

Developmental Effects of Parental Incarceration on Children



Possible Developmental Effects on Children of Parental Crime, Arrest, and Incarceration ¹				
Developmental Stage	Developmental Characteristics	Developmental Tasks	Influencing Factors	Effects
Infancy (0-2 years)	Total Dependency	Attachment and trust	Parent-child separation	Impaired parent-child bonding
Early Childhood (2-6 years)	Increased perception and mobility; incomplete individuation from parent	Sense of autonomy, independence and initiative	Parent-child separation; Trauma	Anxiety, developmental regression, acute traumatic stress, survivor guilt
Middle Childhood (7-10 years)	Increased independence, ability to reason, importance of peers	Sense of industry, ability to work productively	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Acute traumatic stress and reactive behaviors
Early Adolescence (11-14 years)	Increasing abstract thinking, future-oriented behavior, aggression, puberty	Ability to work productively with others, control emotions	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Rejection of limits on behavior, trauma-reactive behaviors
Late Adolescence (15-18 years)	Emotional crisis and confusion, adult sexual development, abstract thinking, independence	Achieves identity, engages in adult work and relationships, resolves conflicts with family and society	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Premature termination of parent-child relationship; intergenerational crime and incarceration

Resources:

The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents: <http://e-ccip.org/index.html>

End Notes:

¹Johnston, Denise & Gabel, Katherine, "Incarcerated Parents", in *Children of Incarcerated Parents*, Edited by Katherine Gabel and Denise Johnston, M.D. (Lexington Books, New York, 1995), p.21

**For more information on drug endangered children, visit our web site
www.nationaldec.org**

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