



CWLA Presentation

***Focusing on the Future:
Implications for Public Policy
Promising Solutions***

Overview of Dream Academy

Mission

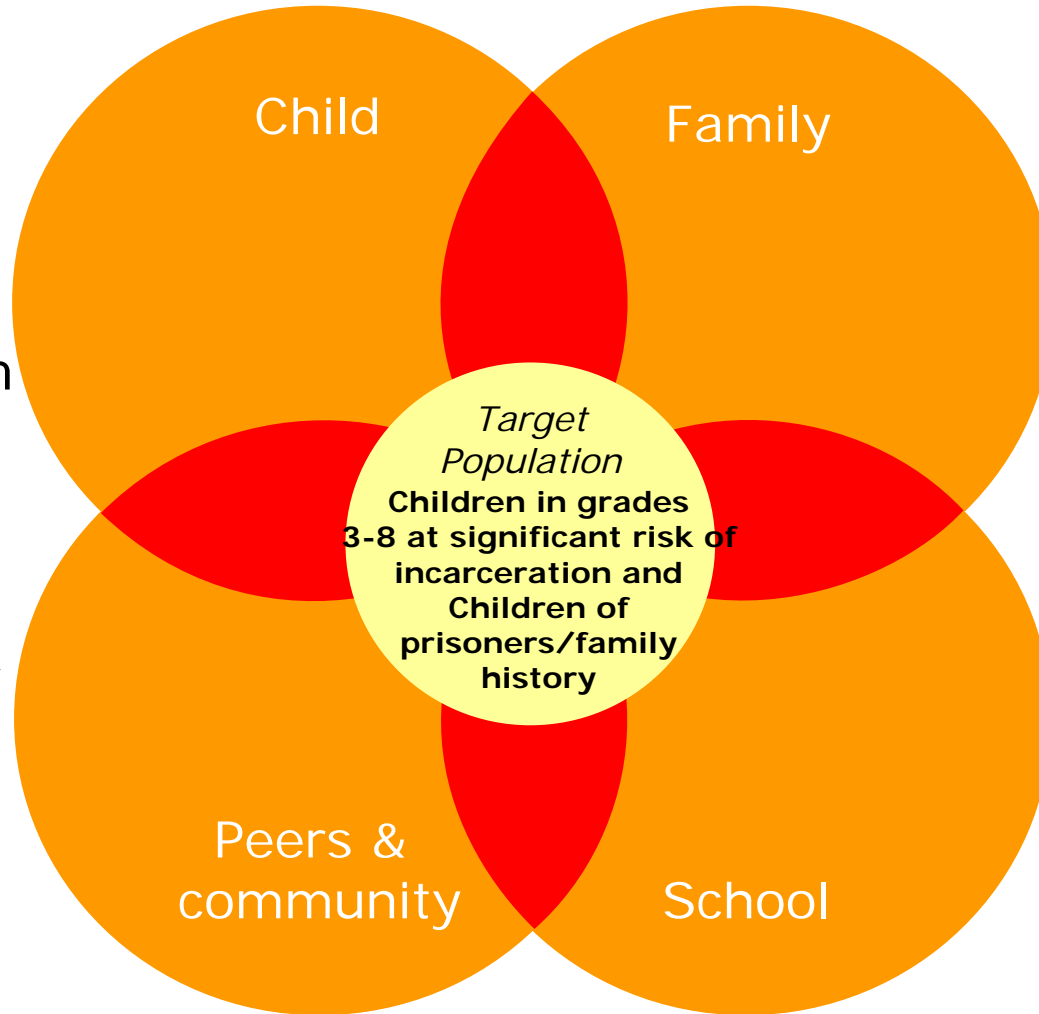
To empower children who are at risk of future incarceration to maximize their potential by providing them with academic social and values enrichment through supportive mentoring and the use of technology.

Overview

- Provide skill building, character building and dream building in an after-school setting
- 11 Centers around the country
- Technology is a key component of how we deliver academic instruction
- One-to-one mentoring is another key program of our Dream Building component

Children at significant risk of incarceration as measured by a set of risk factors

- Little participation in productive activities, including faith community
- High rates of incarceration in community
- Incarceration viewed by community members as expected or common place



- Children of prisoner/family history
- Low family income
- Family instability
- Failure in school
- Lack of academic support
- Under-resourced school

Target Group and Age

Children living in high risk communities in the 3rd – 8th grades that:

- Have a parent incarcerated
- Have a family history of incarceration (mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent) and/or
- Are falling behind in School

Purpose of Policy

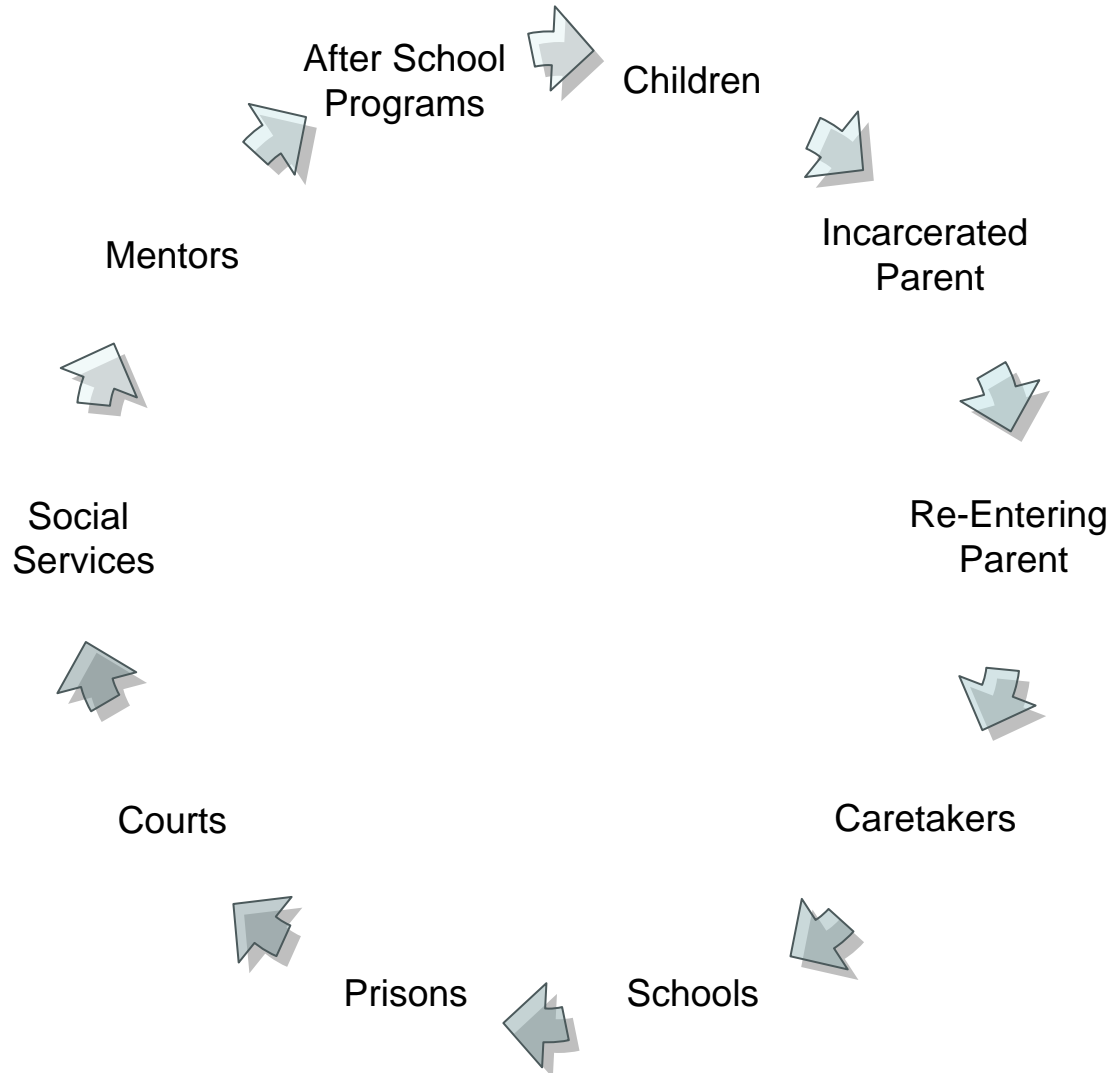
- Influence people's behavior through the law, i.e., civil rights act – sought to change behavior of segregationist who strongly believed in the separate but equal doctrine
- Allocate funding to new initiatives or continue to fund existing initiatives, i.e., HHS MCP program
- Change paradigm/perspective, i.e., affirmative action or more current the new re-entry legislation – trying to help people see the need to re-integrate ex-offenders back into society without the barriers and stigma

How can policy impact Children of Prisoners?

We need to think carefully about:

- What behaviors we want to influence nationally
- What paradigms we seek to change
- How we allocate resources so that all of us doing quality work can benefit and leverage our areas of expertise rather than compete with each other

What is the Entry Point for Intervention for Children of Prisoners?



Promising Solutions

- Must create policy that is more comprehensive –
 - Legislation that intentionally creates funding opportunities for collaboration among like groups with differing expertise
 - Legislation that compels cross-agency collaboration on issues that impact the same kids, i.e., HHS, DOJ, DOE and DOL working together to fund an initiative that meets the goals of each agency while meeting the whole needs of children of prisoners, i.e., mentoring, academics and gang-prevention work in one grant and leveraging DOL's one-stops and Ready-for-Work programs to help these same students prepare for productive futures.

Encouraging more cross collaborations

Children of Prisoners advocates working with:

- Re-entry advocates
- high-school drop out advocates
- public school districts and principals
- private sector to create more job opportunities in inner-city communities

Future policy considerations

- Public Schools are grossly failing American students – especially poor, minority students – 1 in 3 black boys will not graduate from high school
- American public more aware of the “school to prison pipeline” High school drop-outs are 8 times more likely to end up in prison than those who graduate from high school.
- America is losing our ability to compete globally because of an unskilled labor in technology - 4 million jobs that cannot be filled today; 41% of companies say having trouble filling positions in tech, science and across the board

Future Policy Considerations

- Steady and active grassroots efforts are taking place that will shape the legislative agenda to focus primarily on high-school drop out prevention and revamping public school systems
- We will begin to see significant funds being re-directed to address high-school drop out issues
 - Mentoring will probably be a big part of this
 - Job training and job creation
 - Technology as a solution
 - Support services for early identification of potential drop-outs
 - After-school programs as enhancement

Children of Prisoner Advocates THINK ABOUT

- How we could couch our issues in the context of high-school drop out prevention
- How we use schools as an entry point for effective intervention (whatever the form of intervention)
- Job creation within the communities where we have high concentration of crime and arrest as a long-term solution to reducing the number of children of prisoners, i.e., medical training school in Baltimore

Children of Prisoner Advocates

- Ensure that Children of Prisoners living in at-risk communities stay on the minds of lawmakers as particularly vulnerable to academic failure without intervention to support them at critical times in their academic career
- Ensure that teachers, principals and counselors at schools are properly trained to identify COP's, understand the issues and have resources to properly refer children of prisoners - as a standard resource at their school

Concerns about Policy

- Must think carefully how we position children of prisoners as those who are “destined” for incarceration – while the political climate may be very children of prisoners friendly – we have all seen political climates where “tough on crime” and anything associated with crime becomes the enemy

Concerns about Policy

- If we create a group of children who are easily identifiable to police and other law enforcement
- Or become part of a “system”
- We could be unintentionally and unfairly create an easy target for opportunistic politicians to take advantage of this information for political gain rather than for social good

Past Trends

Society goes through periods of reform and periods of “get tough on crime”

Early 1900's during the Progressive Era changes were made to the justice system were made under a newfound conviction that society had a responsibility to recover the lives of its young offenders before they became absorbed in the criminal activity they were taking part in.

Early 1990's a spike in juvenile crime cause fear and an exaggerated response to juvenile crime was perpetuated in the media and on Capitol Hill. Legislators enacted multiple laws to “get tough on crime” including treating juveniles like adults and incarcerating juveniles in adult prisons rather than rehabilitation as the goal.

Many of these policies we are still reeling from the results and working to reserve the effects.

Past Trends

- Affirmative Action (once sympathetic to the fact that African Americans were denied rights for a period of time – now the sentiment is that African Americans can't make it on their own merit)
- Welfare system – mothers who needed support to get back into the work world – now it's black women who don't want to work and just desire to take advantage of the welfare system