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## Writing to Your Child from Prison

*Even if you visit regularly or talk on the phone, letters are a wonderful way to stay connected to your child/ren. Sending mail shows your child/ren that you care. Most children will keep letters and read them more than once so it's important to keep them positive. Letters can become a treasured possession and an important record of your time apart.*

- Send letters **frequently**. If you run out of words you can send a poem, drawings or pictures from a magazine.
- Address your letters **directly** to your child/ren. Put your child/ren's name on the envelope in care of their caregiver (c/o).
- **Encourage** your child/ren to write back and, if you can afford it, enclose a self addressed stamped envelope. *However, don't put pressure on them or be disappointed if they don't write back.*
- **Share** your daily routine. Explain how you handled a problem, what you learned in school / work and how many times you thought of your child/ren during the day.
- Tell stories. **Children like to hear about themselves.** You can write about the day he or she was born, learned to walk or the first day of school. You can also write about your family history or your own childhood.
- Letters can be a good way to **explain** why you are in prison and how long you will be away. *"I am in prison because I broke the law. I will not be able to come home until November".* Keep your explanations simple and easy for your child/ren to understand (age appropriate). Older children can understand more complex reasons.
- **Don't make promises you cannot keep.** Letters give you the opportunity to build trust with your child/ren by being honest with them. Let your child/ren know that you are all right and that your imprisonment is not **their** fault.
- Letters are an easy way to express your feelings and let your child/ren know you will understand theirs. Use **I feel** statements to tell your child about yours..... and **you may feel** statements to show you will understand theirs..... *"I feel sad that I cannot be with you for your birthday. You may feel sad and angry too."* Sometimes children need to be *given permission* to say how they are feeling.
- Even if your letters are returned unopened, or you do not have a current address for your child/ren, **write** and **save** your letters to them **anyway**. If and when you do reconnect, you'll be able to share them. You can revisit this time in your lives and it may answer questions your child/ren may have. You will only benefit by making the effort.

**If you or any member of your family needs help call or write Families in Crisis, Inc.**

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