

- 4 Hawaii's HHIMPACT Extends Across Islands
- 5 Giving Voice to the 9/11 Experience
- 6 Embracing Family Ties for Children of Incarcerated Parents
- 8 Spotlight on Culture: Helping Immigrant Latin-American Families

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL CHILD TRAUMATIC STRESS NETWORK

Two Network Members Take Holistic Approach with Children of Incarcerated Parents

Lilas Rajae-Moore recognizes that children of parents on probation are at risk for trauma: "If a mom goes to prison," she says, "the child sees her go away once. If she's on probation, she could be in and out of county jail, so the child is experiencing repeated incidents of separation trauma."

Rajae-Moore, Director of the Denver Juvenile Probation Department's Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC), a Network member, also recognized that there was no effective mechanism for identifying and intervening with drug-endangered children of families with probation involvement. So Rajae-Moore secured additional grant funding and broadened TASC's mission under the Justice Initiative for Drug Endangered Families.



Left to right: Nathaniel Cordova, Stacey Cordova, Liah Archuleta, Georgeanna Camacho and Patricio Cordova enjoy a pizza dinner during the TASC/Colorado Coalition for the Homeless-sponsored Family Night in August, 2011, held at the Denver Juvenile Probation Department.

TASC partners with the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, and others, to expand services to children and families, and fosters relationships with probation officers to encourage referrals. TASC team members integrated a prevention lens with the treatment lens already in place for drug offenders involved with the probation department. They respond immediately to clients, via phone and text-messaging; they incentivize probation requirements like showing up for drug testing; and they work aggressively to re-engage clients with the police department after arrests are made for noncompliance with the terms of probation. "The faster we can get clients," Rajae-Moore said, "the better chance we have of engaging them, getting them motivated for treatment, and decreasing the sense of hopelessness that these parents have. It's not rocket science, but it works!"

Four years ago, Patricia Brown, a Denver mother on probation with the drug court, lost custody of her four young children and was sentenced to a month in the county jail. A referral to Rajae-Moore and her team activated a raft of services. "We all had mental health evaluations, and everyone was in therapy: me, my husband, the kids," Brown recalled. "From the beginning the idea was, 'let's not just fix the person [on drugs]; let's get everybody in the whole house better.' TASC made it possible for everybody to come back home."

Agency Cohesion in Baltimore

Like Rajae-Moore, Stephanie S. Franklin, Esq., sees firsthand the traumatic effects of parental incarceration on children. Franklin, President and CEO of Mecca's Place, Inc., in Baltimore, MD, is legal counsel for children involved in child abuse and neglect proceedings. On a case-by-case basis, she has often advocated for visitations between incarcerated parents and their children, but she felt frustrated with the lack of interventions to help the children deal with the trauma caused by their parents' incarceration. In the fall of 2010, Franklin joined a community roundtable begun by the Family Center at Kennedy Krieger Institute,

>>> cont'd on pg. 7

Two Network Members Take Holistic Approach with Children of Incarcerated Parents *cont'd from pg. 6*

Baltimore, to address the needs of this often invisible population of children.

A Network member, the Family Center had previously launched a community advisory council as part of its NCTSI grant to address three populations of traumatized children: those affected by parental substance abuse, neglect, or incarceration. Discussions focusing on the impact of incarceration took root and evolved into the roundtable, said Elizabeth Thompson, PhD, Assistant Vice President and Director of the Family Center. "It started out small and has grown into a group of 15-plus active participants." The group found that many participants, like Franklin, were offering individualized advocacy and other services for children of incarcerated parents. The problem, according to Thompson: "No one knew what the others were doing."



TASC client Chaz Line (right) pictured with his son, Xani-Stisean White, at the November 2010 Thanksgiving Family Night sponsored by TASC at the Denver Juvenile Probation Department. Families enjoyed a full meal, along with crafts and activities for children and family members.

Bringing stakeholders to the roundtable from the judicial, law enforcement, education, mental health, and incarcerated parent communities was an effective way to increase cohesion among service agencies. "I liked the team at Kennedy Krieger," Franklin said, "and I saw that this project could make some systemic changes in how we treat these families. We are starting to learn about each other, to cross systems to refer to each other, and to collectively think of how we can make a more seamless system to serve these families."

Kennedy Krieger has produced a toolkit targeted to mental health practitioners, school personnel, child welfare system staff, legal system personnel, and caregivers. The toolkit includes group-specific PowerPoint presentations, psychoeducational materials, a comprehensive list of local Baltimore-area agencies offering services to families, and *The Family Adjustment Tool for Parental Incarceration*. Developed by center staff, this tool helps service providers assess the family and prioritize intervention needs in several areas, including incarceration explanation, reducing stigma, facilitating parental contact, increasing the support system, and increasing consistent structure in the family.

Thompson said that plans are in the works to conduct focus groups with incarcerated parents, with institutional review board approval, in order to elicit from them the most important obstacles to maintaining contact with their children. A December focus group will concentrate on the needs of incarcerated fathers, a group whose voice "is not heard enough," Thompson observed.

Community roundtable member Honorable Bonita J. Dancy, Lead Judge for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, Family Division/Juvenile (a Model Court of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges), said that she hopes the roundtable will develop programs that allow children and their incarcerated parents sufficient time together, as well as services to foster renewal and continuation of positive relationships. These efforts, she believes, will enhance the number of children who can return home when their parents are released. ■