like to accomplish over the next few months for that informed state specific policy recommendations may be introduced for the 2017 Legislative Session”, says Erica Dean, policy analyst at CAHS.

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The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) is a statewide non-profit agency that seeks to decrease poverty and increase economic success for children and their families. For this policy brief, CAHS is working in-state with the Connecticut Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative (CIP)/Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy based out of Central Connecticut State University. The Initiative uses the various data and knowledge it gains from its own research and program implementation to inform interventions for youth whose parent(s) and/or family members have been incarcerated, as well as to aid in the development of public policy.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. KIDS COUNT[®] is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.