

2016 State Roundtable Report



Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup



Chairperson

Honorable Kim Berkeley Clark
*Court of Common Pleas
of Allegheny County*



May 2016

Dear Pennsylvania State Roundtable Members:

Last year you approved the following recommendations from the Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup:

- Evaluate the impact of the Workgroup's efforts in achieving the overarching principle that "Incarcerated parents have the same rights, as parents who are not incarcerated, to fully participate in the court process, to fully participate in case planning, to require the agency to make reasonable efforts towards reunification, and to have visitation and contact with their children";
- Follow up with the Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee on the previous request to collect data on dependent children of incarcerated parents via the CPCMS court orders;
- Follow up with the DHS/OCYF on the possibility of collecting data through the Child Welfare Information Solution;
- Continued support of the PA CWRC effort to enhance the Engaging Incarcerated Parent Training Curriculum;
- Continued support of the SWAN LSI Incarceration Toolkit project;
- Continued collaborative efforts with the DOC, PBPP and other key stakeholders to address statewide systemic issues;
- Utilize Workgroup members to act as ambassadors to assist counties and state agencies in the implementation of the Workgroup's recommendations.

The Workgroup took a recess to allow counties adequate time to utilize these resources. Although our Workgroup did not meet regularly during the recess, Workgroup members continued to support efforts of partnering stakeholders with the completion of their projects. Many of the Workgroup members, in the role of ambassador, participated in education and training throughout the Commonwealth. During our outreach, we have received a lot of positive feedback from judges, attorneys, corrections officials and others about how the Workgroup has helped to effectuate positive change.

For the past year, the Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup worked to initiate a system to collect data on dependent children of incarcerated parents. A request was made of the Juvenile Procedural Rules Committee to include mandatory data collection in the CPCMS orders.

In March 2016, a letter was sent to the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Human Services, Office of Children Youth and Families requesting the consideration of data elements be included in Phase 2 of CWIS on this population. Additionally, The Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) made several enhancements to the Permanency Review Hearing Court Observation Data Collection Form. Among these enhancements is the ability to capture data on whether or not an incarcerated parent participated in the observed hearing.

The workgroup recently met to discuss what the efforts and focus would be going forward. These recommendations are in our report. It continues to be a privilege to serve as the chair of our small but mighty Workgroup. The collaboration with the PA Department of Corrections, the PA Board of Probation and Parole, the PA Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families, the PA Prison Wardens Association, Statewide Adoption and Permanency Planning Network, the Child Welfare Resource Center, Youth and Parent Ambassadors, Attorneys, Court Personnel, and others has been inspiring. Special thanks go to Angela Sager, who always keeps us inspired, rounded and focused. Collaboration rocks!

We continue to be committed to the overarching principle that under the law, ***"Incarcerated parents have the same rights, as parents who are not incarcerated, to fully participate in the court process, to fully participate in case planning, to require the agency to make reasonable efforts towards reunification, and to have visitation and contact with their children."***

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KB Clark', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kim Berkeley Clark, Chair
Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup

Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup

Chairperson

Honorable Kim Berkeley Clark

Administrative Judge

Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County

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Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup 2016 Progress Report

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION:

The Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents Workgroup, commissioned by the Pennsylvania State Roundtable was formally launched in September 2011. Prior to the Workgroup's establishment, the issue of incarcerated parents with children in the dependency system was addressed by both the Pennsylvania State Roundtable's Father Engagement Workgroup (2011) and Visitation Workgroup (2011-2012). Through their efforts, both Workgroups began to identify the complexities surrounding engagement of incarcerated parents in many facets of the dependency process including case planning, delivery of services, hearing participation and visitation and contact. During the 2011 Pennsylvania State Roundtable, it was determined that the issues surrounding dependent children with incarcerated parents were complex and deserving of individualized attention and thus, a State Roundtable Workgroup was commissioned to focus solely on the issue.

2011-2015 WORKGROUP EFFORTS: SURVEYS, PARENT/YOUTH VOICES, COLLABORATION & RESOURCES, AND OUTREACH AND EDUCATION:

Surveying Stakeholders

During 2011-2014, the Workgroup focused their efforts on better understanding the issues faced by dependent children and their incarcerated parents as well as issues identified by cross system stakeholders (child welfare, corrections, probation/parole, courts) that interface with this population. Given the limited availability of national or Pennsylvania specific data about the issue, the Workgroup conducted extensive surveys in 2012 of stakeholders groups. Survey results revealed all stakeholders overwhelmingly agreed children have a right to visitation with their incarcerated parents; children deserve the right to maintain or create a bond with their parent and that child well-being is enhanced by frequent meaningful contact and visitation. The surveys also revealed that common barriers exist across the Commonwealth regarding visitation including inadequate "child-friendly" visitation spaces in correctional facilities, distance and transportation. In addition, survey results identified hearing participation and overall engagement of incarcerated parents in case planning as challenges. Finally, the survey results from all stakeholders underscored the need for dialogue, collaboration, protocols and cross-system trainings. Survey results were used by the Workgroup to develop initial recommendations in 2012 and continued recommendations and products from 2013 through 2015.

Parent and Youth Voices

Since the Workgroup's inception, Workgroup members believed strongly in including both a parent and youth as valued members of the group. It was important to ensure that the voice of both parent and youth were not only heard, but also seen as an integral component in developing State Roundtable recommendations, Workgroup products and the Workgroup's overarching principle that:

Incarcerated parents have the same rights as parents who are not incarcerated, to fully participate in the court process, to fully participate in case planning, to require the child welfare agency to make reasonable efforts towards reunification and to have visitation and contact with their children.

In fact, the Workgroup ensured invitations for parent and youth Workgroup Ambassadors to participate in the *Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Educational Video for Judges and Legal Professionals* and all educational sessions offered to stakeholder groups and at Local Children's Roundtable presentations. It was often during such sessions, that the voices of parent and youth Ambassadors were what made the difference for stakeholders in committing to enhance efforts surrounding this population.

Building and Sustaining Collaboration Efforts and Providing Resources

The Workgroup's multi-system members recognize the critical need of system partners to work together to achieve the overarching guiding principle aforementioned. In 2012, the first recommendation put forth by the Workgroup was *collaboration*. In 2016, this recommendation still remains the cornerstone of the Workgroup's efforts, for without cross-systems collaboration, little can be achieved. A collaborative system (on both state and local levels) among courts, child welfare, corrections and probation/parole is crucial for the improved well-being and outcomes of dependent youth and for engaging their incarcerated parents in all aspects of the dependency system process.

In its first year, the Workgroup recommended that Local Children's Roundtables develop county specific protocols for working with this population (*see Attachment A of the 2012 State Roundtable Report for example protocol*). In addition, a recommendation was made for systems partners to work together to make visitation spaces in county prisons more "child friendly" thereby enhancing the visitation experiences for children and parents. Since the 2012 recommendations were approved, some county Local Children's Roundtables reported increased collaboration on the local level to develop protocols and enhancements to visitation

spaces. Those who have made changes reported positive outcomes and experiences as a result of their efforts. The Workgroup plans to gather more information about protocols and local prison visitation enhancements during the 2016-2017 evaluation process.

The Workgroup also recommended state agency partnerships be strengthened. Since 2012, Workgroup members have forged partnerships with the PA Department of Corrections, PA Board of Probation and Parole, PA Department of Human Services, PA Wardens Association and others.

Collaborative Projects include:

- **Protect Your Rights document** designed to educate and inform incarcerated parents with children in the dependency system about their rights and responsibilities. The document also includes information on the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) time frames. Over 20,000 Protect Your Rights documents were disseminated to county children and youth agencies, dependency courts and local and state prisons. The document is endorsed by the above entities and the PA Wardens Association. <http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/assets/upload/Final%20Protect%20Your%20Rights%20Poster.pdf>
- **Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Education Video for Judges and Legal Professionals** funded by the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation is designed to educate judges and other legal professionals on issues faced by dependent children and their incarcerated parents. Video chapters include (1) confronting the biases and myths; (2) trauma; (3) setting the tone in the courtroom; (4) visitation; and (5) permanency planning. This video emphasizes youth voice and demonstrates that although unique challenges exist for this population of foster youth, with individualized case planning, strong advocacy and judicial oversight many of these challenges can be overcome. While the video was developed for judges and legal professionals, much of the information is relevant for child welfare and corrections professionals, particularly the chapters on trauma, visitation and permanency planning. <http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/childrens-roundtable-initiative/state-roundtable-workgroupscommittees/dependent-children-of-incarcerated-parents/an-educational-video-for-judges-and-legal-professionals>
- **Public Service Announcement (PSA)** airing in 28 state correctional facilities and some local prisons outlines the key points of the *Protect your Rights* document for incarcerated parents. The key points include: participation in the dependency process; communication with attorney and caseworker on a regular basis; participation in case planning; maintaining or establishing a bond with their child; ASFA time frames and; saving and sharing all documents received from program completion in the correctional

institution. The PSA is also included on the educational video aforementioned and can be viewed on the website above.

- **Child Welfare Resource Center's (CWRC) Engaging Incarcerated Parents training curriculum** was enhanced by the CWRC with strong support from the Workgroup in 2015-2016. The course is designed to strengthen child welfare professionals' understanding in teaming with other system partners, case planning and visitation when working with children and their incarcerated parents. The pilot process was completed and the course was held so far in three counties: Allegheny, Cumberland and Montgomery. Upcoming trainings are scheduled for Luzerne, Blair and Lycoming Counties later this year. CWRC reports the initial trainings were well received and scored an average of 4.42 out of 5.0 on evaluations from participants. Training participants stated that they plan to use information learned during the course to better engage incarcerated parents and make efforts to keep parents better informed about the dependency process. In addition, participants stated they plan to encourage children to write letters to their parents, reach out to prisons to better understand visitation policies and procedures and share and exchange course resources with their co-workers.
- **Statewide Adoption and Permanency Planning Network (SWAN) Legal Services Initiative (LSI) Resource Manual** currently remains in the developmental phase. Once finalized, the Resource Manual will provide information in one comprehensive document outlining Pennsylvania county prison policies, procedures, inmate programming and visitation practices. The targeted audience for the Resource Manual includes child welfare professionals and SWAN LSI paralegals but will also be appropriate for judges and other stakeholders working with this population. As of the date of this report, the Resource Manual is currently in the final stages of editing and approval.

For a complete listing of other Workgroup or Workgroup partner resources including descriptions, target audiences and resource locations, please visit the Office of Children and Families in the Courts' Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents webpage. <http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/childrens-roundtable-initiative/state-roundtable-workgroupscommittees/dependent-children-of-incarcerated-parents>

Outreach and Education

Since 2012, Workgroup members remain committed to acting as Ambassadors in educating stakeholders on the Workgroup's overarching principle and assisting Local Children's Roundtables in full implementation of recommendations. Ambassadors conducted education

sessions at the following venues:

- 2012 Pennsylvania State Roundtable
- 2013 Children’s Summit
- 2014 SWAN Summer Conference
- 2014 Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Agent Training
- 2015 Pennsylvania Warden’s Conference
- 2015 Somerset County Prison
- Local Children’s Roundtable presentations

At the request of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, upcoming regional presentations are planned at three Pennsylvania State Correctional Institutions to educate superintendents and other corrections administrators about the dependency system and incarcerated parents’ rights and responsibilities.

Additional Resources Provided by the PA Department of Corrections:

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections is committed to cultivating healthy connections and experiences for incarcerated parents and their children. Positive interactions encourage better outcomes for these fragile and impaired parent-child relationships while maintaining ongoing efforts to support and strengthen them. To this end, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections programs, services, and initiatives to facilitate parent-child bonding include:

- **Read to Your Child:** Offered at most institutions, this program encourages offenders to learn to read, improve reading skills, and foster more meaningful connections with their children by reading to them. It lightens some of the psychological barriers that come with the physical barriers of prison in order to help children feel less alienated from their parent. While children are able to take the book home with them from their visit, offenders can also practice reading before a video camera and subsequently send both the video and the book to their children.
- **Project IMPACT at SCI Muncy:** Inside SCI Muncy Parents and Children Together (IMPACT) uses a small visitation center, a child-oriented setting that feels and looks like a home, in order to provide a warm environment for an incarcerated mother and her children to bond. Mothers receive on-site training and parental case management services. IMPACT also includes crafts, snacks, and opportunities to play games, watch movies, and go outside for activities and play. Finally, mothers and grandmothers who have children/grandchildren up to age 9 can sign up for “A Story Time for Mom,” during which they are recorded reading a book. Once the recording has been completed, it is then mailed to the children.

- **Virtual Visitation:** Offered at most state correctional institutions and to eventually be offered in all institutions, this service uses the latest video-conferencing technology to make it possible for children to visit with their incarcerated loved ones any day of the week. This helps children to maintain these important connections even when their caregivers cannot afford to visit the facility.
- **Inside Out Dads (Fatherhood Initiative):** Offered only at male facilities, this program comprises 12 sessions that offer support and crucial information to encourage positive parenting, including Children’s Growth, Fathering from the Inside, Communication, Showing and Handling Feelings, and Discipline.
- **Sesame Street: Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration:** In cooperation with Community and Family Engagement at Sesame Workshop (Sesame Street), the PA DOC has obtained and distributed to institutions across the state 10,000 tool kits. They are bilingual and comprise materials and information that support parents/caregivers of these children and the challenges/psychological impacts they face. A DVD, a storybook, and a guide for parents/caregivers are included and cover a breadth of topics from comforting children, encouraging connection, helping children share their feelings, and talking about incarceration.
- **Child Resource Centers:** In cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has created colorful and informative “one-stop-shop” Child Resource Centers for every institution’s visiting area. Resources comprise a large poster and stand with handouts about important services available to children, including: PA Family Centers, Early Intervention, Head Start Programs, Home Visiting Programs, PA Pre-K Counts, and Child Care Programs. Other comprehensive information for caregivers is located on Quick Reference Guide handouts, designed to connect them to an extensive wealth of resources and support services, such as: medical benefits, mental health services, addiction treatment, and nutrition programs. All Child Resource Center materials are available for purchase <http://www.cor.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx#.Vw6yNqTD-Ul> by the public and other agencies.

DATA COLLECTION:

As stated in the 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 State Roundtable Reports, no good data exists either nationally or Pennsylvania specific on the number of children in the Pennsylvania Dependency System with an incarcerated parent. The Workgroup still strongly believes it is necessary to collect both county specific and state data on this population of dependent youth. Since its inception, the Workgroup has recommended that the Common Pleas Case Management System (CPCMS) court orders be revised to include mandatory check boxes to indicate if a parent(s) is incarcerated and whether or not that parent participated in the

dependency hearing. This request to revise dependency court orders was made through the Workgroup Chair to the Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee. To date, we have not received a response from the request.

Court Observation Data

In 2015, the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) made several enhancements to the Permanency Review Hearing Court Observation Data Collection Form. Among these enhancements is the ability to capture data on whether or not an incarcerated parent participated in the observed hearing. While this is certainly an advance in data collection, it only captures data on those hearings observed by OCFC Staff. Between January 2015 and March 2016, a total of 401 permanency review hearings were observed in 61 counties. Of those hearings observed, 61 had an incarcerated parent in a federal, state or local prison. During the observed hearings, 43% of the time incarcerated parents participated in the hearings either in person, by phone or via video conference. Permanency Review Hearings observed in Permanency Practice Initiative counties had a higher percent of incarcerated parents participate (54%) as opposed to Non-Permanency Practice Initiative counties (35%). This court observation data marks initial data on incarcerated parents' participation in observed Permanency Review Hearings. OCFC will continue to collect this data over the next several years to track the percentage of incarcerated parents who participate in observed Permanency Review Hearings. OCFC will share the observation results with the Workgroup on an annual basis.

Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) – Data Collection Request

In 2015, the Workgroup recommended the possibility of collecting additional data elements on dependent children and their incarcerated parent through CWIS. It was determined with the exception of hearing participation, important data elements on this population would best be collected by county child welfare agencies and entered into CWIS. In March 2016, a letter was sent to the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Human Services, Office of Children Youth and Families requesting the consideration of data elements be included in Phase 2 of CWIS on this population. The requested data elements to be considered for CWIS included:

- Incarcerated mother/Incarcerated father
- Type of correctional facility (federal, state, local)
- Whether or not the incarcerated parent is the custodial parent
- Whether or not the incarcerated parent was involved in case planning
- Whether or not visitation occurred between the parent and youth in prison
- Whether or not parent/youth communicated via letter writing, telephone, video

Data Collection, Research and Evaluation with the PA Department of Corrections

The Workgroup engaged in initial conversations with the PA Department of Corrections, Director of Planning, Research and Statistics to partner on data collection and research projects during 2016/2017. The final project(s) have not yet been decided but will likely include: data collection on the number of inmates who have a child in the dependency system; researching the impact of contact visitation for both parent and child and evaluating workgroup recommendations. Future meetings will be scheduled with Workgroup members and DOC staff to finalize research and evaluation efforts.

The PA Department of Corrections did conduct a survey sampling both male and female inmates entering the state prison system in 2015. The survey asked information on whether or not the inmates were in foster care as a child, the length of time in care, number of placements, why they entered foster care and the impact on their lives. Please see the following Infographic outlining the results of the survey.

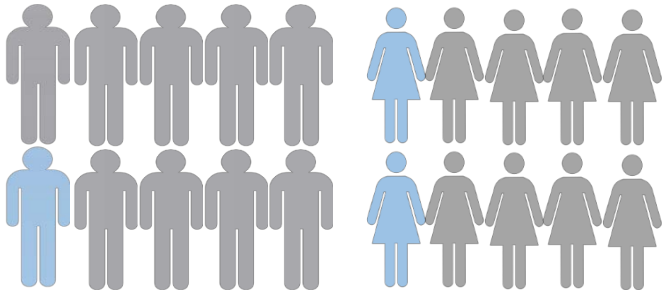
FOSTER CARE & STATE INCARCERATION

In 2015, 706 inmates (569 male, 137 female) entering the state correctional system responded to a survey regarding their personal experience in foster care ...

PREVELANCE

11.6%

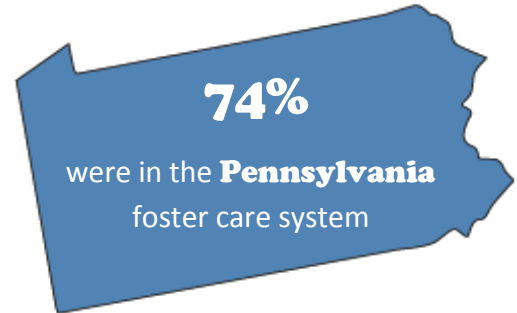
of those surveyed were previously in foster care



1 in 10 males
were in foster care

2 in 10 females
were in foster care

WHERE



HOW MANY

Number of foster care placements:

1 (median) **2.7** (average)

HOW LONG

Number of years spent in foster care:

3 (median) **4.8** (average)

36%



Lived in a foster care **group home**

45%



State/County child welfare agency placed me

29%



My parents/guardian voluntarily placed me

21%



I don't know / other

19%



My parents/guardian were incarcerated

8%



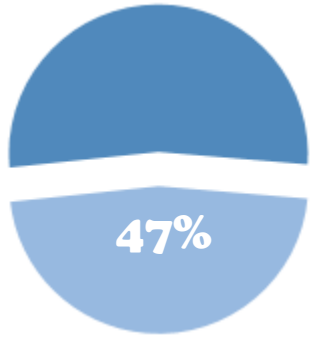
My parents/guardian passed away

WHY ENTER

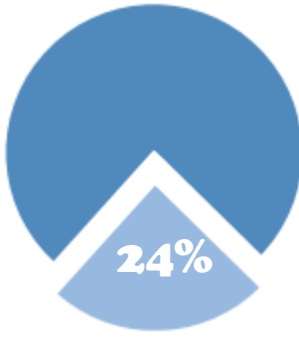
PERCEPTION OF IMPACT ON LIFE



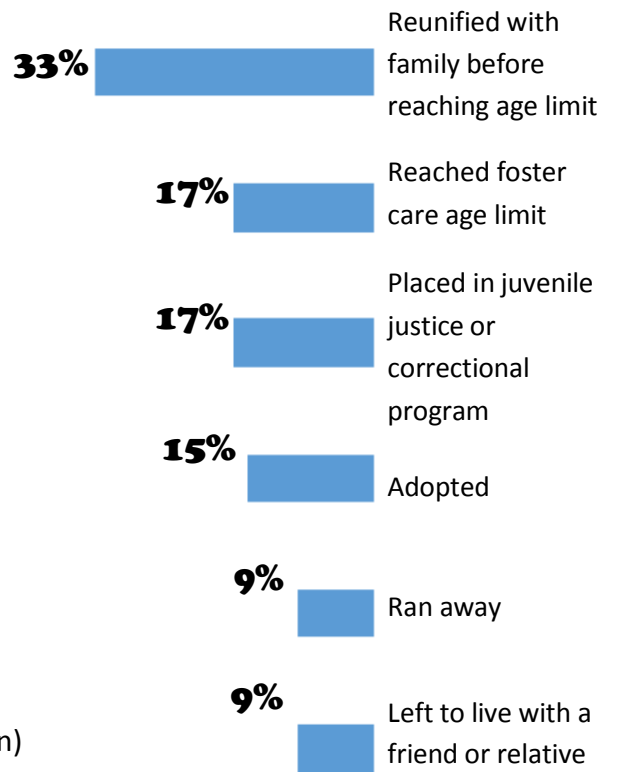
LEAVING FOSTER CARE



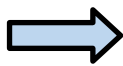
...ran away, reached the foster care age limit, or was placed in a juvenile justice or correctional program



...of those who aged out or ran away were **temporarily homeless**



AGE LEAVING FOSTER CARE



12.5 (average) | **14** (median)

FOSTER CARE & JUVENILE JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT



... And of those involved, **81%** were placed in residential juvenile justice programs

NEW INITIATIVE:

Workgroup members identified the lack of collaboration between child welfare professionals and adult probation/parole officers as a significant barrier to effectively engaging families. Child welfare and criminal justice agencies often work within the same family to address similar issues, but may not be working collaboratively to support families. The case plans for both entities may mirror each other, or at least share common goals, but often parents who are paroled and have a child in the foster care must navigate through both systems to fulfill duplicate obligations. During 2016-2017, the Workgroup requests the opportunity to develop a resource document for child welfare professionals and parole professionals to help foster collaboration and serve families more efficiently and effectively.

MEASURING SUCCESS AND IMPACT:

In the 2015 State Roundtable Report, the Workgroup recommended developing a strategy to measure the success and impact of the recommendations, products and efforts. Workgroup members had in-depth discussions on how best to evaluate not only the Workgroup products but also the impact of outreach efforts to better educate system stakeholders. During more recent discussions, Workgroup members proposed an additional evaluation component to assess the implementation of recommendations by Local Children's Roundtables and their impact on youth, parents and stakeholders.

Evaluation components will include:

- Surveying Stakeholders (courts, corrections, probation/parole, child welfare and attorneys);
- Meeting with some of the Local Children's Roundtable that implemented recommendations to gauge success with cross systems protocols, child/parent engagement and local prison visitation space enhancements;
- Collaborating with the PA DOC on research and evaluation project(s)
- Conducting youth and parent focus groups (possibly);
- Reviewing Hearing Participation data from OCFC Court Observations.
- Gathering information on the number of CWRC Engaging Incarcerated Parent courses held and course evaluation scores.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Pennsylvania State Roundtable's Dependent Children of Incarcerated Parents respectfully submits the following recommendations:

1. Evaluate the Workgroup's efforts in achieving the overarching principle and the impact of outreach efforts to stakeholders;
2. Examine the successes of Local Children's Roundtables that implemented Workgroup recommendations;
3. Develop a joint resource document for child welfare professionals and probation/parole professionals to help foster collaboration and serve families more efficiently and effectively.
4. Follow up with the Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee on the previous request to collect data on incarcerated parents' participation in dependency hearings;
5. Follow up with DHS/OCYF on data collection through the Child Welfare Information Solution for dependent children and their incarcerated parents;
6. Continue collaborative efforts with Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole and other key stakeholders to address statewide systemic issues;
7. Continue to utilize Workgroup members to act as Ambassadors to assist Local Children Roundtables and other stakeholders with the implementation of the Workgroup's recommendations.