



60 Popieluszko Court
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860.727.5800
Fax: 860.727.5801
www.familiesincrisis.org

Help for Hard Times

Suggestions for families and friends when a loved one is imprisoned

First things first

- Take care of yourself - both physically and emotionally. You won't be much help to others if you're not in a good place yourself.
- Seek out and connect with people who are in the same situation as you - they know what you are going through...maybe you can even share resources (baby sit for each other, carpool to visit, etc.).
- Build on the positive - stay focused on what you can do or change - not on what you can't.
- Live your life! You have a life to lead on "the outside" - it may include children, your home, job or religious community - stay involved and find joy where you can.
- Don't hesitate to ask others you know and trust for help. Often, your family and friends may want to be supportive but aren't sure how to approach you. Unlike death and divorce, there are no social rules or rituals for others to follow. It's up to you to set the tone.

If children are involved

- It is important to keep the explanation simple and age appropriate when you tell a child that a loved one is in prison.
- Prepare what you want to say and allow plenty of time to answer questions about prison, prison life, the crime, and what this will mean for them.
- Children will react differently. For some children, the experience can be overwhelming while for others it is less serious. Sometimes it is a relief.
- The child's age, understanding of the situation, and the reaction of others all play a part in the affect the parent's incarceration will have.

- Children may have different feelings, and sometimes even several feelings at once, or one right after the other. Some of those feelings may be sadness, fear, guilt, disbelief, anxiety or anger. It is important to understand and recognize all their feelings.

Stay connected

- Visiting is not the only way to be together. Telephone calls and letters can be just as beneficial.
- Focus on your relationship - you're still parents, partners, siblings or friends. Walls don't change that. Do the best you can to care and support each other.
- Take the time to learn about each other's world -You'll have to work harder to understand each other's daily lives. Ask questions. Listen. Share details about what's happening on the "outside" as well as the "inside."

Before you visit

- Make sure you are an approved visitor before you make the trip.
- Every institution is different. Know the visiting schedule. If possible, let your loved one know when you plan to come so he or she can be ready too.
- Know the rules and regulations ahead of time so you don't bring something that is not allowed. You may lose your visiting privileges.
- Prepare both yourself and your children for the visit. Explain the visiting process and security measures. Visiting can be emotional - before, during and after the visit. Check in with one another.

Budget your resources

- If you accept collect calls, expect higher phone bills and budget accordingly.
- Check with your phone company or shop around for ways to keep your phone bills down.
- Visiting is an expense too - in both time and money. There are transportation costs, time factors (will you have to take time off from work?), childcare, etc.
- Know your limits and don't overstep them. Negotiate and together come up with a plan to stay connected that won't leave you exhausted or put you in debt.

For further help or information, call or write: