

# **CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS (CIP) PROGRAM**



## **OFFICE OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC DEFENDER**

An Evaluation of the period from October 2006 through December 2007  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This evaluation of the Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) Program consists of two components: an evaluation of program *processes* that analyzes how the program is currently operating, and an evaluation of program *outcomes* that describes program results to date and provides a framework for how program objectives can be measured in the future.

We base this evaluation on data collected from the hard copy files maintained by the CIP social worker and from interviews with community and agency stakeholders, former clients and their families, deputy public defenders, and CIP Program staff. We use these data sources to present a picture of the CIP Program structure, reveal the characteristics of the population served by the program, and evaluate the provision of services to clients and their children. Our findings suggest that the CIP Program has positively impacted many clients and their children.

*“The CIP Social Worker would come and visit me when I was locked up. She did a lot of work for me. She would mediate between my children and CPS. She put me through on three-way calls so I could talk to my family out of state. She helped me get a DNA test to establish my paternity. She was my only way of communicating with the outside world. She helped me out a lot--I’d have been lost without her.”*  
-“Tim,” Formerly Incarcerated Parent

### Key Findings from the Process Evaluation

- In collaboration with the Sheriff’s Department, the CIP staff has achieved key changes in jail practices, resulting in the availability of breast milk to infants and expansion of access to visitation for incarcerated parents and their children.
- The majority of deputy public defenders handling felony cases requested CIP services for one or more clients during the study period.
- The CIP staff responds to the majority of service requests in less than one week.
- Case management improvements include increased emphasis on documentation of social worker activities, improvements in data collection tools, and increased training for CIP staff and advocacy on behalf of families.

### Key Findings from the Outcomes Evaluation

- The CIP Program served 148 CIP clients during the study period (October 2006-December 2007), and provided over 178 distinct units of service to these clients.
- The largest share of service requests were for visits with children, followed by requests for housing, assistance with family court and assistance with legal paperwork.
- Over one-half of clients requested visits, but only one-third actually received visits due, in part, to barriers to visitation.
- Overall, the social worker attempted over 81 percent of services requests and provided over 64 percent of service requests to clients and their families.
- CIP clients are more likely to be men (72 percent) than women (28 percent).

- The average age of clients is 32, the average age of children is 5.8, and the average number of children is 1.7.
- The majority of CIP clients are African American (68 percent), while Latinos and Caucasians each make up 10 percent of the population.
- 51% of incarcerated parents have a need for Drug and/or Alcohol treatment. Within this group, 73% of mothers need treatment, compared to 43% of fathers who need treatment.
- One quarter of CIP clients are married and nearly one-half are primary caregivers.
- The majority of incarcerated fathers have children in the care of another parent (62 percent), while the majority of incarcerated mothers have children in the care of relatives (53 percent).

## **Key Recommendations**

### **1. Collect case management information in an electronic format.**

The use of an electronic database would allow social workers to provide services more effectively, improve the Program Director's ability to oversee caseloads, and enable program leadership to report on program outcomes. It could also help ensure that social workers never record the same information twice so that time spent on documentation can be minimized.

### **2. Target CIP services to clients who are likely to benefit most.**

CIP Program resources are limited and cannot be provided to all incarcerated parents. Targeting services would allow program management to achieve the greatest gains given limited resources and provide guidelines for deputy public defenders when making service requests. The Program should target high-need and high-efficacy clients, including those who are primary caregivers, pregnant, engaged in CPS reunification, engaged in custody disputes, seeking residential treatment, or those who are highly motivated to strengthen their families.

### **3. Focus CIP resources on the provision of a limited set of intensive services.**

Focusing the CIP Program on the provision of a small set of primary services would help clarify program objectives and increase the likelihood of achieving them. The Program should provide a small set of services through intensive case management, including locating children and addressing their urgent needs, facilitating visits, assisting with family court, producing family impact statements, and setting up residential treatment.

### **4. Implement experimental design to assess causal impacts of the Program.**

The Public Defender's Office and the Zellerbach Family Foundation have made significant investments in the CIP Program pilot. A study designed to evaluate the impact of the Program on social welfare and criminal justice outcomes would allow for the realization of these investments and ground program replications in solid evidence of success.

**5. Conduct cost-benefit analysis of CIP Program.**

Identifying and quantifying averted taxpayer costs, including costs from the child welfare and criminal justice systems, could increase buy-in and support for the CIP Program among stakeholders and potential funders.

**6. Identify and secure additional resources to expand the CIP Program.**

Increasing the financial resources available for the CIP Program will allow the CIP Program to hire additional CIP social workers in order to serve more clients who would benefit from CIP services.

## THE CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS PROGRAM

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The San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) Program's mission is to help promote a healthy relationship between children and their incarcerated parents. The Program was envisioned and initiated by Jeff Adachi, San Francisco's publicly elected Public Defender, in partnership with the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

The CIP Program is part of the Reentry Unit, which provides clients of the Public Defender's Office with a combination of legal and social support. The Reentry Unit strives to eliminate the lifetime barriers to employment presented by having a criminal record, and to maximize the health and self-sufficiency of clients who are in need of prisoner reentry services. These services include substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, employment and education resources, housing, and support for clients' families. The Reentry Unit represents the first attempt by a public defender's office to address client legal outcomes through a comprehensive set of social services.

*"Today, our office combines our core mission of providing the highest quality of legal representation with social and reentry services aimed at helping people turn their lives around."*

*-Jeff Adachi, San Francisco Public Defender*

The CIP Program staff works with clients, their families, the deputy public defenders, and a network of community-based treatment providers to respond to the needs of incarcerated parents and their families. The staff is uniquely positioned to address family needs that are created when a parent is taken into custody. Services provided include addressing the urgent needs of children, setting up visitation, assisting clients with family court or paperwork, and connecting clients and their families to additional social services. The goals of these services are to insulate children from the risks associated with parental incarceration, maintain family bonds through the period of incarceration, and improve the ability of clients to participate in family life upon their release.

### **The Literature on Incarcerated Parents and their Children<sup>i</sup>**

Over the past several decades, the number of children whose parents are incarcerated has increased dramatically and the number continues to rise. Nationwide, an estimated 1.5 million children have incarcerated parents and around 10 million more have parents who were imprisoned at some point in their children's lives (Simmons, 2000). In California, an estimated 856,000 children have a parent currently involved in the adult criminal justice system, representing almost nine percent of the state's children (Simmons, 2000). Approximately 97,000 of these children have a parent who is currently in jail (Simmons, 2000).

The CIP Program is supported by a growing body of research suggesting that interventions to build family relationships improve criminal justice outcomes and reduce recidivism (Dowden and Andrews, 1999; Hairston et al., 2001). Research also suggests that children of incarcerated parents are a high-risk population in need of social services. Several studies find that these children are more likely to experience difficulties with academic performance, criminal involvement, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and juvenile delinquency compared with other children (Stanton, 1980; Wright & Seymour, 2000). Children of incarcerated parents are up to six times more likely to be incarcerated at some point in their lives (Reed & Reed, 1998).



This literature motivates intervention programs to assist parents in making changes in their lives, ease the impact of parental incarceration on children, and mitigate the intergenerational cycle of poverty and incarceration. While parental incarceration generally places hardship on families, the experience may also provide a window of opportunity for parents to reevaluate their choices, access services for themselves and their families, and make long-term changes.

## **Evaluation Objectives**

This evaluation was funded by the Zellerbach Family Foundation in order to assess CIP's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. For the past two years, the CIP Program has operated as a pilot with the goal of creating a self-sustaining program in the future. An independent doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley conducted this evaluation at the request of the San Francisco Public Defender's Office.

This evaluation consists of two components. We begin with an evaluation of program *processes* that analyzes current program operations. Then we provide an evaluation of program *outcomes* that describes program results and creates a framework for measuring program objectives in the future. We offer recommendations for program improvement where applicable and summarize these recommendations at the end of this document.

## **Research Methods**

Our findings are based on a review of the literature, interviews with stakeholders, and an analysis of case-level data. We interviewed Program clients, their family members, deputy public defenders, and CIP's governmental and non-profit community partners. We also interviewed the CIP Program staff and observed the CIP social worker on the job (please see Appendix A for more details on interviews conducted.) We conducted an extensive analysis of client-level data from 148 hard copy files maintained by the CIP social worker between October 2006 and December 2007. We selected this time period because it represents the first 15 months that a new effort to systematically collect client data and case activities was implemented. We capped the period under review at the end of December 2007 so that we could observe some activity on all cases.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

The information we gathered enables us to paint a picture of the population served by the Program and evaluate the provision of services to clients and their children. This study does not evaluate the causal effects of the CIP Program on the criminal justice or social welfare outcomes of program participants. However, we do provide recommendations for how the San Francisco Public Defender's Office can evaluate these outcomes in the future. In addition, we provide guidance on how a cost-benefit analysis could be used to translate program impacts into taxpayer dollars saved. We are hopeful that San Francisco's CIP Program can ultimately serve as a model for other Public Defender's Offices whose constituencies might realize similar benefits.

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## PROCESS EVALUATION

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The process evaluation focuses on the day-to-day operations of the CIP Program. We begin with a description of the current staffing and program structure. We then describe and evaluate the stages in the progression of a typical case through the CIP Program, highlighting successful components and identifying opportunities for improvement. Finally, we discuss the placement of the CIP Program within the Public Defender's Office.

### Program Staffing and Advocacy Efforts

Public Defender Jeff Adachi and Chief Attorney Teresa Caffese provide leadership for the CIP Program. Simin Shamji, Director of Specialty Courts and Reentry Programs, directs the Program as part of the Reentry Unit at the Public Defender's Office. She determines whether requests for services are appropriate, refers requests to the social worker, manages casework, and oversees training.

In partnership with the Program director and the client's deputy public defender, the CIP social worker provides services and referrals for CIP clients. She conducts client casework, including the assessment of client needs, development of case plans, and the provision of services. There is currently one full-time social worker dedicated to the Program.

In addition to providing client services, the CIP Program staff advocates for changes in policies and practices that affect clients and their families. For example, the CIP Program staff worked with the Sheriff's Department to remove barriers to contact visits between incarcerated parents and their children. This policy change will facilitate visits requested by clients, as discussed in greater detail in the outcomes section of this evaluation. The CIP Program staff also worked with the Sheriff's Department to provide breast milk pumps to incarcerated mothers and to ensure their breast milk would be refrigerated and made available to infants' caregivers. These advocacy efforts have produced concrete changes in the way families experience parental incarceration.

#### *Support for Lactating Mothers*

*In the past, although lactating mothers were able to pump their breast milk so they could maintain their lactation and breast feed their babies upon their release, the jail did not have the resources to store the milk or a system to get the milk to caregivers. In collaboration with the Sheriff Department's Medical Director, the CIP Program staff helped ensure that a refrigerator could be dedicated to breast milk storage at the San Francisco County Jail, and a system was devised to allow caretakers to pick up the breast milk so that infants can benefit from it. The CIP social worker also obtained a permanent breast pump for the incarcerated mothers. These changes in practices may further encourage mothers to maintain lactation while in custody, as well as help insulate infants from the negative effects of maternal incarceration.*

## Program Structure

A typical case moves through the CIP Program structure in seven stages. (A flow chart of these stages is provided in Appendix B.) In an initial intake interview with a client, the deputy public defender determines whether to request CIP services on behalf of the client. All client of the Office of the Public Defender who are parents facing felony charges are eligible for CIP services, but only a small percentage are referred. A deputy public defender initiates a CIP case by completing a request for services form. The CIP Program director then reviews this request and, if the case is eligible and approved for services, she refers the case on to the CIP social worker.

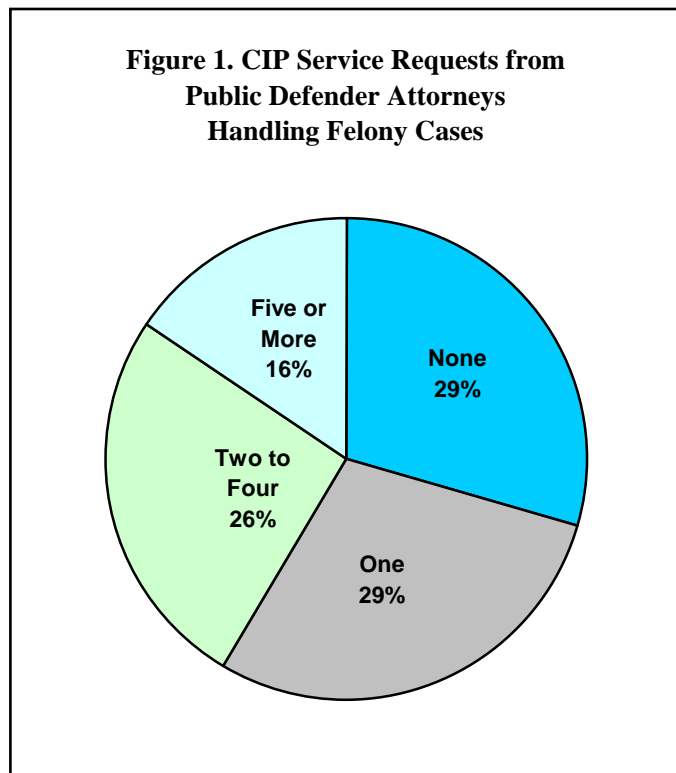
Within five (at most) working days of receiving a referral, the social worker meets with the client to conduct a needs assessment. Based on this assessment, the social worker develops a case plan with the client and then works to provide the services identified in the case plan, such as help with family visits or referrals to outside services. The CIP social worker provides regular updates about case activity to the client’s deputy public defender and records activities in the hard copy case files. Once services are completed, the social worker periodically follows up with the client to identify additional needs and capture client outcomes. Each case has a 12-month time limit, and most cases stay open for this duration. However, if the client is charged with a new offense, the case may remain open for longer than one year.

## Decision to Request Services

Almost all CIP service requests were initiated by the deputy public defenders on behalf of their clients. We interviewed a sample of 11 (out of 58) deputy public defenders handling felony cases about how they make the decision to request services for their clients.

We find that deputy public defenders are generally aware of the CIP Program and understand the eligibility rules. They also indicate that about two-thirds of their clients are parents. However, the majority of the deputy public defenders made one or fewer service requests over the period (as shown in Figure 1). Our interviews provide some insight into why they request services for a small proportion of eligible clients.

Surprisingly, the absence of client targeting guidelines may actually reduce service requests. Given the large population of eligible clients and the limited availability of CIP services, deputy public defenders may feel responsible for appropriately targeting services. If this is the case, developing further guidelines could encourage more service requests, especially from deputy



public defenders that are unsure of which clients should be referred. Several deputy public defenders also explained that many of their clients do not express an interest in child-related services. As a result, they refer few or no clients to the CIP Program.

In the future, the CIP Program staff may wish to pursue additional ways of connecting clients to the Program. Deputy public defenders typically carry caseloads of 50 or more clients, leaving little time for gathering information or providing services beyond legal defense. Given these time constraints, paralegals and interns may also be valuable resources for connecting clients to services.

The CIP Program staff uses the CIP Program brochure and the website for direct outreach to clients. The brochure is displayed in community organizations in San Francisco and is given to clients by the court clerks. These outreach mechanisms have reached clients, as demonstrated by the recent increase in clients making direct contact with the CIP Program director.

### **Case Referrals**

The CIP Program director receives service requests and refers appropriate cases to the CIP social worker. Clients who are charged with misdemeanor offenses, clients who are not parents, or clients whose service requests are out of scope are not referred to the worker. We found very few inappropriate service requests.

In some cases, it was difficult to determine whether a client was eligible for CIP services based on the information provided on the service request form, so cases were referred to the social worker who then determined that the cases did not meet CIP eligibility requirements. We found four cases like this. In two of these cases, the client did not have a child, and in the other two cases the client was charged with a misdemeanor offense. After conducting an initial assessment and determining that the clients were inappropriately referred to the CIP Program, the social worker closed these cases.

### **Client Assessments**

After receiving a referral from the Program director, the CIP social worker meets with the client to conduct a needs assessment. The assessment form includes client demographics, education and employment background, and mental and physical health information. The assessment form also includes the children's characteristics, living arrangement, level of parental involvement, and Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement. We find that in practice, the social worker typically collects only a subset of this information. Given time constraints, it may be practical to limit data collection depending on each client's particular situation. Due to these data limitations, we were able to report only on client and child characteristics that were consistently collected in the hardcopy files.

The target response time for the CIP Program is four to five working days. We find clients met with the social worker within an average of about six working days after the deputy public defender made the request, indicating the Program staff exceeded the response time target. We also find variation in response times. In one-third of the cases, the turnaround time was two days or fewer, but in one-quarter of the cases, the wait time was more than seven working days. To the extent that the social worker prioritizes cases that need immediate response over other

requests, then we would expect to see variation in response times. For example, we find the average time lapse is about five days for requests to meet urgent child needs and four days for requests to assist clients with family court. A quick turnaround for requests to provide these services is particularly important to meeting program goals, as we discuss further in the outcomes evaluation. The program may benefit from specific response time targets based on the nature of the service request.

## **Housing the CIP Program in the Public Defender's Office**

The San Francisco CIP Program is unique in that it is housed within the Public Defender's Office, while other CIP Programs are typically housed within the Sheriff's Department or run by community organizations. Other models for facilitating visits between incarcerated parents and their children are driven by the identification of visitation needs by family members or social workers outside the criminal justice system. Drawing on interviews with the CIP Program director, deputy public defenders, and other key stakeholders, we identify advantages and disadvantages of including the CIP Program within the Public Defender's Office.

The philosophy of the CIP Program fits well with the mission of the San Francisco Public Defender's Office: "to protect and defend the rights of our indigent clients through effective, vigorous, compassionate, and creative legal advocacy." Jeff Adachi's strong support for the Program and his advocacy for children of incarcerated parents give the Program a firm foundation. All 11 interviews with the deputy public defenders indicated that they are very supportive of this Program and believe it should be housed within the Public Defender's Office.

The Program may benefit in practical ways from its location within the Public Defender's Office as well. The close proximity of the social worker and the deputy public defenders allows for easy coordination and information sharing. Important information about cases is often communicated between the CIP social worker and deputy public defenders in hallway conversations, something that would not occur if CIP were housed elsewhere. For instance, while shadowing the CIP social worker, we observed that when she saw a deputy public defender for a client she was about to visit, the deputy public defender conveyed late-breaking information about the custody of the client's child. The social worker was then able to quickly communicate this new information to the client.

The Public Defender's Office is located one block from the San Francisco County Jail facilities and Hall of Justice, minimizing travel time for the CIP social worker when meeting with clients held there. The CIP Program also benefits from pre-established relationships with other agencies. For instance, the Sheriff's Department is more likely to take visitation requests coming from the Public Defender's Office seriously than they might if the request were coming from a newly established independent organization. Finally, the location of the San Francisco CIP Program allows for effective deputy public defender trainings as the CIP Program director has built long-term relationships with current deputy public defenders.

Perhaps the most important advantage of housing the CIP Program within the Public Defender's Office is that communications with the CIP social worker are protected under attorney-client privilege. This protection is important because clients might hesitate to share concerns about their children if they fear this information will be reported to Child Protective Services (CPS).

*"What I've always loved about this program is that it's embedded in an environment that serves parents. There have been some other attempts to provide these services that may have been met with some suspicion from the parents. My hope is that the social worker is allied with the parents so that the parents will have more trust. Ideally, you'd already have that trust going in."*

**-Nell Bernstein,  
SFCIPP Program Coordinator**

San Francisco law enforcement has recognized this problem and taken a leadership role in developing guidelines to protect children whose parent is arrested and placed into custody (as reported in the San Francisco Chronicle, 2006). In these cases, the incarcerated parent may be the best source of information about the children's care and well-being. The CIP social worker is in a unique position to build trust and work with clients to ensure that children are safe and cared for while their parents are in custody.

Despite the many advantages of CIP's connection to the Public Defender's Office, there are some aspects of this connection that could be hindrances in the future. When applying for grants, philanthropic foundations that traditionally do not fund government organizations may be unwilling or unable to fund the Program. A way around this could be to establish a partner non-profit organization through which philanthropic funds could be obtained. On the other hand, some prospective funders may view the CIP Program's connection to the Public Defender's Office as a sign of the Program's strong roots, connections, and leadership.

Housing the program within the Public Defender's Office may suggest the direct clients of the Program are parents. However, the name of the Program—Children of Incarcerated Parents—suggests the primary clients are children. While the stakeholders we interviewed did not have concerns about the any conflicts of interest between serving parents and serving their children, these concerns may arise from some stakeholders as the Program grows.

## OUTCOMES EVALUATION

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The outcomes evaluation focuses on services provided for clients and families through the CIP Program. We begin this section with a description of the demographic and family characteristics of the San Francisco CIP population. We summarize the requests for social services during the period under study and evaluate the provision of these services to clients and their children. We then discuss possible paths through which the CIP Program might impact the criminal justice outcomes of clients of the Public Defender's Office. We provide guidelines for targeting and focusing services to produce the greatest impact on social and criminal justice outcomes. Finally, we provide an experimental research design to test the causal impacts of the CIP Program on these outcomes. We also provide a framework for a cost-benefit analysis that could be used to translate positive effects of the Program into savings to local, state, and federal government.

### **Characteristics of the CIP Population**

We know little about the characteristics of incarcerated parents and their children because this information is seldom collected. When it is collected, it is rarely recorded in ways that are conducive to data analysis. This evaluation has allowed for the collection and analysis of the demographic and family characteristics of the San Francisco CIP population. We describe our findings and, where possible, provide comparisons from prior studies about the general population of incarcerated parents or individuals. We believe this data makes an important contribution to the literature on incarcerated parents and their children. Our findings are presented below and summarized in the data table in Appendix C.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

We describe demographic information on gender, age, and race/ethnicity from the hard copy files maintained by the CIP social worker. We find that the CIP Program clients have similar demographic characteristics to those of the general incarcerated population. However, CIP Program participants are older and more likely to be women and African American than the general incarcerated population, which may reflect differences in the characteristics of the incarcerated parent population. Because there is a selection process into the CIP Program, our data cannot be generalized to the larger population of incarcerated parents in San Francisco.

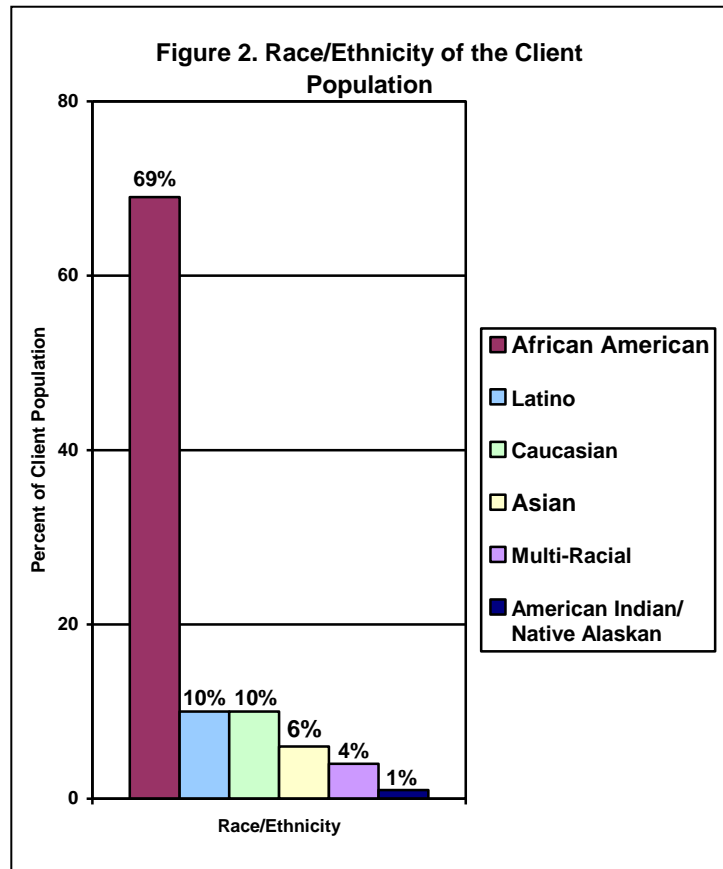
#### *Age and Gender*

The average age among the CIP client population is 32 years, somewhat older than estimates for the general San Francisco jail population (28 years; Van de Water, 2003). We find the majority of CIP clients are men (72 percent), although men are somewhat under-represented in the CIP client population relative to estimates of their representation in the San Francisco County Jail population (87 percent; Van de Water, 2003). These findings suggest that either incarcerated women are either more likely to be parents or more likely to receive program services than incarcerated men. Although estimates are not available for the parent population in the San Francisco County Jails, national estimates of state prison populations suggest incarcerated women are more likely to be parents than incarcerated men, which would explain their greater representation among the CIP population (65 percent of women compared with 55 percent of men; Mumola, 2000).



## Race/Ethnicity

Figure 2 shows the racial/ethnic breakdown of the CIP client population. Compared with estimates from the San Francisco County Jail population, African Americans are over-represented (68 percent compared with 55 percent), and Latinos and Caucasians are under-represented (10 percent compared with 21 percent and 19 percent, respectively; Van de Water, 2003). However, the Bureau of Justice Statistics finds that in state prison populations, African American inmates are more likely to be parents than both Latino and Caucasian inmates (Mumola, 2000). This research suggests African Americans may be over-represented among the San Francisco CIP client population because, among the incarcerated, they are more likely to be parents than individuals from other racial/ethnic groups.



## Family Characteristics

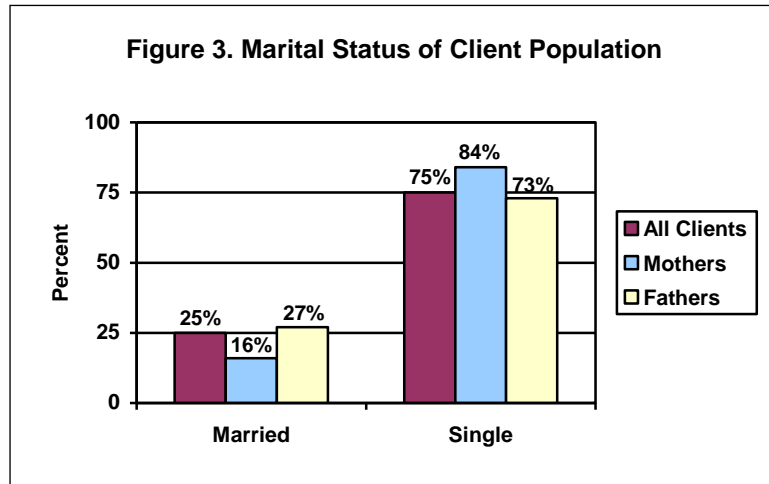
Summary information on the family characteristics of CIP clients provides insight into the social service needs of this population. We collected data on child characteristics, marital status, child living arrangements, parental involvement, Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement, and self-reported need for drug and alcohol treatment. Generally, we find that clients of the San Francisco CIP Program have similar family characteristics to those reported in the literature for this population.

### *Number and Ages of Children*

We find the average child served by the CIP Program was six years old and the average number of children was 1.7 per client. However, one-half of all clients had children who were infants or toddlers. The number of children per client ranged from one child to five children, but more than one-half of all clients also had only one child. These results demonstrate that a large proportion of CIP clients are in the early stages of their lives as mothers or fathers, a time when family service interventions may have the greatest impact.

### Marital Status

Three-quarters of CIP clients are not married at the time of assessment. However, we were only able to capture two categories for marital status—“married” or “single.” Figure 3 presents our findings on the marital status of the CIP population by gender. The low marital rates are

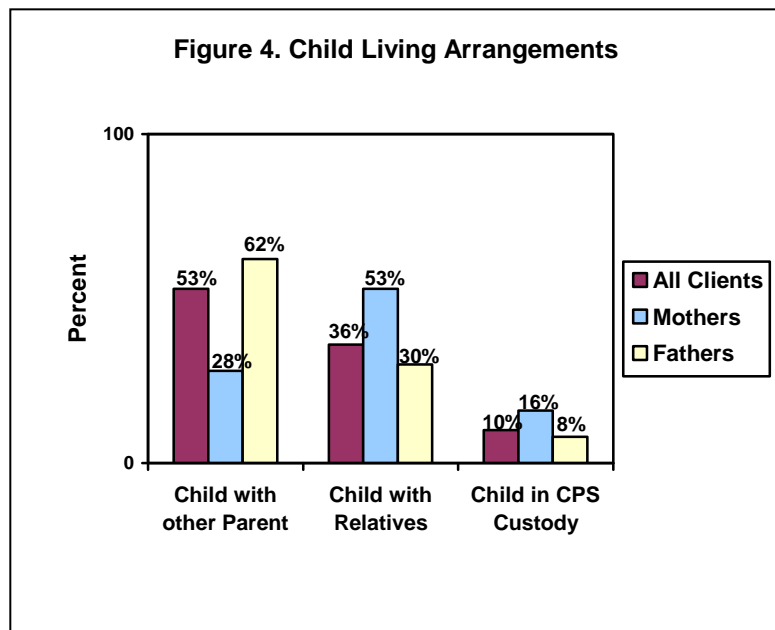


consistent with estimates in the literature. The Bureau of Justice Statistics finds that 23 percent of parents incarcerated in state prisons are married. This study also finds an additional 30 percent of parents had been married at some point, indicating that “single” is not a good proxy for “never married” (Mumola, 2000). We found less than one-fifth of CIP mothers are married compared to more than one-fourth of CIP fathers.

Without additional information about non-marital partnership and other family support, it is difficult to conclude whether this difference in marital status represents a difference in the children’s needs. We recommend collecting a broader range of marital categories, including never married, widowed, divorced, or separated. Given low marital rates among this population, we also recommend capturing relationships that do not involve marriage, such as partnerships between the biological or social parents of the children involved, along with information about the living situation of the client and children prior to and following incarceration.

### Child Living Arrangements

There is some evidence that parental incarceration may affect children in different ways depending on the gender of the incarcerated parent. Researchers have found only one-fifth of incarcerated fathers resided in two-parent homes prior to incarceration and over three-fourths of children of incarcerated fathers are living with their birth mothers (Johnston & Carlin, 2004). Our findings suggest that children of incarcerated fathers are more likely to have another parent at home than children of incarcerated mothers.



As shown in Figure 4, the majority of CIP fathers (62 percent) have children who live with their mothers, while less than one-third of CIP mothers (28 percent) have children who live with their fathers. Children with incarcerated mothers are more likely to be in the care of relatives or in CPS custody. We find over one-half of incarcerated mothers have children living with relatives, compared with less than one-third of incarcerated fathers in the CIP population. This finding is consistent with reports in the literature that living with a grandparent is the most common arrangement for children of incarcerated women, while living with the children's mother is the most common arrangement for children of incarcerated men (Mumola, 2000). Figure 4 also shows that CIP mothers are more likely to have children in CPS custody than CIP fathers. This finding is also consistent with national estimates of parents in state prison (Mumola, 2000).

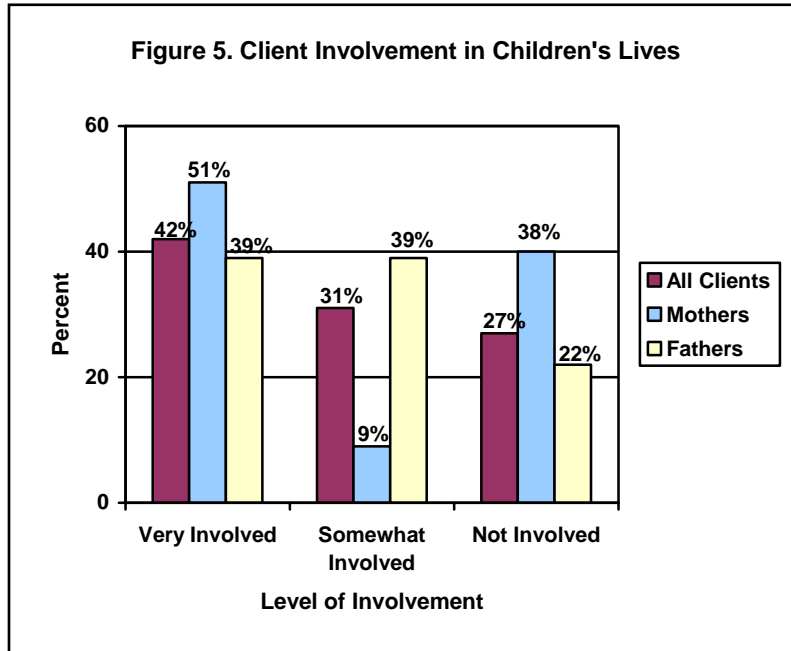
Prior research has found that grandparents and other relatives raising children may face additional challenges, including difficulties enrolling children in school, accessing and authorizing medical treatment, maintaining public housing leases, obtaining affordable legal services, and accessing a variety of federal benefits and services. Nearly one-fifth of grandparents responsible for their grandchildren live in poverty.<sup>ii</sup>

Research has indicated that few children of incarcerated parents end-up in non-kinship foster homes (Johnson & Waldfogel, 2003; Mumola, 2000). We found that one in ten CIP parents have children who are in foster care or have been adopted. In almost all of these cases, the children's involvement with the foster care system occurred prior to their incarceration. Among children in foster care, the majority of these placements did not appear to be kinship homes. This finding indicates that San Francisco's children of incarcerated parents may be more likely to be in non-kinship foster care than was previously thought. This is somewhat surprising since San Francisco has a higher than average rate of kinship foster placement; 50 percent of San Francisco's foster children are in kinship care compared to a 30 percent average nationwide.

### *Parent Involvement*

The level of parental involvement prior to incarceration is an important indicator of the CIP client needs and the likely outcomes of service provision. We created a qualitative measure of parent involvement ranging from very involved to not involved with children prior to incarceration. Many of the case files contain self-reported levels of parental involvement and indicators of prior parental involvement (such as the ability to identify children's primary caregivers, birthdates, schools, etc.). Where self-reported involvement was not available, we imputed estimates of parental involvement from other indicators in the file.

Figure 6 summarizes our findings on the level of parental involvement for all clients and by gender. We found that 22 percent of CIP fathers were not involved in their children's lives prior to incarceration. In a study focused on contact between incarcerated parents and children, Johnston and Carlin (2004) report the same result; they estimate that one-fifth of fathers had lost contact with their children prior to incarceration. Johnston and Carlin also find that 60 percent of fathers who had some contact with their children are at risk for losing contact. We find that the majority of CIP fathers (61 percent) are not very involved in their children's lives. If we interpret parent involvement as a signal of living arrangements, our data suggests well over one-half of CIP fathers were not living with their children prior to incarceration.

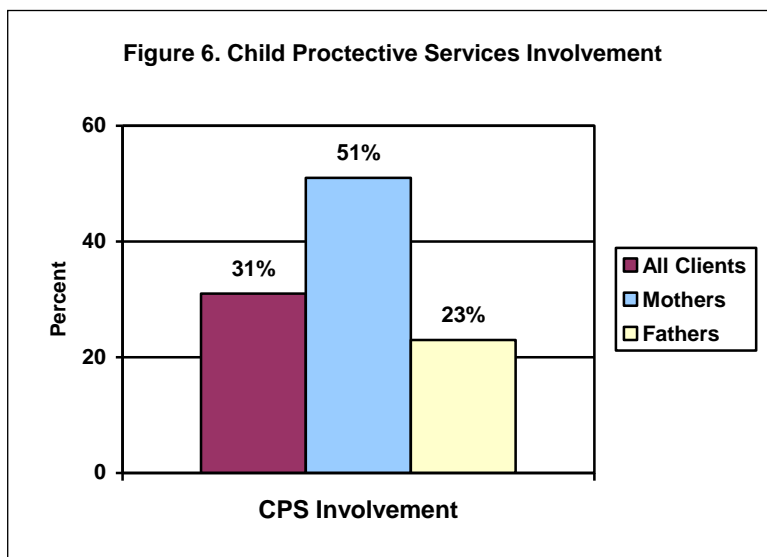


Johnston and Carlin found that 40 percent of mothers had not lived with their children prior to being convicted. Figure 5 shows our finding that 38 percent of mothers were not involved in their children's lives prior to incarceration, suggesting that at least 38 percent of CIP mothers did not live with their children. If we also include those mothers who were only somewhat involved in their children's lives, we estimate 47 percent of mothers in the San Francisco CIP client population were not living with their children prior to incarceration.

Parental involvement varies considerably based on the gender of the parent. While fathers are just as likely to be somewhat involved as very involved, mothers are five times more likely to be very involved than somewhat involved in their children's lives prior to incarceration. Similarly, mothers are almost twice as likely as fathers to report no involvement. Overall, the majority of CIP clients (73 percent) were involved in their children's lives prior to incarceration. Close to one-half (46 percent) of all clients report they were either the primary caregiver for their child or they provided primary care for their children with another family member. Women and men reported they were primary caregivers at similar rates.

*CPS Involvement*

CPS involvement is an important piece of information for the CIP social worker, both in terms of service provision and as an indicator of family need. Figure 6 shows the percent of CIP clients whose children are CPS involved for all clients and by gender. It should be noted that these results are based on information found in hard copy case files and not through any data reconciliation process with child welfare databases. It is possible that more children are CPS-involved than we have identified here.



is

Based on our findings, 31 percent of the clients have children that are CPS involved. CIP mothers were more than twice as likely as CIP fathers to have had CPS involvement, which is consistent with our previous finding that incarcerated mothers in this population were twice as likely as incarcerated fathers to have children in the care of CPS. These findings suggest that, on average, children of incarcerated mothers may be worse off in terms of having a support network than children of incarcerated fathers. However, the higher levels of CPS involvement reported by CIP mothers could also be attributed to more awareness among mothers about whether or not their children have been involved with the child welfare system.

### Drug and Alcohol Use

The substance abuse challenges of CIP clients may affect their ability to stay out of jail, their ability to utilize program services, and their relationships with their children. Over one-half of CIP clients reported drug or alcohol problems. These challenges are particularly acute among mothers, 73 percent of whom express a need for substance abuse treatment during assessment (compared to 43 percent of fathers.) These findings are consistent with estimates of substance abuse prior to incarceration for the parent population in state prison. The Bureau of Justice Statistics finds that one-third of mothers (compared with about one-fifth of fathers) report they committed the offense that sent them to prison because they needed money to buy drugs.

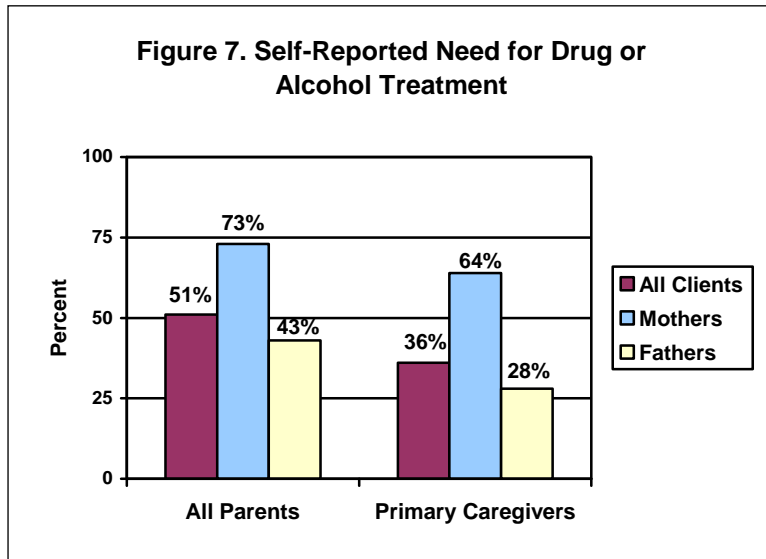


Figure 7 also shows that substance abuse problems are somewhat less common among primary caregivers. Still, over one-half of mothers and over one-quarter of fathers who report they are primary caregivers also report they need treatment for drug or alcohol use. These findings suggest that the CIP population has a high level of need for substance abuse treatment and that this need is greatest for incarcerated mothers.

### Provision of Social Services

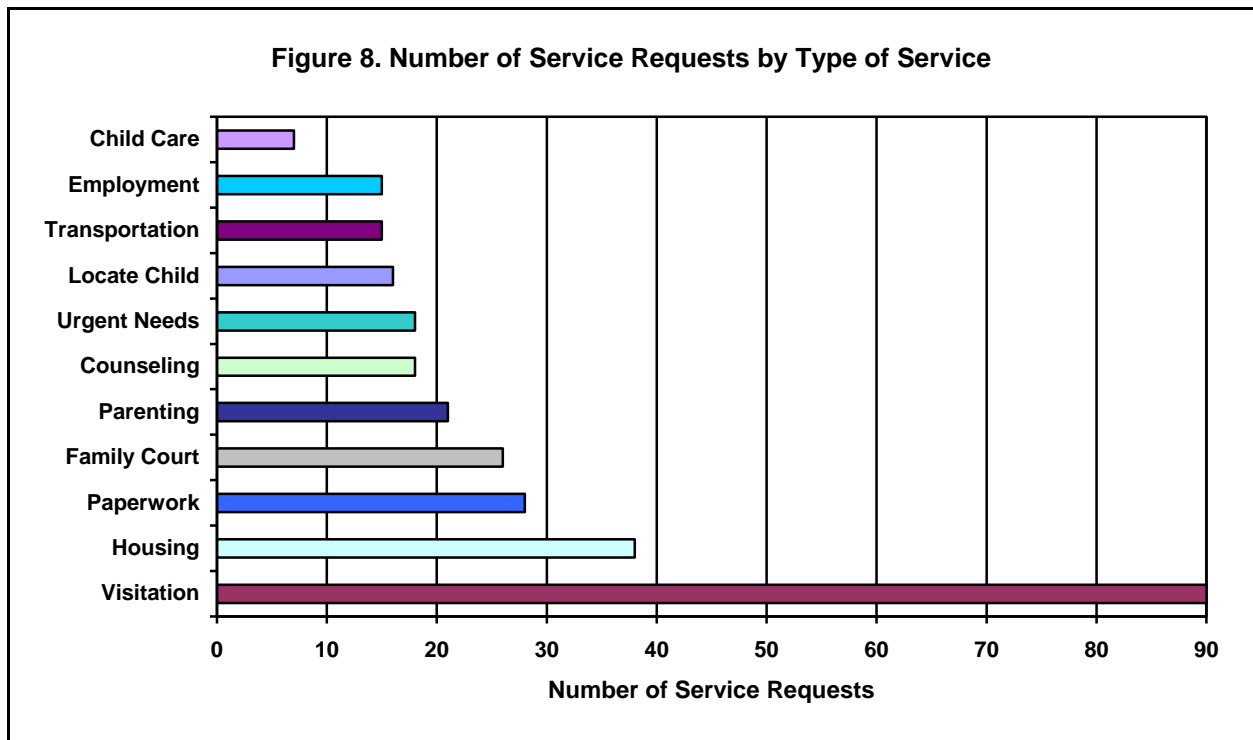
The CIP Program has accomplished a great deal in a short time period and with a small staff. Services were provided to almost 150 clients and their families during the study period. Program staff also advocated on behalf of clients and their children to expand access to visitation and other family services. We recorded service requests and social service provision based on the hard copy case files maintained by the Program social worker. We present our findings on the services requested and provided in the following section.

*“The social worker’s help meant a lot to me especially since I wasn’t expecting it. It had a big impact because you have so many needs when your partner is incarcerated. Just a little help can have a huge impact.”*  
 -Mother of Infant whose Father is Incarcerated

## Services Requested

Services are requested in a variety of ways, including by the client's deputy public defender during the initial interview, during the social worker's client assessment and case planning, or during subsequent interactions between the social worker and the client or other family members. We record all requests for client services regardless of the source or time of the request.

Figure 8 below shows each type of service request as a percentage of the total service requests over the study period. The CIP social worker provides some direct services to clients, such as meeting urgent child needs, setting up visitation, and assisting with paperwork and family court. Additional services are provided through referrals from the CIP social worker to other service providers, such as parenting classes, counseling, transportation, food or income assistance, residential treatment programs, and training or employment services.



### *Visits*

Visits with children represent the largest share of service requests (31 percent). Requests for several services were made jointly with requests for visitation. Parenting classes were often requested along with visits, as jail policy during the study period required clients to participate in a series of parenting classes before they could receive visits from their children. Similarly, when clients have had little contact with their children and need help locating them, requests for assistance finding children were often made jointly with requests for visitation.

### *Housing and Counseling*

Requests for housing services also represent a large share (13 percent) of service requests. Help with housing included a range of services from providing referrals for low-income or subsidized housing to helping clients get into residential treatment programs. Client requests for residential treatment referrals, whether for substance abuse or domestic violence, were interpreted as joint requests for housing and counseling services. In addition, several clients requested counseling services for their children to help them understand and adjust to parental incarceration.

*“The CIP program helped [the client] get a referral to a residential treatment program. CIP was effective in terms of arranging visits while she was incarcerated and in enabling the children to reunify with their mother. She has really made use of the services offered to her.”*

*-Alan Botts, Reunification Worker,  
Human Services Agency*

*“The CIP Social Worker would come and visit me when I was locked up. She did a lot of work for me. She would mediate between my children and CPS. She put me through on three-way calls so I could talk to my family out of state. She helped me get a DNA test to establish my paternity. She was my only way of communicating with the outside world. She helped me out a lot--I'd have been lost without her.”*

*-“Tim,” Formerly  
Incarcerated Parent*

### *Family Court, Paperwork, and Transportation Requests*

Clients frequently requested assistance with paperwork (ten percent) and family court proceedings (nine percent). Help with paperwork included a variety of activities, such as paternity tests, power-of-attorney, certificates of program completion, and applications for state identification or government assistance. Requests for paperwork were often made jointly with requests for family court assistance involving guardianship or custody issues. In many cases, the CIP social worker also referred clients to the Sheriff Department’s Prisoner Legal Services Division for assistance with paperwork and family court issues. When clients needed to attend family court hearings, requests were often made for transportation to those hearings. Most other transportation requests were for help getting children and family members to jails for visitation.

### *Urgent Child Needs and Childcare*

Requests for assistance meeting urgent child needs (six percent) or childcare services (one percent) were usually made early on in the life of a case. Clients who were primary caregivers sometimes needed these services to ensure their children were safe, fed, and cared for while they were in custody. One client needed childcare assistance for her children’s guardian while she was in custody. Once released, another client needed assistance with childcare during her trial.

### *Employment and Education*

Requests for employment and education referrals (five percent) were typically made as part of client reentry plans. The social worker assisted clients in making connections to these programs to improve their likelihood of success once they were released. These services were sometimes requested by clients who were unable to have visits or reestablish contact with their children. However, a few clients were interested only in these services and made no other requests.

## Services Provided

We found that the CIP social worker attempted to fulfill at least 84 percent of service requests, and over half (61 percent) of services requested were provided. We found several reasons why the social worker may not have been able to provide requested services. First, clients were sometimes released from custody prior to assessment. If the client and the social worker failed to connect once the client was released, the services that were initially requested were not attempted.

Similarly, clients were sometimes in custody long enough to have an assessment, but were released before service provision could be completed. When the request for services was intended to assist the client while in custody, clients no longer needed these services once they were released. In addition, clients sometimes changed representation due to a conflict of interest arising with the Public Defender’s Office or because they hired private attorneys. In such cases, the CIP social worker suspended services because the parent was no longer a client of the Public Defender’s Office.

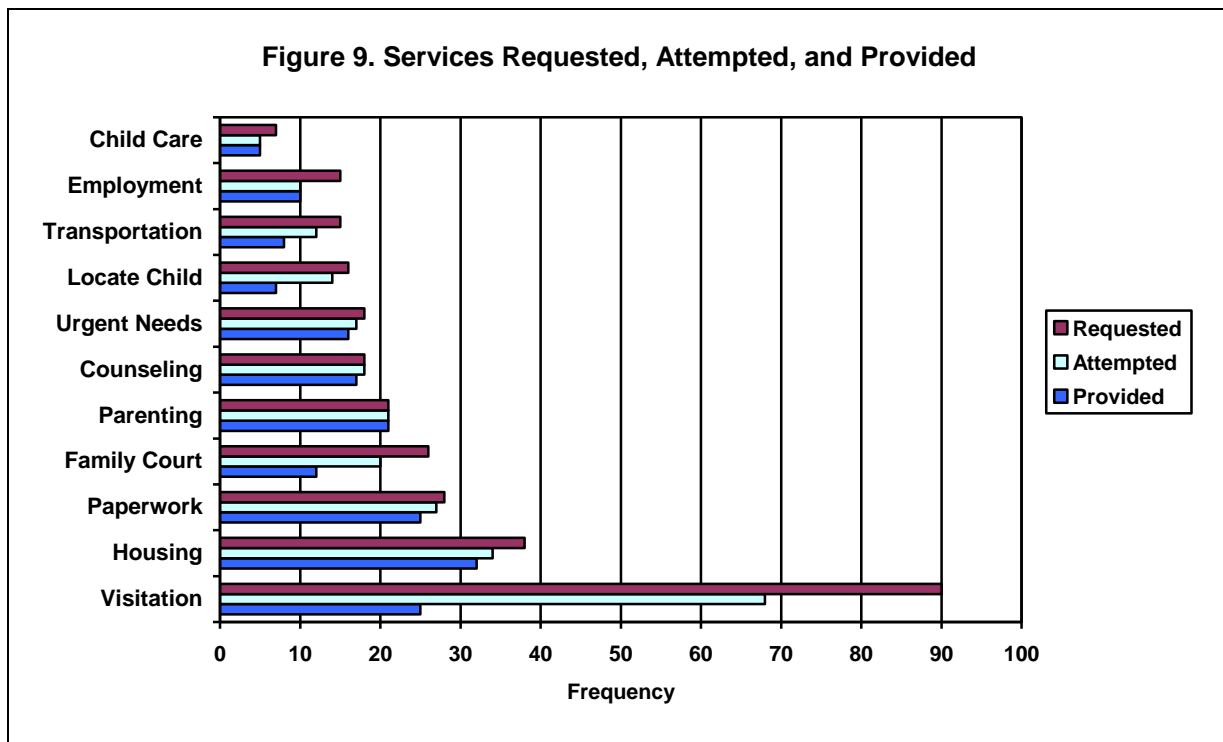


Figure 9 compares service requests, service attempts, and services received; the data are summarized in Appendix D. The data we collected on service provision suggest that some services were more likely to be attempted by the social worker and/or provided to clients. Those clients who sought assistance with urgent child needs or referrals to parenting or counseling were very likely to receive these services. In contrast, only about one-half of clients who sought assistance with family court were likely to receive that assistance.

The social worker was often unable to help clients who wanted to locate their children if they had no contact for a long period prior to incarceration. In these cases, we found clients often had



limited information to start the social worker on her search. However, several cases involved clients who were caregivers prior to incarceration and needed to locate their children to ensure they had adequate care. In these latter cases, the CIP social worker was able to locate the children and ensure their safety.

The most striking difference in services requested and services provided is in the case of requests for visitation. There were 90 requests for visits in the period under study and only 25 of those clients were able to have visits with their children. While the social worker attempted to provide this service in 68 of the 90 times, less than one-half of these attempts were successful. Compared to other service requests, this is the lowest success rate, yet arguably, visitation is the most important service that is facilitated by CIP.

Overall, visitation was prohibited or refused in 22 cases. In some instances, the children's caretakers did not support visits or CPS prohibited clients from having visits with their children. Other clients who requested visits were unable to provide enough information for the CIP social worker to locate their children. During the period under review, gang-affiliated clients were forbidden from receiving visits and clients held in certain facilities were unable to receive visits due to jail policies. In addition, policies requiring a certain number of parenting classes prior to visitation presented a barrier as classes were offered infrequently and had limited space.

#### ***Contact Visits for more Children***

*In collaboration with the Sheriff's Department, the CIP Program staff has achieved an important change (although temporary and under review) in visitation practices. The policy expands access to contact visits for incarcerated parents and their children. The parent is required to participate in a thirty-minute parenting skills orientation session prior to a contact visit, but there are no longer exclusions or unreasonable waiting periods to take the class. There are only two major exceptions for parent-child contact visits: inmates who have a pending case or prior convictions involving children or inmates who have had a major disciplinary violation within 30 days of the requested visitation day. These changes are likely to greatly increase the number of visit requests that can be facilitated by the CIP Program in the future.*

### **Effects of Parental Incarceration on Children<sup>iii</sup>**

Although various psychiatric and behavioral disorders have been associated with parental incarceration, very little research to date has focused on children. The impact of separation from their parents and grief around this loss is believed to be the greatest risk for these children (Waul, Travis & Solomon, 2002). Visitation with the incarcerated parent is believed to ameliorate some of the difficulties caused by this forced separation.

Several theoretical perspectives can provide a context for the consequences of parental incarceration on children and the importance of visits between children and their incarcerated parents, including attachment theory, life-span theory of development, and risk and resilience theory.

### *Attachment Theory*

Attachment theory states that consistent and sustained contact between parent and child is imperative for the child's development of a secure attachment (Bowlby, 1973). Interruptions in this process may lead to anxiety about abandonment, which may result in externalizing (aggression, stealing) or internalizing (withdrawal, depression, anxiety) throughout childhood and beyond (Keiley, 2002; Myers, et al, 1999). Research has found the negative effects of insecure attachment to a parent could be mitigated by secure attachments to other caretakers (Howes, Hamilton, and Phillipsen, 1998). Therefore, when assessing children of incarcerated parents, it is important to examine the nature of their relationships with grandparents, or other alternative caregivers, as these relationships may help compensate for the parent's absence.

### *Lifespan Theory of Development*

The lifespan theory of development states that development is a continual process (Elder, 1998). This perspective suggests the effects of parental incarceration depend on the child's age and developmental progress. For children under the age of two, parental incarceration will likely interrupt parent-child bonding. This disruption is believed to become more severe when the child experiences multiple placements. During early childhood, from age two to six, children do not have the full capacity to separate their situations from those of their parents. As a result, the consequences of parental incarceration during this stage include acute trauma reactions and stunted socio-emotional development (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2002). School age children, although better equipped developmentally, may develop aggressive behaviors toward peers and authority figures or depressive symptoms including inability to concentrate and withdrawal (Sarris, 2002). The developmental task of future planning in adolescence may also be disrupted by parental involvement in the criminal justice system. This disruption may manifest in an increase in dependency and regression or in conduct problems (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2002).

### *Risk and Resilience Theory*

Risk and resilience theory examines the frequency and intensity of risk and protective factors that mitigate the consequences of adverse events (Garmezy, 1991). Children who have a parent involved in the criminal justice system often are also at risk due to poverty, exposure to substance abuse, and changes in residence (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2002). These experiences may place adolescents, in particular, at an increased risk for mental illness, in addition to other negative outcomes (Phillips et al., 2002).

### **Impact of Visits on Parents and Children**

The theoretical perspectives presented all converge on the view that children of incarcerated parents face increased risks of behavioral and emotional challenges. Visitation with incarcerated parents is believed to ameliorate some of the difficulties created by forced separation.

Visiting a parent in jail or prison may alleviate a child's anguish over the loss of their parent from everyday life (Nolan, 2002). Visiting also improves outcomes for parents and families and is positively associated with reduced recidivism, improved mental health, diminished disciplinary problems, and increased likelihood of family reunification (Covington, 2002; Eddy, 2003; Nolan, 2003; Kupers, 2000).

### *Child-centered versus Parent-centered Service Provision*

Most research has found incarcerated parents, their children, and their extended families benefit from visitation. However, it is important to acknowledge that some stakeholders may discourage such visits. At times, children may feel uncomfortable or frightened by seeing their parents in jail. This is especially true when jails do not offer child-friendly visitation areas or contact visits. The CIP social worker's case notes indicated that one child felt anxious that her mother was "all alone in jail," indicating that this child experienced feelings of needing to be the caretaker for her mother after seeing her incarcerated. As advocates for parents and their children, the CIP Program staff is currently working to create more family-friendly visiting environments in some jails. This could greatly improve the experience of children visiting their parents in jails.

*"When people are incarcerated, they do sometimes become more intensely interested in their kids. Some people might see that as hypocrisy, but someone who cares about kids would see that as an opportunity.*

*Incarceration can provide a moment to reflect on 'what have I done to my family and what can I do to make things better?' Maybe that lasts only two days but in those two days we can build bridges to the world on the outside."*

*-Nell Bernstein,  
SFCIPP Program Coordinator*

Some child welfare workers or caretakers frown upon maintaining contact with parents who may disappear from the children's lives once they are released from custody. Others see the time parents spend incarcerated as an opportunity for them to focus on their children and on making long-term changes in their lives.

*"If he really loves his daughter and wanted to visit with her, he wouldn't have messed up again and ended up back in jail."*

*-Child's Grandmother and Caretaker*

Similarly, caretakers sometimes prohibit visits out of frustration with their family members or concerns about exposing children to jail environments. In one case, a family refused visits because they hoped to maintain the story that the client was in the hospital rather than in jail. In another case, a grandmother caring for her son's child expressed exasperation with the incarcerated parent and did not feel motivated to facilitate visits.

### *Secondary Benefits of CIP Services to Jails*

Representatives we interviewed from the Sheriff's Department indicated that services provided by CIP have a calming affect on prisoners, which decreased inmate fighting and made them easier to manage. One jail supervisor noted, "For incarcerated parents, it helps to feel that there's someone outside working on their issues. It's definitely a stress reliever, which reduce all kinds of problems at the jail." Another jail supervisor expressed a similar sentiment: "there are some practical implications with CIP services and visits. It keeps their behavior in line when they are in jail because they don't want to lose that visit." Another Sheriff's Department representative observed that visits can also reduce depression among inmates and make them more motivated to work toward self-improvement: "visits with their children keep hope alive for incarcerated parents. It gives them something to work for. It reminds them that they've done something positive in the world by creating this little being."

## Criminal Justice Outcomes

Our analysis suggests that the CIP Program may affect client's current criminal justice cases and their likelihood of recidivating. Several deputy public defenders emphasized the potential for the CIP Program to help them create positive relationships between clients and the Public Defender's Office.

*[The CIP social worker] has really been able to connect with and relate to my clients. She builds trust between the clients and our office and that sense of trust has been helpful in my cases.*  
-Deputy Public Defender

In addition to building trust with clients, we identify the following paths through which the CIP Program might directly impact client's current cases: ensuring child well-being while in custody, producing family impact statements, and providing treatment programs as alternatives to incarceration. The CIP Program also plays an important role in helping clients to attend family court hearings they might otherwise be excluded from because they are in custody. The goal of the CIP Program is to strengthen the relationships between parents and their children through the difficult period of incarceration, which will also likely reduce client recidivism and intergenerational incarceration.

### *Child Well-Being*

The CIP Program may alleviate client concerns about the well-being of their children while they are in custody. This service is particularly important for clients who are primary caregivers and have concerns about the living arrangements of their children. While clients may hesitate to share their concerns for fear of CPS involvement, the CIP social worker can serve as a neutral resource for clients to share information under the protection of attorney-client privilege. As a result, CIP services may allow clients greater security in fighting their cases as well as provide protection for children who are left without adequate care when their parents are in custody.

We found four cases in which the CIP social worker was able to provide urgently needed food, diapers, or clothing for children taken in by relatives or for the pregnant partners of clients. In three additional cases, she was able to ensure adequate care or substance abuse treatment for clients who were pregnant. Finally, in two cases the social worker was able to locate children who had been taken into CPS custody upon their parent's arrest and transfer them into the care of relatives.

### *Family Impact Statements*

The CIP social worker may use the information she collects about clients and their families to produce family impact statements to be presented to the judge at bail hearings or sentencing. Over one-half of the deputy public defenders interviewed identified this service as potentially beneficial in the legal setting. For example, one deputy public defender cited a case in which the social worker conducted extensive interviews of family members and wrote a letter on behalf of the client. There appear to be only a few cases in which a family impact statement was requested, which may indicate that these statements are not particularly useful. However, in interviews, most deputy public defenders agreed that family impact statements could significantly impact the legal outcomes of some cases.

In particular, deputy public defenders cited cases in which clients are primary caregivers and the judges are deciding between incarceration and probation. Two deputy public defenders suggested that mothers arrested for drug possession commonly fit this profile. The limited use of family impact statements may point to an information problem between deputy public defenders and the CIP Program. While they may characterize the Program as primarily focused on providing social services, there may also be opportunities to use program services to impact criminal justice outcomes of their clients.

*My client was caring for his son and had made real efforts to turn his life around. Based on her work with the family, the social worker wrote an excellent letter on his behalf. Under somewhat different circumstances, I think the letter could have had an impact at sentencing.*

*-Deputy Public Defender*

### *Treatment Programs*

The CIP Program may help connect clients with treatment programs that can be substituted for incarceration. We identified 11 cases in which the CIP social worker assisted clients in directly entering treatment programs. In some cases, it is clear that these treatment programs were agreed to as an alternative to incarceration, while in other cases the disposition of the legal case is unclear. The role of the CIP social worker in setting clients up with treatment programs is somewhat different from that of adult social workers. Clients with children sometimes need special arrangements with residential treatment programs that will allow them to have contact and provide some level of care for their children. The case files indicate that the CIP social worker has negotiated with residential treatment programs to help meet the needs of parents with dependent children.

### *Family Court*

While their criminal cases are a clear priority, some clients with children also face guardianship or custody disputes. The Sheriff's Department has the responsibility to transport clients to family court hearings in cases involving the termination of parental rights. However, many family court hearings do not involve the termination of parental rights, but instead focus on guardianship or custody issues. In these cases, the Sheriff's Department is not obligated to provide access to the hearings for clients in custody. The Sheriff's Department often does not have information about these family court dates and, as a result, clients are often unable to appear and represent themselves.

Clients involved in guardianship or custody disputes may be especially vulnerable while they are in custody. Other parties may see the parent's arrest or conviction as an opportunity to initiate or proceed with cases to obtain guardianship or custody of the children. The inability of client's to appear at these family court hearings may increase the advantage other parties have at these hearings, as well as increase the incentive for other parties to pursue family court cases.

Over the period under study, the CIP social worker assisted 22 clients with guardianship, custody, or other family court issues. In four cases, the CIP social worker supported clients who wished to fight the termination of their parental rights while in custody. Although this service is not directly connected to client criminal cases, it is essential to serving the broader goals of the CIP Program.

## *Recidivism*

In addition to impacting a client's current criminal case, the CIP Program may also have an impact on the long-term criminal outcomes of clients. As noted above, research suggests that maintaining, establishing, or enhancing connections between clients and their children reduces the likelihood that prior offenders will recidivate. Given the data currently available, we are unable to make causal claims about the effect of the CIP Program on clients' short- and long-term criminal justice outcomes, but we propose a research strategy so these effects, in addition to the Program's impacts on the social welfare outcomes of clients and their families, can be measured in the future.

## **Targeting Program Services**

In the period analyzed, we observe a wide spectrum in the intensity of services provided. For example, in one case the CIP social worker contacted the client or the client's family several times a week for several months, facilitated visits, helped the client gain entry into a rehabilitation program, and advocated for the client to be reunited with her children. In contrast, in another case, the social worker obtained the client's signature for his daughter's passport application, representing the entirety of the services requested and received. However, more intensive services do not necessarily produce greater impacts. Depending on the type of service and family situation, a small amount of the social worker's time could have a significant impact in terms of achieving the CIP Program goals.

Given limited resources, the CIP Program would ideally target services to clients and families who are likely to experience the greatest benefits from those services. We recommend targeting program services to clients with the following characteristics:

- 1) Primary caregivers;
- 2) Pregnant women or women who have recently given birth;
- 3) Parents whose children are in foster care with a goal of reunification;
- 4) Parents engaged in guardianship or custody disputes;
- 5) Parents seeking residential treatment instead of jail time; and
- 6) Parents highly motivated to maintain or improve their family relationships.

We characterize this subset of the incarcerated parent population as high-need and high-efficacy, meaning they have substantial need for program services and they are likely to experience significant gains from the intervention. Targeting services to these parents would allow the CIP Program to maximize its impact given resource constraints. Targeting would also provide deputy public defenders clearer guidelines for pursuing services for their clients.

We also suggest that program management tailor the services provided to the target population of incarcerated parents. The CIP Program currently provides a wide range of service types, including both direct services and referrals. Services provided also vary in their intensity. Focusing the CIP Program on a subset of direct, intensive services would help clarify the program objectives and increase the likelihood of achieving those objectives.

We recommend the CIP Program focus on providing the following primary services:

- 1) Locate children and address their urgent needs;
- 2) Facilitate visits;
- 3) Assist with family court;
- 4) Produce family impact statements; and
- 5) Set up residential treatment as an alternative to jail time.

This set of suggested primary program services maps onto the needs of the target population as defined above. Table 1 summarizes the relationship between the primary services and the target population most likely to benefit from these services. Target populations are not mutually exclusive.

Table 1: Relationship between Target Population and Primary Services

	CIP Target Populations					
	Primary Caregiver	Pregnant or Recently Gave Birth	Engaged in Reunification Process	Engaged in Custody Disputes	Seeking Residential Treatment	Highly Motivated
Address Urgent Child Needs	√	√				√
Facilitate Visits	√	√	√	√		√
Assist with Family Court	√	√	√	√		
Produce Family Impact Statement	√	√			√	
Set up Residential Treatment					√	

In addition to the primary services outlined above, we suggest the CIP social worker continue to provide referrals to a larger population of incarcerated parents and part of the set of general community services provided by the CIP Program. These services may include referrals to housing, employment, education, childcare, or income assistance programs, as well as referrals to Prisoner Legal Services. However, we suggest providing these services in an alternative format that does not require time-intensive case opening, follow-up, and closure. We recommend the jail-based client services component of the Centerforce program (below) as a useful model for assisting with these one-time service requests.

*The Centerforce Model*

The Centerforce Families Moving Forward program provides intensive family reunification services with clients and their family members at the Marin County Jail. Program participants develop and complete family reunification service plans, attend weekly parenting groups, and

access community resource and support systems. Each case receives intensive case management services including small actionable goals that can be attained between each meeting with the social worker. Clients are served for up three to six months, with occasional service extensions.

In addition to providing intensive reunification services, the Program also provides jail-based client services involving quick, one-time referrals. Program social workers set up a table and are available to assist inmates for a few hours each week. They answer questions, provide community referrals, and assist with other short-term needs that incarcerated parents may have. These community referrals may include connections to housing, health care, drug abuse treatment and support groups, and other family services.

In our observation of the CIP social worker, while she was conducting one-on-one visits with clients who had been referred to her by a deputy public defender, several inmates approached her and asked her if she could help them. Due to the social worker's time limitations and caseload, she was unable to assist them. However, if a model similar to Centerforce's jail-based model were implemented, this might give the CIP social worker the opportunity to help address some of the unmet needs of a broader population of incarcerated parents.

### **Measuring the Effects of the CIP Program**

The CIP Program has a unique opportunity to use experimental research methods to evaluate the impact of the Program on the social welfare and criminal justice outcomes of the families it serves. We strongly recommend the implementation of an experimental research design (described below) to demonstrate the impacts of the CIP Program. If clients who participate in the CIP Program experience significantly improved outcomes, the proposed research design will show those effects and clearly and unquestionably attribute them to the CIP Program.

We propose using an experimental framework to ensure that clients receiving program services are randomly selected from a pool of eligible clients over the course of a one-year study period. This will require two temporary adjustments to program structure. First, client information regarding the presence of children and desire for CIP services will be solicited by legal interns (rather than deputy public defenders) at arraignment. This change in program structure will ensure that the sample of clients is truly random. Without this change, one might argue that those deputy public defenders who frequently request services for their clients are somehow different—better or worse—from deputy public defenders who request services infrequently. This change will also allow program management to control the pace of service requests and ensure that enough clients participate in the CIP Program to estimate program impacts. In addition, this change will allow the CIP Program to collect information about the control group—those clients of the Public Defender's Office who are part of the target population but do not receive services.

Second, the legal intern would pass client information on to the CIP Program director for those clients targeted for the Program. The Program director would randomly refer one-third of those clients to the CIP social worker for services. For example, the legal intern would provide information forms (similar to the current service request form) to the Program director and she would place every third request into the treatment stack. Only those clients would be referred to the CIP social worker for services. The remaining forms would be placed in the control stack. Information on the control group would be retained for comparison purposes later in the study.



By randomly assigning eligible clients to the Program during this short period, the Program staff would be able to create an experimental control group. Without this randomization, one could argue that those clients for whom services were requested are somehow different—either better or worse off—than the clients for whom services were not requested.

The following five steps summarize the data collection process:

- 1) A legal intern collects information on clients using a short intake form suitable to determine whether the client is in the target population as well as demographic and case characteristics;
- 2) The CIP Program director randomly refer one-third of these cases to the CIP social worker for services;
- 3) The CIP social worker proceeds with the assessments, consults with the deputy public defender regarding possible interventions, and develops case plans as usual;
- 4) A legal intern collects information on short-term legal outcomes (the disposition of current case) and long-term legal outcomes (recidivism after one year), while the social work intern collects social welfare outcomes for clients in both the control and treatment groups; and
- 5) The data is analyzed to determine whether there are significant differences in outcomes between the two groups.

The recommend time period for data collection is one year, with an average of 14 new cases opening per month, resulting in about 168 clients who receive program services over the study period. Given this client pool, the control group should include over 300 potential clients for whom information was initially collected at the first stage but to whom services were not provided.

Measuring the effects of the CIP Program would require the development of a set of program objectives. Program staff would need to also identify appropriate and concrete measures of these objectives to allow for an evaluation of the effects of the CIP Program. Based on the expressed goal of the CIP Program, we developed the following program objectives as a starting point:

- 1) Promote Child Well-Being
- 2) Maintain and Strengthen Families
- 3) Improve Criminal Justice Outcomes
- 4) Reduce Recidivism

As mentioned above, once program objectives are agreed upon, the program staff would also need to develop concrete outcomes measures to capture the effects of the Program. Average outcomes for the group that experienced the CIP Program would then be compared with average outcomes for the group that did not participate for each outcome measure. Any significant differences in outcomes observed for the treatment and control group could then be attributed to the impact of the CIP Program on clients and their families.

Table 2 on the following page maps our recommended primary services (as outlined in the section on targeting program services) onto the four suggested program objectives. The table indicates the expected relationship between the provision of each service and the fulfillment of the intended objectives of the Program.

Table 2: Relationship between Services Provided and Program Objectives

	CIP Program Objectives			
	Promote Child Well-Being	Maintain and Strengthen Families	Improve Criminal Justice Outcomes	Reduce Recidivism
Address Urgent Child Needs	√		√	
Facilitate Visits	√	√	√	√
Assist with Family Court		√	√	√
Produce Family Impact Statement	√	√	√	
Set up Residential Treatment	√	√	√	√

### Costs Averted by the CIP Program

In addition to providing non-pecuniary benefits to clients and their families, the CIP Program may result in significant savings in taxpayer dollars. We recommend that a cost-benefit analysis of the CIP Program be conducted in the future. Below we discuss a few major categories through which costs can be averted as well as some preliminary estimates.

If more children are reunified with their parents rather than entering or remaining in foster care as a result of the CIP Program, a significant cost saving could accrue to taxpayers. If we assume just two families per year (with two children each) are reunified that otherwise would not have been, this could result in an annual savings of between \$34,944 (if children are placed in family foster care) and \$254,928 (if children are placed in group homes) in foregone government costs.<sup>iv</sup> Other major child welfare cost categories that could be reduced include: administration, case management, legal fees, counseling services, and operating facilities.

As mentioned above, earlier studies have found that interventions to build family relationships may improve legal outcomes for clients and reduce their likelihood of recidivating (Dowden and Andrews, 1999; Hairston et al., 2001). Given that the estimated average daily cost of incarceration is \$202 per day, any intervention that decreases the length of incarceration or the rate of recidivism will result in significant taxpayer savings.<sup>v</sup> In addition, there may be cost savings in the form of reduced income support programs for the children and families who lose the financial support of their parents or partners. Finally, the social and emotional costs of incarceration and recidivism to children and families may not appear as a cost to government, but should be included as a cost to society.

To the extent that the research study described above finds that the CIP Program improves outcomes for clients and their families, a cost benefit analysis would translate these effects into taxpayer savings. In this case, we would recommend program management obtain a detailed cost benefit analysis of the CIP Program.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Our findings suggest that the CIP Program has positively impacted many clients and their children. The Program staff continues to collaborate with partner agencies and advocate for policy change across the systems of criminal justice, human services, and child protective services to improve the support systems for incarcerated parents and their families. The Program has undergone notable improvements in efforts to document activity, adding an improved service request form for deputy public defenders and developing new case management tools. The expressed hope of CIP stakeholders is that the Program will continue to expand to serve more clients in the future. We have presented recommendations for program improvements throughout the evaluation. We summarize our key recommendations here.

### **1. Collect case management information in an electronic format.**

- *Rationale:* The use of an electronic database would allow social workers to provide services more effectively, improve the Program director's ability to oversee caseloads, and enable program leadership to report on program outcomes. A well-designed case management system would help ensure that social workers never record the same information twice so that time spent on documentation can be minimized.
- *Strategies:* Efforts are currently underway to build an in-house Access database to conduct case management activity. The Public Defender's Office should also consider obtaining estimates from software vendors who specialize in case management software packages. Until this can be accomplished, efforts to prioritize information collection should be continued and careful review of the forms currently in use should be conducted so that duplicate data requests are minimized.

### **2. Target CIP services to clients who are likely to benefit most.**

- *Rationale:* CIP Program resources are limited and cannot be provided to all incarcerated parents. Targeting services would allow program management to achieve the greatest gains given the available resources and provide guidelines for deputy public defenders when making service requests.
- *Strategies:* Target high-need and high-efficacy clients, including those who are primary caregivers, pregnant or nursing, engaged in CPS reunification, engaged in guardianship or custody disputes, seeking residential treatment, or highly motivated to strengthen their families.

### **3. Focus CIP resources on the provision of a limited set of intensive services**

- *Rationale:* Focusing the CIP Program on the provision of a small set of primary services would help clarify program objectives and increase the likelihood of achieving those objectives.
- *Strategies:* Provide a small set of services through intensive case management, including locating children and addressing their urgent needs, facilitating visits, assisting with family court, producing family impact statements, and setting up residential treatment. In addition, provide low-intensity referral services in a drop-in format that does not require the opening of a new case.

#### **4. Implement an experimental design to assess causal impacts of the Program.**

- *Rationale:* The Public Defender's Office and the Zellerbach Family Foundation have made significant investments in the CIP Program pilot. A study designed to evaluate the impact of the Program on social welfare and criminal justice outcomes would allow for the realization of these investments and ground further replications of the Program in solid evidence of success. The San Francisco Public Defender's Office has worked through the growing pains of implementing a new program and is now in a unique position to demonstrate the effectiveness of this model.
- *Strategies:* Implement the research design explained in the previous section or a variation of this design that retains the experimental components.

#### **5. Conduct cost-benefit analysis of CIP Program.**

- *Rationale:* Identifying and quantifying averted taxpayer costs can increase buy-in for the CIP Program among stakeholders and potential funders.
- *Strategies:* Identify the averted costs stemming from major cost centers, such as child welfare agencies and the criminal justice system, and conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the CIP Program.

#### **6. Identify and secure additional resources to expand the CIP Program.**

- *Rationale:* Increasing the financial resources available for the CIP Program will allow the CIP Program to hire additional CIP social workers in order to serve more clients who would benefit from CIP services.
- *Strategies:* Identify and pursue support from private funders and foundations interested in innovative programs focused on building strong, health families for at-risk youth.

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## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

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### Population Served

Formerly Incarcerated Father, 3/26/08  
Caretaker for Incarcerated Parent's Child, 3/26/08  
Formerly Incarcerated Mother, 3/29/08  
Formerly Incarcerated Mother, 4/1/08

### Public Defender's Office

Danielle Harris, Deputy Public Defender, 3/7/08  
Aleem Raja, Deputy Public Defender, 3/10/08  
Hadi Razzaq, Deputy Public Defender, 3/10/08  
Yolanda Robinson, CIP Social Worker, 3/12/08  
Jessica Flintoft, Program Coordinator, Safe Communities Reentry Council, 3/20/08  
Simin Shamji, Director of Specialty Courts and Reentry Programs, 3/21/08  
Adam Lipson, Deputy Public Defender, 3/21/08  
Vilaska Nguyen, Deputy Public Defender, 3/24/08  
Matthew Rosen, Deputy Public Defender, 3/25/08  
Phong Wang, Deputy Public Defender, 3/25/08  
Rafael Trujillo, Deputy Public Defender, 3/26/08  
Mark Iverson, Deputy Public Defender, 3/28/08  
Sangeeta Sinha, Deputy Public Defender, 3/28/08  
Sujung Kim, Deputy Public Defender, 3/28/08  
Linnette Peralta Haynes, CIP Social Worker, 4/3/08

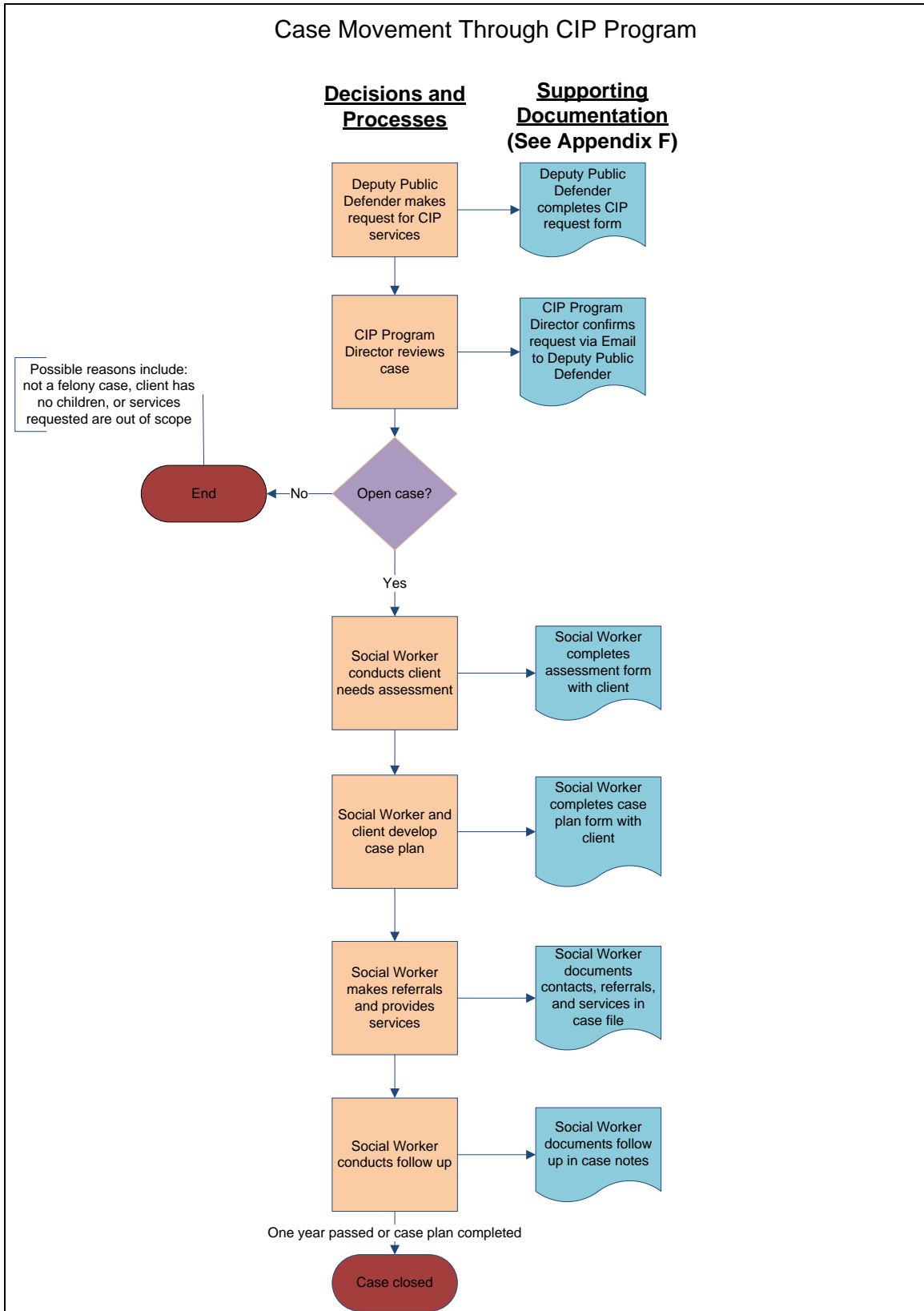
### Governmental Community Partners

Alan Botts, Social Worker, San Francisco Human Services Agency, 3/21/08  
Karen Levine, Supervisor, San Francisco Sheriff's Department, 3/27/08  
Floyd Johnson, Supervisor, San Francisco Sheriff's Department, 3/27/08  
Richard Dyer, Captain, San Francisco Sheriff's Department, 3/27/08  
Susan Arding, Section Manager, San Francisco Human Services Agency, 3/28/08  
Janine Tirado, Supervising Probation Officer/Training Manager, Adult Probation Department, 4/3/08

### Nonprofit Community Partners

Nell Bernstein, San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (SFCIPP)  
Coordinator, 3/28/08  
Tara Regan, Children and Family Programs Manager, San Quentin State Prison and Marin  
County Jail, Centerforce 4/4/08

## APPENDIX B. CIP PROGRAM STRUCTURE: A CASE FLOW CHART





## APPENDIX C. CHARACTERISTICS OF CLIENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

	All Clients		Women		Men	
	frequency	percent	frequency	percent	frequency	Percent
All Clients	148	100%	39	28%	102	72%
<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>						
African American	89	69%	26	72%	63	67%
Latino	13	10%	4	11%	9	10%
Caucasian	13	10%	5	14%	8	9%
Asian	8	6%	0	0%	8	9%
Native American	1	1%	1	3%	0	0%
Multi-Racial	5	4%	0	0%	5	5%
<i>Primary Language</i>						
English	119	96%	34	97%	85	96%
Other	6	4%	1	3%	4	4%
<i>Marital Status</i>						
Married	31	25%	5	16%	26	28%
Single	93	75%	27	84%	66	72%
<i>Caregiver Status</i>						
Primary	62	46%	16	43%	46	47%
Not a Caregiver	73	54%	21	57%	52	53%
<i>Guardianship</i>						
Other Parent	64	53%	9	28%	55	62%
Relatives	43	36%	17	53%	26	30%
CPS Custody	12	10%	5	16%	7	8%
Adopted	1	1%	1	3%	0	0%
<i>Parent Involvement</i>						
Very	56	42%	18	51%	38	39%
Somewhat	41	31%	3	9%	38	39%
Not Involved	35	27%	14	40%	21	22%
<i>CPS Involvement</i>						
Some Involvement	40	31%	18	51%	22	23%
No Involvement	91	79%	17	49%	74	77%
<i>Drugs and/or Alcohol</i>						
Needs Treatment	60	51%	22	73%	38	43%
Does Not Need Treatment	58	49%	8	27%	50	57%
<i>Pregnant</i>			4	10%		
<i>Average Age of Clients</i>		32		31		33
<i>Average Age of Children</i>		5.8		5.7		5.8
<i>Average Number of Children</i>		1.7		1.9		1.7

**APPENDIX D. CLIENT SERVICES: REQUESTED, ATTEMPTED, AND PROVIDED**

	Services Requested by Client	Services Attempted by Social Worker		Services Provided to Client		
		frequency	percent of requests	frequency	percent of attempts	percent of requests
Child Care (Referral)	7	5	71%	5	100%	71%
Employment (Referral)	15	10	67%	10	100%	67%
Transportation (Referral)	15	12	80%	8	67%	53%
Locate Child (Assistance)	16	14	88%	7	50%	44%
Urgent Needs (Assistance)	18	17	94%	16	94%	89%
Counseling (Referral)	18	18	100%	17	94%	94%
Parenting (Referral)	21	21	100%	21	100%	100%
Family Court (Assistance)	26	20	77%	12	60%	46%
Paperwork (Assistance)	28	27	96%	25	93%	89%
Housing (Referral)	38	34	89%	32	94%	84%
Visitation (Assistance)	90	68	76%	25	37%	28%



"The criminal justice system needs to be more responsive to the needs of children impacted by a parent's incarceration. Many children are abandoned or forced into foster care as a result of their parent's incarceration. This program was created to help children obtain family services, counseling and family jail visits to reduce the hardship of a parent's incarceration."

JEFF ADACHI  
Public Defender  
City & County of San Francisco

\*The CIP Program is made possible through the generosity of the Zellerbach Family Foundation.



**OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER**  
City & County of San Francisco

## **CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS PROGRAM**



**If you are in jail and worried about  
your child, we can help**

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### CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS BILL OF RIGHTS\*

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

\* By San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership

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### MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to help promote a healthy relationship between children and their incarcerated parents.

### When a parent is in jail or prison, we can help with:

- family visits;
- emergency housing;
- government assistance;
- urgent childcare;
- family court hearings;
- child support payments;
- job/vocational training;
- counseling;
- other urgent needs of the child and family.

Ask your Public Defender about the CIP Program or

### CONTACT:

Children of Incarcerated Parents Program  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER  
555 7th Street, San Francisco  
(415) 553-1671

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> Our review of CIP-related literature draws heavily on Mallinger (2004).

<sup>ii</sup> [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org), accessed 4/6/08.

<sup>iii</sup> Again, this summary draws from Mallinger (2004).

<sup>iv</sup> These numbers are based on the California Legislative Analyst's estimated average monthly foster care payments of \$728 per child for a family foster home and \$5,311 for a Group Home ([www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov), accessed 4/6/08.)

<sup>v</sup> [www.ci.sf.ca.us](http://www.ci.sf.ca.us), accessed 4/6/08.