

# Family Members Behind Bars

*Difficult Questions Children Ask ...  
and How To Answer Them*



A Caregiver's Guide to Montana's  
Criminal Justice System —  
from Arrest to Release

Montana Alliance for Families  
Touched by Incarceration  
(MAFTI)

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## ABOUT MAFTI

On any given day in the United States, more than 1.5 million minor children have a parent serving a sentence for a criminal offense. Fifty-five percent of state prison inmates are parents of children under age 18.

Montana received a grant in 2006 from the Family and Corrections Network (FCN) to develop a project that supports the National Children's Bill of Rights for Children of the Incarcerated (see page 2). Dee Ann Newell of Arkansas worked under a fellowship from the Soros Foundation to assist and inspire us.

Under the leadership of the Montana Head Start Collaboration, Montana citizens representing a variety of private and public interests met in 2006 to address the negative impact of parental incarceration on children in Montana. The partnership led to formation of the Montana Alliance for Families Touched by Incarceration (MAFTI).

MAFTI developed this manual to help children and families affected by incarceration navigate through this difficult time in their lives.

### **MAFTI PARTNERS**

Montana Head Start/State Collaboration Project  
Montana Head Start Association  
Montana Department of Corrections  
Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA of Montana)  
Montana Department of Health and Human Services  
Montana Women's Prison – Billings  
Montana State Prison – Deer Lodge  
Family Tree – Billings  
Parenting Place – Missoula  
Montana Dads Incarcerated  
Montana Native Women's Coalition

## The National Bill of Rights for Children of the Incarcerated\*

Every child with a parent in prison (or alternatives to prison) has the following rights:

1. To be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest;
2. To be heard when decisions are made about me;
3. To be considered when decisions are made about my parent;
4. To be well-cared for in my parent's absence;
5. To speak with, see, and touch my parent;
6. To support as I face my parent's incarceration;
7. To not be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated;
8. To have a lifelong relationship with my parent.



\* The *Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents* was written in 2003 by Californians Nell Bernstein, (journalist and author) and Gretchen Newby (a practitioner serving children of prisoners), outlining the principles needed to ensure the well-being of these highly at-risk children.

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## HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

If you suddenly have become Mom or Dad to your three grandchildren while their parents sit in jail, charged with manufacturing dangerous drugs, this manual is for you.

If you are a foster parent grasping for answers for the 5-year-old who cries at night because Mom went off to prison for 10 years, this manual is for you.

Maybe the police came to your house last week, arrested your husband in connection with an armed robbery, and led him away in handcuffs as your toddler son stood on the porch screaming “Daddy, daddy.”



You operate a day care center and you receive a frantic call from one of your clients, a single dad. He has been arrested on a probation violation. His kids need a place to stay just for a few nights until he can figure things out.

You are among a unique group of caregivers for children whose parents or other family members have been thrust into the criminal justice system for a few days, a year, a decade –or maybe more. These are children in acute crisis who need answers when it seems as though there are no answers.

There are no one-size-fits-all answers for difficult questions your child will ask, because families and their circumstances are so unique. Read our questions and answers, see the similarities in what you are hearing, and you will certainly

come up with an answer that is right for you and your child.

We have divided this manual into the various chapters of the criminal justice system, from arrest to jail, court, verdict, sentencing, and on to prison or a community corrections placement such as drug treatment or prerelease.

Universal questions are those a child will likely ask over and over as the family member progresses through the criminal justice system.

This manual was written, edited, and reviewed by dozens of interested Montanans, including a mother of four whose husband spent time in prison, teachers, Head Start staff, probation officers, inmates, an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer with the CASA program, and others too numerous to mention. MAFTI thanks them all.

The Resources List on page 49 points you to a wealth of free information available on the internet. The Family and Corrections Network (FCN), for example, offers an entire library of information for caregivers. We realize not everyone has access to the internet. Try your local library computer or ask a friend to print some of this information for you. The FCN pamphlets are a must for every caregiver.



A note about the artwork: Illustrations with this signature were drawn especially for this manual by an inmate and mom at Montana Women's Prison. We thank the artist her for her contribution!

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# 10 TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS...

## FROM CAREGIVERS

*By Ann Adalist-Estrin, Children of Prisoners Library, Family and Connections Network Copyright 2003.*

1. Talk about feelings with children. “You look sad. Are you missing Daddy?” Or, “When you get that angry at little things I wonder if you are also angry at your Mom for going to jail?” or, “I wish your dad could have seen you play ball tonight and I bet you do too.”



2. Be as honest with children as possible. “Mom won’t be coming home for a very long time. It will be four more birthdays (or two more summer vacations).”

3. Remember to keep your feelings separate from each child’s. “We feel different things about this, I am angry at your dad and don’t really want to see him but I want you to go because he’s your Dad and you love him.”

4. Set up family discussion times. Tuesday night is the family “meeting.” Or Wednesday night is “Let’s wait for dad’s call tonight and talk about how we are all doing with this.” Or Saturday morning’s breakfast is a “prison and jail talk is off limits” time—a moment of relief to those who need a break from the subject.

5. Talk about the family’s choice to tell others or keep it a secret from certain people.

6. Let children know why the choice is necessary. Provide plenty of opportunity to talk about it at home.
7. Encourage children to write or talk to their parents whenever possible.
8. Help children to start a picture or story that their parent adds onto, then the child adds on, and so on and so on by mailing it back and forth.



9. Read with your children. Encourage your library to include books and pamphlets about children of prisoners in its collection.

10. Get support and help for the children and yourself... through friends, clergy, or counselors.

Here is a list of other free FCN brochures available on the internet at <http://www.fcnetwork.org/cpl/cplindex.html>.

[www.fcnetwork.org/cpl/cplindex.html](http://www.fcnetwork.org/cpl/cplindex.html).

2. Conversations - Questions Children Ask
3. Risk and Protection
4. Visiting Mom or Dad
5. Jail and Prison Procedures
6. Communication Tips for Families
7. Caring for Children of Prisoners
8. Questions from Caregivers
9. What do Children of Prisoners Need?
10. Impact of Parental Incarceration
11. Common Stress Points
12. Different Children/Different Behaviors
13. Tips for Fostering Trust & Safety
14. The Caregiver's Situation

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# 10 (OR MORE!) QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK AT EVERY STAGE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS

## INTRODUCTION

We have included here a few of the common questions a child will ask when the parent is in jail, prison, or a community corrections placement such as a drug/alcohol treatment program or pre-release center. Our answers are suggestions. You can tailor them to fit your unique circumstances.



### 1. Where is my family member?

Adults often sugarcoat information about family members who have committed crimes because they want to protect children from the painful truth. Lying to a child seldom is a good idea. The truth has a way of coming out. A lie revealed by someone else may cause the child to doubt the caregiver whom (s)he desperately needs to trust.

Telling a child that the family member works in another city, state, or country, is away at college, overseas in the military, or in the hospital will increase their anxiety. Why doesn't (s)he ever come to see me? Will (s)he die? Is (s)he already dead? The child will see that other children whose parents are away see them once in awhile. Without accurate information, a child might believe matters are worse than they are.

## **2. Why is (s)he there?**

“Your family member is there because (s)he committed a crime and has consequences.”

## **3. When will (s)he be coming home?**

Release dates are seldom certain. It’s probably best not to give the child a firm date on which a loved one will come home. There are too many variables. For example, a family member who is eligible for a parole hearing might tell the caregiver that (s)he is getting out of prison soon, but the parole board might not grant parole.

“We don’t know for sure but we do know that (s)he will not be home this Christmas.”

This is appropriate in cases where the family member received a prison sentence with a parole eligibility restriction:

“(S)he will not be coming home until you are all grown up, but you can visit.”

“The judge will decide today if your family member can come home.”

## **4. When can I see my family member?**

In most cases, family members can visit offenders in jail, prison or other correctional facilities. The Department of Corrections (DOC) supports the connection between children and their parents if contact is safe and appropriate for the child. The best answer is one that gives the child a specific time to look forward to, but only if you are sure of the time for a visit.

“The jailer said we could come tomorrow. We will visit right after you get home from school.”

“Every prison has different rules about visiting. I will call Monday and find out the rules.”

“The prison is a long way from here. We won’t be able to visit until spring break.”

“ We will have a car in May. We can go then.”

“You can’t visit right now, but (s)he might write to you. Would you like to write a letter or draw a picture for your family member?”

### **5. Can I touch my family member?**

If the family member committed a crime against any child, (s)he may have restricted contact. Most often, however, parents and children may have limited physical contact during visits in jail, prison, and other correctional facilities.



“You can sit on her lap and she will read you a story.”

“She will hug and kiss you like always.”

“He will be behind glass so you will not be able to touch him. You can talk to him on a telephone at the prison.”

### **6. What will happen to me?**

“We don’t know yet where you will stay while your family member is in jail/prison. We will make sure you are safe.”

“You will stay with me until he/she comes home.”

“Your grandparents will take care of you and your brothers until your family member comes home.”.

If a child must be separated from siblings, tell him/her that they will be with adults who will try to keep them safe too. Some siblings separated during a parent’s incarceration are never reunited. Perhaps a caregiver is able to care for an infant but not school-age children. Avoid dates for a reunion

(tomorrow, Saturday, etc.) unless you are sure.

### 7. Is my family member okay?

A child who watches TV might have a distorted view of jail, court, and prison as dangerous, noisy places where people are sometimes hurt or even killed. They will experience fear, anxiety, sadness, and perhaps guilt or shame about their loved one behind bars. Usually these stereotypes about the criminal justice system are not true, but injury or death of a family member is possible.

“Your family member has food and water, a warm place to sleep, and comfortable clothes. The people who work in the jail/prison/treatment center work hard to make sure that everyone is safe.”



### 8. What will (s)he do there?

“Your family member will have rules to follow. (S)he might go to school to learn how to obey laws, be less angry, stop using alcohol or illegal drugs, and be a better parent. (S)he will eat, sleep, exercise, and talk with other people.”

### 9. Does (s)he blame me? Is it my fault?

“It is not your fault that your family member committed a crime. (S)he is paying the consequences now.”

In domestic violence situations, the child might have called the police, or been the reason an adult called the police.

“You did the right thing by calling the police because your

family member might have hurt you or someone else.”

### **10. Does (s)he still love me?**

Most parents love their children regardless of their current circumstances.

“Your family member will always love you. (S)he might be angry right now, but (s)he still loves you.”

If you do not believe this is honest in your situation, your answer will need to be more creative.

“Sometimes people who commit crimes are very mixed up and they don’t know how they feel about anyone.”

### **11. Is it okay if I feel confused, scared, sad, or angry?**

“All feelings are okay. Sometimes it helps to talk to other people like a friend or trusted adult about your feelings.”

### **12. Is it okay if I still love my family member?**

Children who have undergone the worst physical, sexual, or emotional abuse imaginable often still love the family member. Resist the temptation to tell the child that the family member is a bad person who does not deserve love. This can create more confusion and trauma.

“Yes, it is okay that you love your family member.”

### **13. Is it okay if I don’t love my family member anymore?**

“Yes it is, and it is also okay for you to have different feelings about this later.”

### **14. What can I do to help my family member?**

“Everyone in the family needs to love and support each other by helping with chores at home and trying hard to be a good brother or sister.”

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# 10 QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER IS ARRESTED

## INTRODUCTION

The arrest of a family member is an immediate crisis like a house fire, car accident, serious illness, or death in the family. Children will probably react to the immediate event with fear, panic, and shock.



This situation will be worse if police arrive with their guns drawn and handcuff the family member. Adults also will be in crisis and possibly unavailable as support for the children. Depending on family dynamics, the children might be overlooked entirely.

The arrest of one or both parents robs children of their sense of security. Police or social workers may take them from the home and place them in foster care. If the parents produced methamphetamines in the home, the children may be stripped, bathed, dressed in unfamiliar clothes, and assessed by medical experts who are strangers to them.

Children need physical safety, reassurance, information, an introduction to new routines, support, kindness, and adult encouragement to ask questions. Caregivers must not expect

children to hold the family together or postpone their grief.

If the children or other family members are victims (domestic abuse or incest, for example), the children will have mixed emotions. They might feel relief that the assaults will stop. They might feel guilty for reporting the crime or for not being able to stop the assaults. The family member might blame them for the arrest. They may be confused and sad. Children often love their parents even if those parents abuse them. Depending on what they have learned at home, children might see the police as the bad guys

### **1. What happened?**

“Someone thinks your family member broke an important rule (or law).”

“Your family member was arrested. That means the police took him to jail so they can talk about this more and figure out what really happened.”

### **2. Why did the police tie my family member up?**

“When people are arrested, they might become angry and frightened. Sometimes they try to run away, even if it means hurting someone. The police put on handcuffs to make sure that your family member does not run away or hurt anyone. They will take off the handcuffs when they get to jail.”

### **3. What did my family member do?**

Explaining any crime to a child can be difficult. Keep it simple for now. Provide no more information than the child can understand. The truth will come later.

“They think he stole something.”

“They think he broke a window and went into someone else’s house without asking.”

If the family member is accused of murder, assault, or rape, simplify it for the time being. If (s)he goes to trial or is convicted, you can provide the child with more details.

“They think (s)he hurt someone else.”

If the arrest involves manufacture and/or sale of dangerous drugs, the child could have been in imminent danger.

“Your parents are not able to keep you safe right now, so you are going to stay with me for awhile.”

#### **4. Will I ever see my family member again?**

This is another tough question. Although the child will probably be reunited with the arrested family member, this is an uncertain and dangerous time for everyone.

“You will see your family member again, but it might not be very soon. We will have to wait and see.”

#### **5. Is my family member safe?**

If the family member left home in handcuffs, the child may be very anxious about safety. Also, they might have seen violence on TV associated with arrest and jail.

“The people who are in charge of the jail try very hard to keep everyone safe.”

If you know that the child trusts the police, explain that police officers run the jail. Otherwise, try telling the child that people who run the jail have been to school to learn how to keep people safe.

#### **6. What will happen to my family member in jail?**

“When your family member gets to jail, the police will ask lots of questions, and maybe take a picture. Your family member will stay in a small room with bars, called a cell. (S)he might share a cell with at least one other person. People in jail

each have a small bed called a cot, with blankets and a pillow. Everyone in jail dresses the same in uniforms that look like pajamas or the clothes painters wear. They have three meals a day.”

### **7. When will (s)he come home from jail?**

Immediately after arrest, no one knows when the family member will be released. It is best not to guess or make promises. People who are arrested seldom come home until they have been to court.

“We don’t know yet. Your family member will talk to a judge. The judge listens to everyone and then decides if your family member can come home soon or if he has to stay in jail for awhile.”



You can add information if law enforcement or the court provides it.

“We know that (s)he will not be able to come home tonight or tomorrow night.”

### **8. Is it my fault my family member was arrested?**

Especially if the arrest followed violence at home, children might think it is their fault. What they really want to know is whether anyone blames them for the arrest.

“It is not your fault. The police arrested your family member because they have broken an important rule called a law. Arrest can be a consequence for adults who don’t follow laws.”

### **9. What if I do something wrong? Will I go to jail too?**

“If you do something wrong you might have a consequence like a time-out or not riding your bike for three days.”

“When you get older you could go to jail if you commit a crime. Teachers and other trusted adults can explain right and wrong to you, and how laws work, so you won’t commit a crime.”

### **9. My family member said (s)he didn’t do it. Did (s)he lie?**

“We don’t know yet. Your family member will have a chance to explain to the judge what happened. This might take a long time.” Courts sometime schedule hearings months down the road, especially if the family member’s lawyer requests delays.

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# 10 QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER GOES TO COURT

## INTRODUCTION

After arrest, the family member (now called a suspect) will go to court more than once and possibly many times. The court process will be a time of great uncertainty for children and the entire family.

No one knows how long the court process will take or what will happen next. It could be weeks, months, or even years before the family member is convicted or set free. The family member might not come home at all during this time.

At the first court hearing, the judge will appoint a lawyer for your family member and may set a bond amount (sometimes called bail). If (s)he pays the bond, (s)he can go home between court hearings. Most suspects plead not guilty at first even if they committed the crime.

The family member might admit to the crime later or plead guilty to lesser charges in exchange for a lighter sentence (plea bargain). If your family member does not plead guilty, (s)he will have a trial.

Caregivers must use caution when deciding whether or not to take young children to court. Evidence against the family member can be traumatic and possibly harmful for children to hear. They love the family member and yet people will be saying accusatory things.



Consider the child's age, developmental level, and temperament. The suspect may not be allowed to have physical contact with the child in court.

If the crime was committed against the child, (s)he will have different emotions. Even if the child is a victim, (s)he probably loves the family member and might feel responsible for the arrest.

Children may have seen court events on TV in which the judge shouts at the accused person. They need reassurance that the judge and police will stop abuse and violence.

### **1. What is court?**

“Court is where a judge listens to your family member and other people. The judge tries to find out what happened, and make a fair decision about what will happen next.”

If the judge does not grant bond, or the family member cannot afford the bond, the child will have more questions.

## **2. Could my family member come home if we had more money?**

“The judge thinks it would be best right now for your family member to stay in jail until people figure out what happened.”

“It is not your fault that we do not have more money.”

If the family member bonds out of jail:

## **3. Are they letting my family member pay money to come home?**

“They are letting your family member come home for awhile because (s)he promised to go back and see the judge later. (S)he will get the money back later when (s)he keeps the promise. If your family member breaks the promise, (s)he will lose the money and may go back to jail.”

Some children will be curious and want to go to court, while others will be terrified at the thought. Court is difficult for most adults, and they may not be emotionally available to the child. Court generally is not a good place for young children. They have probably seen court portrayed on TV as abusive and violent, with people shouting at each other. Assure the child the family member will be safe.

## **4. Can I go to court too?**

“You will not be going to court. Court is for adults. People will be talking about the crime they think your family member committed. You will stay home with (caregiver). The judge will find out the truth.”

“You would have to sit still and be quiet for a long time. We

will stay home. Maybe we can read a book.”

If the child is the victim of the family member’s crime or a witness to the crime, (s)he might have to testify. In these cases, lawyers will meet with the child in advance to explain things and attempt to create a comfortable environment. Let the child see the courtroom before the trial. Role-play and run a “dress rehearsal” so the child knows exactly what to expect when (s)he goes to court.

### **5. Why do I have to go to court? I’m scared.**



“The judge wants to ask you some questions about what happened. I will be right there with you. Just tell the truth. It’s okay if you don’t remember everything. The judge will make sure that you are safe. He will not hurt or yell at you.”

If the caregiver is a parent, grandparent, or other family member, (s)he might have to go

to court as a witness. Children will fear that this other loved adult will disappear.

### **6. Will they make you (the caregiver) stay in jail too?**

“No. I am going to court because the judge asked me to tell what I know about your family member and the crime people say he did. I will not have to stay long or go to jail. I will be home in time to read you a story tonight.”

If the child goes to court, (s)he will have questions about everything.

## **7. Why do people have guns? Will they kill us?**

“They wear guns and badges because they are police officers (or sheriff deputies). They will not kill anyone. Their job is to make sure people are safe in court.”

## **8. Why are people saying mean things about my family member?**

“Some people are saying those mean things because they believe your family member committed a crime. That does not mean it’s true. We don’t know yet.”

Most suspects enter into a plea bargain. This means the family member agrees to plead guilty if the prosecutor will drop some of the charges or reduce them to something less serious. For example, (s)he might plead guilty to possession of drugs if the prosecutor will drop the charges of manufacturing drugs. In exchange for the guilty plea, the family member can expect a lighter sentence.

The alternative to a plea bargain is a trial at which the prosecutor must prove to a jury that the suspect committed the crime.

Even if a judge or jury does not convict the family member, life may not return to normal. Some members of the community will assume the criminal charges were true even if the prosecution did not prove them. Arrest and court events make headlines. The family member may lose his job. Neighbors and co-workers may eye the family with suspicion.

If the family member victimized his spouse and children, a not-guilty verdict may be traumatic.

## **9. He did not do it, so why don’t people like us?**

“Sometimes people are unfair. They believe your family member committed a crime because someone said he did.”

The judge decided he didn't do the crime.”

**10. He hurt us, so why did they let him go?**

“Sometimes even judges can't figure out what really happened.”

“ We don't know why and we may never know why. Right now we will do everything we can to keep you safe.”

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## 10 QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER IS CONVICTED

### INTRODUCTION

Conviction means the family member was found guilty of a crime. Perhaps (s)he admitted to the crime as charged, or to lesser charges through a plea bargain. Perhaps the case went to trial and a jury found the family member guilty.

Conviction is another time of crisis for the family as they face the probability that a loved and trusted adult did such a thing. People sometimes are wrongfully convicted, but denial becomes more difficult. The convicted person might appeal the conviction, which draws out the uncertainty.

Regardless of the circumstances, the child's life will be changed forever by a conviction. If another family member is the victim, the child might feel relief about the conviction, but (s)he will also feel sadness, betrayal, and confusion, and probably guilt and shame. (S)he will miss this family member regardless of how bad things were.

**1. My family member said (s)he didn't do it, so did (s)he tell a lie?**

“Sometimes people are afraid to tell the truth so they lie. Sometimes people commit crimes and we cannot always understand why.”

**2. Does it mean (s)he lied about other things?**

“No. Lying about this crime does not mean your family member lied about other things.”

**3. Is it my fault (s)he is not coming home?**

“It is not your fault/our fault that your family member hurt you/us. It was his fault and (s)he has to have consequences.”

**4. Why can't my family member tell the judge that (s)he is sorry and then come home?**

“When people make small mistakes, like a child sneaks a cookie, (s)he can apologize and that's the end of it. When an adult breaks a law, they have bigger consequences. This was very serious crime because it hurt other people.”

“The burglary victims are afraid to leave the house now.”

“The person who was shot died and can't go home to his children.”

**5. My family member said someone else helped him commit the crime. What happened to them?**

“The other person also will have consequences.”

“The judge decided that the other people did not do this.”

**6. Will my family member do this again?**

“We don't know. Your family member will have to decide if (s)he will obey the laws from now on. People will help him understand why what (s)he did was wrong. They will help him

stop drinking/using drugs so maybe (s)he won't commit more crimes.”

“We will work hard to keep you safe so your family member cannot hurt you again.”

### **7. Where are the people (s)he hurt?**

“People who are hurt when someone breaks the law are called victims. The victims are going to be okay.”

“The victim died and her family is very sad.”

“The people who lived in the house that was burglarized are okay and your family member is going to pay them back for the things (s)he stole.”

### **8. Will the victims hurt us?**

The victims are very angry at your family member, but not at you. Remember that it is not your fault that (s)he committed a crime.”

“We will keep you safe. They will not hurt you.”

### **9. What will happen next?**

Judges in Montana have an extraordinary number of sentencing options. Avoid predicting what will occur, even if the defense attorney has asked for a light sentence. A surprise at sentencing could cause the child to mistrust adults later. It's best never to tell a child that the family member might come home soon.



“Your family member will have to stay in jail until the judge decides what the consequences will be. Consequences are called a sentence. We don’t know yet what the judge will decide.”

**10. Can I tell the judge we need my family member back?**

“Most judges understand that children need their parents. However, one of the consequences for breaking a law is that your family member will have to be away from you. It is sad but true that you have to suffer because your family member committed a crime.”

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# 10 QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER IS SENTENCED

## INTRODUCTION

Montana judges have many sentencing choices. **Prison** is often usually reserved for repeat offenders or those who have committed murder, aggravated assault, rape, or manufacture and sale of dangerous drugs. Fewer than 20 percent of offenders convicted of a felony crime in Montana receive a prison-only sentence.

About one fourth of sentences in Montana include both **prison and suspended time**. After release from prison, the offender serves the suspended portion on probation. This allows offenders to return to the community with supervision. As probationers, the offenders must meet court-ordered

conditions and report regularly to a probation officer.

Most crimes in Montana involve alcohol or drugs, so judges usually require offenders to remain “clean and sober” on probation. They also must avoid bars and casinos. Mandatory counseling and addictions treatment are designed to meet individual needs. Probationers must find jobs and pay any court-ordered fines, child support, and victim restitution.

Almost half of all first-time nonviolent offenders who plead guilty receive

**deferred sentences.** This means the judge postpones (defers) sentencing for a period of time and the offender agrees to obey probationary conditions. If the offender completes the deferred sentence without violations, the crime does not remain on the record. If the offender breaks probationary rules, the judge usually orders an arrest and hearing.



Montana has a unique sentence called a Department of Corrections commitment, often referred to as a “**DOC commit.**” The judge allows the DOC to decide the best placement for the offender based on individual risks and needs. Only about one fifth of DOC commits go to prison initially. DOC places most offenders in prerelease centers, drug or alcohol treatment centers or in the intensive supervision program (ISP). ISP offenders live in the community, report to a probation officer, and wear electronic monitoring devices that track their location.

## 1. What is a sentence?

“A sentence is the consequence your family member will have for committing a crime. A sentence includes punishment such

as jail or prison. Your family member might have to pay some money too.”

## **2. Who decides what happens to my family member?**

“The judge and lawyers will listen to a lot of people like the police, lawyers, your family member, and the people that were hurt – the victims – before the judge decides the sentence. The judge will probably order your family member to receive help for problems (drinking, drugs, anger, etc.) and attend a special school to learn how to obey the law. ”

## **3. Can I tell the judge that I want my family member to come home?”**

“Sentencing decisions are made by adults. One of the consequences for committing a crime is that you and your family member might not get to live together for a while/a long time. You may miss your family member. It is sad that you have a consequence because you didn’t do anything wrong.”

Note: The caregiver might help the child write a letter to the judge or draw a picture as a way to express feelings.

## **4. My family member said (s)he wouldn’t do it again, so why can’t (s)he come home?**

“When an adult commits a crime, the consequences are much bigger than when a child breaks a rule. Your family member needs help learning how to follow the law.”

## **5. Why did my family member get to come home the last time? (In instances of a deferred or suspended sentence)**

“Last time the judge gave your family member another chance to follow the law. (S)he committed another crime. Now (s)he has more consequences. (S)he needs more help.”

**6. My family member said (s)he would be coming home soon.**

“Sometimes adults don’t tell a child something bad is going to happen because they don’t want the child to be afraid or sad. It’s too bad your family member promised (s)he would come home soon because the judge is the one who decides..”



**7. Why doesn’t the judge like my family member?**

“The judge must decide what is best for your family member. Sometimes consequences are the best thing for someone who

commits a crime.. This helps them learn how to behave themselves. Sometimes people need to be punished for hurting others. This does not mean the judge doesn’t like your family member.”

**8. Other people do the same thing. Why don’t they get sentenced?**

“People do not always get caught for committing a crime. It is not okay to do something wrong, even if you don’t get caught. Most people who commit crimes will get caught.”

**9. Will my family member be killed?**

(A death sentence is so rare in Montana that we won’t address it in this manual. See the resources list.)

“No. Being killed is not a consequence for committing a crime. Your family member will have consequences that (s)he will not like, but (s)he will not be killed.”

If the child is the victim, (s)he will have different questions.

## 10. Will the judge let him hurt us again?

“The judge will make rules for your family member to follow. The rules the judge makes for your family member are meant to keep you safe. We will do all we can to keep you safe.”

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# 10 QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER GOES TO PRISON

## INTRODUCTION

In most cases, a prison sentence will be another immediate family crisis, the worst-case scenario.

Until now, adults and children in the family could hope for a better outcome

such as a suspended sentence, deferred imposition of sentence, or a prison alternative. Now it is certain that the family member won't be coming home any time soon.

If the family member committed crimes against children or other adults in the family, a prison sentence guarantees a respite from the hurt, perhaps permanently, and might be a relief.

Prisons and jails are similar in appearance but they have different purposes. Jails are temporary holding facilities operated by cities, counties, and tribal governments. Suspects go to jail after arrest and before a court hearing or trial if they



are not granted bond (or bail).

Offenders convicted of misdemeanors in Montana also serve their sentences in local jails, often in the community in which they committed their crimes. Offenders sometimes remain in county jails for months after sentencing due to additional court hearings, or prison overcrowding.

Incarcerated people are called inmates.

Prisons in Montana are larger secure facilities designed for felony offenders serving longer sentences. Prisons have more treatment, education and exercise options than jails.

The Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) operates all prison that house adult offenders who were convicted in state district courts.

DOC's administrative offices are in Helena.

**MONTANA WOMEN'S PRISON (MWP)** in Billings is Montana's only prison for adult female offenders. MWP offers a range of treatment and education opportunities that focus on rehabilitation, chemical dependency treatment, and education, including successful parenting.

**MONTANA STATE PRISON (MSP)** in Deer Lodge is the main prison for men and offers the most treatment and reentry options, including Montana Correctional Enterprises or "prison industries," which prepare inmates for employment once they are released.

MSP administers three smaller prisons for male offenders. Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) owns **CROSSROADS CORRECTIONAL CENTER** in Shelby, which contracts with DOC. CCC houses male federal inmates who are awaiting court action or transfer to an out-of-state prison. All women convicted of federal crimes are incarcerated out of

state. **DAWSON COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY** in Glendive and **CASCADE COUNTY REGIONAL PRISON** in Great Falls operate through a DOC-county partnership. State and county inmates are separated.

Several offender treatment programs operate in privately owned facilities that essentially are “prisons” because the offenders do not leave the premises. These “alternative secure” facilities include the following:

**CONNECTIONS CORRECTIONS PROGRAM** – Drug and alcohol treatment for male offenders in Butte and Warm Springs.

**ELKHORN TREATMENT CENTER** – Methamphetamine treatment center for women, located in Boulder.

**MISSOULA ASSESSMENT AND SANCTION CENTER (MASC)**  
– Many offenders who are sentenced to DOC go to MASC, where they are assessed and provided treatment prior to being placed. Only about 20 percent of these offenders go to prison initially.

**NEXUS** – Methamphetamine treatment center for men, located in Lewistown.

**START** (Sanction, Treatment, Assessment, and Revocation Transition) – A “halfway back to prison” center in Warm Springs for male offenders who have violated conditions of community placement including prerelease, parole, or probation. Programming helps offenders avoid going to prison by making better choices.

**WATCH** (Warm Springs Addictions Treatment and Change)  
– Six-month alcohol addiction treatment programs in Warm Springs and Glendive for male and female offenders convicted of their fourth and subsequent DUIs (driving under

the influence of alcohol and/or drugs).

### **1. When can I see or talk to my family member?**

“I will find out the visiting rules are and help you to see him.”

Visiting rules are different for each jail and state prison.



Sheriff’s offices or tribal governments can provide jail-visiting rules. Because prison visiting rules can change, we are not including them in this manual. See the phone listings for these facilities on page \_\_\_\_\_.

### **2. When is my family member coming home?**

Be careful not to give a child a firm date because prison release dates can change for many reasons, including parole (early release) or new criminal charges (extended stay). If you are reasonably certain when the sentence will end, try using a reference date that is important to the child.

“We believe (s)he might come home after two summers,” or “after three birthdays,” or “when you are 12 years old.”

### **3. Will my family member be safe?**

“People who work at the prison are called correctional officers. They are much like police officers. They work very hard to make sure that your family member and the other inmates are safe. You will be safe when you visit.”

NOTE: Prisons in Montana do not use the outdated term “guard” anymore because it has negative connotations . Today’s correctional officers are trained professionals who do more than “guard” the inmates. Caregivers can compare them to police officers.

#### **4. Where will my family member sleep?**

“Your family member will sleep in a bed sort of like a camp cot in a small room with bars on the door, called a cell. (S)he will probably share a cell with at least one other person, sometimes called a cellie.”

#### **5. What will (s)he wear?**

“Inmates wear identical uniforms that look like doctor or nurse “scrubs.” They also have socks and shoes, provided by the prison.”

#### **6. What will (s)he eat?**

“The prison serves three meals a day on trays in a cafeteria similar to the one you have at school. Some inmates eat meals in their cells. Inmates also buy snacks from a prison shop called a commissary.”

#### **7. How will my family member spend his/her time in prison?**



“People read books, write letters, and go outside or to a gym for exercise. They attend classes that help them learn how to obey rules, be better parents, stop drinking alcohol or taking drugs, and be less angry. Most prisons have classes for inmates who want to earn their high school degree or study for college.”

#### **8. What will it be like to visit prison?**

Every prison is different. You will be informed about the rules in advance. This is a general answer to help children envision the visit and perhaps lessen their fear:

“You will be with me (or other adult caregiver) the entire time. Before we go, the prison will tell us what we can wear and what we can and cannot bring into the prison. Going into the prison will be sort of like going through airport security (if the child has been to an airport). We will be checked to be sure we don’t have cell phones or other things that are not allowed in prison. We will visit in a special room with tables and chairs. Most prison visiting rules have books and toys for children to enjoy. Your family member will meet us there.”

### **9. Will anyone hurt us?**

Public safety is the top priority at DOC correctional facilities. Staff will take any action necessary to protect visitors, other staff, and inmates. Visits include some risks, which staff members will explain to visitors. Young children probably do not need to be told that a prison visit involves risk. However, it might be a good idea to explain that a stranger (security staff) will be touching them during the search.

“The people who work at the prison will keep us safe. You will not be left alone at any time in the prison. It might be scary at first to be in a prison but no one will hurt us.”

### **10. What if I do something wrong? Will I have to go to prison?**

“If you do something wrong you will have a consequence like “time out” or not riding your bike for three days.

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# 10 QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER GOES TO A PRERELEASE CENTER

## INTRODUCTION

Private agencies in Montana contract with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to operate prerelease centers in Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula. They provide housing, treatment and counseling for people convicted of felony crimes. Sometimes people call prerelease



“halfway houses” because they offer a level of supervision less restrictive than prison. Most offenders stay in prerelease centers for six months.

Prerelease residents must work in the community or spend much of their time applying for jobs. The doors are not locked like a prison but the residents must have staff approval to leave. They may leave the prerelease center for work, church, treatment, classes, or shopping for basic needs. They must return on time or they can be sent to prison.

Many prerelease residents spent time in prison. Perhaps the parole board agreed to release them onto parole if they successfully complete a six-month stay at a prerelease center. Others were sentenced to the Department of Corrections

(DOC), which determined that a prerelease center is the most appropriate placement.

Local screening committees decide if an offender will be accepted into a particular prerelease center. A community might accept an offender after another screening committee said no. Screening committees usually include a prerelease staff member, law enforcement, a probation and parole officer, and citizens. Many offenders apply for a prerelease placement in their own community, so they can be close to family and friends.

### **1. What is a prerelease center?**

“Prerelease centers are places where people who broke the law stay while they learn how to obey the rules. Some prerelease centers have a lobby with chairs, books and a TV. The people who are in charge can see what is going on from an office with lots of windows. Most prerelease centers have classes where people can learn how to stop drinking or using drugs, control their anger, and follow the law.”

### **2. Is my family member behind bars?**

“Prerelease centers do not have bars on the windows or high fences like jails or prisons. The people at the prerelease will tell him what time he can leave the center and what time (s)he has to come back every night.”

### **3. Why did my family go to a prerelease center?**

If the court recommends prerelease instead of prison:

“The judge decided to give your family member a chance to prove that (s)he could obey the law and stay in our community instead of going to prison. (S)he will have to find a job and obey the rules. If your family member breaks the law again, the judge might send him or her to prison.”

If the family member went to prison and then prerelease:

“Your family member spent time in prison. Now it is time to show that (s)he can find a job, obey the law, and live in the community again. If your family member succeeds in the prerelease center, (s)he will be coming home in about six months.”

#### **4. When can I see or talk to my family member?**

“Prerelease centers will allow you to visit at certain times when your family member is not at work or in school. We will find out the rules, and I will go with you. People in the prerelease centers can use the telephone and write letters.”



#### **5. When is my family member coming home?**

“Your family member will probably stay in the prerelease center for six months (until July, until after Christmas, after your birthday, etc.) Sometimes they stay longer if they have classes to finish or if they have not obeyed the rules.”

#### **6. Where will he/she sleep?**

“People in prerelease centers have a bed and dresser. They usually share a small room with one other person. They have sheets, blankets, and pillows like yours.

#### **7. What will he/she wear?**

“People in prerelease centers wear their own clothes. They are allowed to have only a few clothing items like socks and underwear, work clothes, pajamas, a coat, and boots/shoes.”

#### **8. What will he/she eat?**

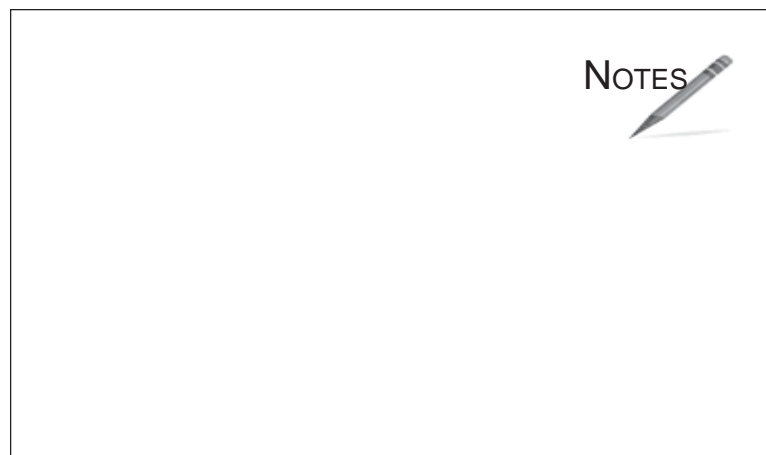
People who live at the prerelease center eat three meals in a big room that looks like a school cafeteria. Some prerelease centers serve food cooked somewhere else and brought in every day. Other prerelease centers have cooks who make the meals. Your family member and other people who live there might help in the kitchen.”

**9. What will my family member do in the prerelease center?**

“Prerelease centers have classes to help your family members and the other residents learn how to be less angry, stop using drugs or alcohol, become better parents, manage their money and follow the laws.”

**10. Why can't my family member have his cell phone to call me?**

“One of the consequences of committing a crime is that your family member is not allowed to have a cell phone. This is one of many rules (s)he has to follow. He can use the telephone at the prerelease center to call you but (s)he has to wait his or her turn.”



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# 10 QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER IS ON PROBATION OR PAROLE

## INTRODUCTION

It is not necessary for children to learn the difference between parole and probation. The same people supervise probationers and parolees in Montana, and the rules are similar.

Parole is early release from prison granted by the Board of Pardons and Parole (“parole board”) to offenders who have demonstrated that they do not pose a risk to victims or the public. They must have met court-ordered treatment and programming conditions outlined on the sentencing judgment, and shown evidence of positive change. Think of parole as prison time served in the community.

Probation is community supervision instead of prison. A probationer can avoid prison for the entire sentence as long as (s)he follows the probationary rules. Think of probation as prison time “suspended” over the family member to ensure compliance with the law.

Many sentences include a combination of prison and probation and/or parole. If your family member receives a 20-year sentence with 8 years suspended, (s)he might spend 12 years in prison and 8 more on probation. However, (s)he could be granted parole after serving as little as a fourth of the prison

sentence, or 5 years. In this case, your family member would serve 7 years (the balance of the prison sentence) on parole and 8 years on probation.

If a family member needs enhanced supervision on probation, the judge or Department of Corrections (DOC) may order the Intensive Supervision Program (ISP). A probationer on ISP is confined to a certain geographic area and must wear an electronic ankle monitor to show where (s)he is.

All parolees and probationers in Montana (including those on ISP) report to Probation and Parole (P&P) Officers employed by the DOC. Supervision rules are similar. Probationers and parolees must refrain from alcohol and illegal drugs, and stay

out of bars and casinos.

They cannot contact their victims or travel outside designated supervision areas without a permit.

The judge typically orders probationers and parolees to hold jobs, pay fines and fees including victim restitution, and participate in various types of treatment and programming.



### **1. What will my family member be like when (s)he gets out of prison?**

“Your family member is used to living in a small cell and obeying many rules, eating what they give him to eat, and wearing prison clothes. It will take awhile for him or her to adjust to being home. We will all have to get used to being a family again. People will help you with this.”

## **2. What will happen to my family member on probation/parole?**

Parole or probation after a time in prison:

“Because your family member committed a crime and had to be in prison, now (s)he must prove to people that (s)he can follow the rules. (S)he will meet (daily, weekly or monthly) with a probation and parole (P&P) officer to make sure he is following the rules.”

Sentenced to probation with no prison:

The judge decided that your family member can come home instead of going to prison. (S)he will have special rules to follow, including a meeting every week/month with a probation and parole (P&P) officer who enforces the rules.”

## **3. What does a P&P officer look like?**

“P&P officers look just like other people. They can be men or women. They are like police officers except that they don’t wear uniforms. They have badges and sometimes they carry guns. A P&P officer might come to your home sometimes to make sure your family member is following the rules. If you are afraid or don’t feel safe with your family member, you can tell the P&P officer and (s)he will help you.”

## **4. Will the same P&P officer always come to our house?**

“The officer might change sometime. Even if the P&P officer changes, you will be safe when (s)he is in your home.”

A child will probably experience many disappointments when a loved one is bound by travel, time, and activity restrictions. You might try focusing on the positive aspects of community supervision instead of prison.

**5. Why can't my family member come to my ball game, go shopping with me, or take us to Grandma's for Thanksgiving?**



“Your family member is lucky to be at home instead of in prison, but (s)he has many rules to follow. One of the rules is that (s)he cannot leave town (or the county) without special permission. I'll go to your ball game/shopping with you. Maybe Grandma can come here for Thanksgiving.”

**6. Why can't we have a hamburger at (the local restaurant and bar)?**

“We talked about how your family member gets in trouble when he drinks alcohol (or gambles). One of the rules says that (s)he cannot go places where (s)he might be tempted to drink or play the machines. Our old restaurant has a casino. Let's make hamburgers at home/get the hamburgers to go/try another restaurant that doesn't serve alcohol.”

**7. How long does probation (or parole) last?**

“The judge decided that your family member will be on probation for 10 years. That means you will be in high school.”

“Your family member will be finished with parole when you are 13 years old.”

**8. What will happen if my family member breaks a rule of probation?**

“The P&P officer would have to decide what to do.”

Sometimes a family member can have another chance but he has to agree not to get in any more trouble. If (s)he breaks the rules again, a judge might have to decide whether to send your family member to prison.”

**9. My family member drank some beer and they took him or her back to jail. What will happen?**

“We don’t know yet. Sometimes people on probation (or parole) go to a special program for a few months to learn how to stop drinking alcohol. Your family member knows the rules and (s)he made a bad choice. (S)he will have consequences.”



**10. Why doesn't my family member have enough money to buy my new ballet slippers?**

“The judge told your family member that he must pay for the damage he caused when he ran into the other people’s car. One of the people was hurt in the wreck and because it was your family member’s fault, he will be paying the doctor bills. These bills are some of the consequences.”

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## PHONE NUMBERS (406 AREA CODE)

### Montana Prisons

Montana State Prison (MSP)	Deer Lodge	846-1320
“Boot Camp”	Deer Lodge	846-1320
Montana Women’s Prison (MWP)	Billings	247-5100
Missoula Assessment & Sanction Center (MASC)	Missoula	258-4000
Crossroads Correctional Center	Shelby	434-7055
Dawson County Correctional Facility	Glendive	377-7600
Great Falls Regional Prison	Great Falls	454-6826

### Prerelease and Treatment Centers

Alternatives, Inc.	Billings	259-9695
Connections (alcohol treatment)	Butte	782-6626
Elkhorn (meth treatment/women)	Boulder	447-5300
Gallatin County Reentry Program	Bozeman	994-0305
Great Falls Transition Center	Great Falls	727-0944
Helena Prerelease Center	Helena	442-6572
Missoula Correctional Services	Missoula	541-9200
NEXUS (meth treatment/men)	Lewistown	535-6660
Passages	Billings	294-9609
START	Warm Springs	693-9992
WATCH West (felony DUI)	Warm Springs	693-2272
WATCH East (felony DUI)	Glendive	377-6001

### State Probation & Parole Regional Offices

Billings 377-4086	896-5400	Glendive
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Great Falls	727-6061	Helena	444-7396
Kalispell	752-257	Missoula	549-0022

### **Federal Probation**

Billings	657-6287	Browning	338-5921
Glasgow	228-2519	Great Falls	453-4461
Hardin	665-4210	Helena	441-1160

### **Montana County and Tribal Jails**

NOTE: County sheriffs and tribal governments usually oversee local jails. Some counties and tribes do not have jails or they share with other jurisdictions. Here is a listing of all county sheriff's offices and tribal governments. People at these numbers can answer questions about visitation and provide directions to the facilities.

Anaconda-Deer Lodge	Anaconda	563-5241
Beaverhead	Dillon	683-3700
Big Horn	Hardin	665-9780
Blaine	Chinook	357-3260
Broadwater	Townsend	266-3441
Butte-Silver Bow	Butte	497-1121
Carbon	Red Lodge	446-1234
Carter	Ekalaka	775-8743
Cascade	Great Falls	454-6820
Chouteau	Fort Benton	622-5451
Custer	Miles City	874-3320
Daniels	Scobey	487-2691
Dawson	Glendive	377-5291
Fallon	Baker	778-7115
Fergus	Lewistown	535-3415
Flathead	Kalispell	58-5585
Gallatin	Bozeman	582-2125
Garfield	Jordan	557-2540

Glacier	Cut Bank	873-3656
Golden Valley	Ryegate	568-2321
Granite	Philipsburg	859-3251
Hill Havre	265-2512	
Jefferson	Boulder	225-4075
Judith Basin	Stanford	566-2277
Lake	Polson	5883-7262
Lewis & Clark	Helena	5447-8235
Liberty	Chester	5759-5171
Lincoln	Libby	293-7781
Madison	Virginia City	843-5301
McCone	Circle	485-3405
Meagher	White Sulphur	547-3397
Mineral	Superior	822-3557
Missoula	Missoula	258-4810
Musselshell	Roundup	323-1402
Park	Livingston	222-4172
Petroleum	Winnett	429-6551
Phillips	Malta	654-2350
Pondera	Conrad	271-4060
Powder River	Broadus	436-2333
Powell	Deer Lodge	846-2711
Prairie	Terry	635-5738
Ravalli	Hamilton	375-6275
Richland	Sidney	433-2919
Roosevelt	Wolf Point	653-6213
Rosebud	Forsyth	346-2715
Sanders	Thompson Falls	827-3584
Sheridan	Plentywood	765-1200
Stillwater	Columbus	322-5326
Sweet Grass	Big Timber	932-5143
Teton	Choteau	466-5781
Toole	Shelby	434-5585
Treasure	Hysham	342-5211

Valley	Glasgow	228-6277
Wheatland	Harlowton	632-5614
Wibaux	Wibaux	796-2415
Yellowstone	Billings	256-2929

## Tribal Governments

Blackfeet	Browning	338-7521
Crow	Crow Agency	638-3700
Confederated Salish & Kootenai	Pablo	675-2700
Fort Peck	Poplar	768-5155
Fort Belknap	Harlem	353-2205
Little Shell	Great Falls	452-2892
Northern Cheyenne	Lame Deer	477-6284
Chippewa-Cree	Box Elder	395-4497

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## INTERNET RESOURCES

*MAFTI provides these internet website links as a service to caregivers. We do not vouch for the accuracy of the content or have a position on that content. If you do not have access to the internet, try your local library or ask a friend to print materials from a home computer.*

**Family and Corrections Network (FCN)** including the Children of Prisoners Library. [www.fcnetwork.org/cpl/cplindex.html](http://www.fcnetwork.org/cpl/cplindex.html). This site features 18 free pamphlets that can be printed and distributed. One of the pamphlets is reprinted on page 5 of this manual, along with a list of all available titles.

Prison Talk: An online community for families of prison inmates. [www.prisontalk.com/](http://www.prisontalk.com/).

**National Institute of Corrections** (U.S. Department of Justice) link to CCIP: The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents: <http://nicic.org/Library/019075>.

**How to Explain Jails and Prisons to Children**, Oregon Department of Corrections. [http://www.oregon.gov/DOC/PUBAFF/docs/oam/explaining\\_prison\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/DOC/PUBAFF/docs/oam/explaining_prison_booklet.pdf).

**Hope House Resources for Children of Prisoners.** <http://hopehousedc.org/aboutus.html>.

**Montana Children's Trust Fund State Family Resource Center.** Serving families touched by incarceration. [www.mafti.org](http://www.mafti.org). (800) 520-2996. [marty@parentingplace.net](mailto:marty@parentingplace.net).

**Mentoring Children of Prisoners: Caregiver's Choice:** [http://www.mentoring.org/find\\_resources/caregiverschoice/](http://www.mentoring.org/find_resources/caregiverschoice/)

**Montana Department of Corrections:** <http://www.cor.mt.gov>. (406) 444-3930. To check the current location of a state prison inmate, call VINE at (800) 456-3076 or log onto [www.vinelink.com](http://www.vinelink.com). You may also visit the CON website (inmate locator) at <http://app.mt.gov/conweb/>

**Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Montana** at [www.casagal.org](http://www.casagal.org) with links to CASA programs in Montana. Judges appoint trained volunteers to advocate for the best interest of children in the state's abuse and neglect system. Includes links to resources in Montana. (866) 863-2272.

**Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services** [www.dphhs.mt.gov](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov) which includes the Child Support Enforcement Division and links to Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), SNAP (food stamps), Energy Assistance, and Child Care Assistance.

Published by:  
**Montana Alliance for Families  
Touched by Incarceration**

## **MAFTI**

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(406) 728-5437**

### **Our Mission Statement:**

The Montana Alliance for Families Touched by Incarceration (MAFTI) is a community-based branch of a nonprofit organization, whose mission is to provide support and advocacy for families touched by incarceration in Montana. Our goal is to empower each individual -- the child, the caregiver, and the incarcerated parent or other family member.



**MAFTI has a limited number of free copies of this manual. If you know a caregiver or other individual who needs a copy, or if you have extra copies to share, please call MAFTI at (406) 728-5437. You may also access an electronic copy at either [www.cor.mt.gov](http://www.cor.mt.gov) or [www.mafti.org](http://www.mafti.org).**



This manual was printed at Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE), the industries program at Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. MCE offers diverse opportunities for inmates to learn job skills necessary for success when they are released back to their families and communities.

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