

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN OF ARRESTED PARENTS PROGRAMS

Program Design

Children of arrested parents (CAP) programs are established to improve the outcomes for children whose parents have been arrested or incarcerated. In some instances services will be offered to children whose parents are unavailable due to family crises. The primary purpose of the CAP programs is to identify children upon parental arrest; assure their safety; meaningfully connect them with their arrested parent based on the child's best interest; and provide networked support to the caregiver, parent and child(ren).

Programs should be family centered and view the family as a whole. As a priority, programs should emphasize the enhancement of child's sense of safety, security, and well being during crisis events affecting their family including parental arrest.

Children of arrested parents (CAP) programs are designed to deliver at a minimum the Outcomes designed by the state of New Mexico, detailed in the Program Outcomes section. Programs must meet the immediate needs of individual families and support the strengths and resiliency of children and families affected by an arrested parent. At a minimum, CAP programs should include: agreements with local and state law enforcement to identify and refer children; assessment of child risk and placement as needed; home visitation; education and local community resource information; identification of social supports; referral of families of community resources and behavioral health services; case management for caregivers, children and parents; safety planning for children; parent education and contact visitation within the detention center.

Needs of Children

When a parent is arrested, children need:

- To know the parent's arrest is not their fault
- To know what is happening to their parent
- To know if they can have contact with their parent, and if so, when and how
- To know where and with whom they will be staying and where they will go to school
- To know what will stay the same and what will be different while their parent is under arrest
- To know it is OK to still love their parent, and it is OK to be angry sometimes too

- To be encouraged to express, in safe and healthy ways, their feelings about their parents and their parent's arrest
- To visit and maintain contact with the arrested parent as much as possible, when permitted and appropriate
- To have stability and consistency in their living situations and daily routines
- To feel safe
- To have fun
- To realize that people make choices in life that lead to different consequences

Source: Adapted from Oregon Department of Corrections, *How to Explain...Jails and Prisons...to Children, A Caregiver's Guide*, 2003.

Program Outcomes

Outcome 1: Children are identified upon parental arrest

The program will be considered effective if:

- The child welfare system is not unnecessarily involved
- A written protocol exists with local police to identify children upon parental arrest and appropriately refer to CAP programs
- Police are trained in child sensitive arrest practices
- Contracted providers are trained concerning the affects of parental arrest on children
- A placement/safety assessment is conducted to determine child placement

Outcome 2: Children are safe

The program will be considered effective if:

- A power of attorney is secured for every child identified so that a responsible adult legally provides temporary care
- Children reside in a safe, stable environment within 8 days of parental arrest or incapacitation
- An initial safety plan is developed within 72 hours of referral
- Children are not the subject of a substantiated report of child maltreatment within six months of establishment of services

Outcome 3: Children are nurtured by their arrested parents and their caregivers

- Children have access to their parent via phone or visitation within 72 hours of arrest
- Parents in jail are interviewed within 3 days of arrest to identify children
- Children are visited in their home or temporary residence to determine caregiver awareness of safe and secure care
- Written protocols exist with the jail for contact visitation between arrested parents and their children to promote bonding
- Parenting classes are conducted that address reintegration, parenting, social skills, environmental risk factors (e.g., domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse), employment, extended family.
- Parents and caregivers demonstrate developmentally appropriate expectations of the children
- Child friendly visiting spaces and policies are developed within the detention facility
- Family friendly visiting policies are in place

Outcome 4: Children and Caregivers are connected to formal and informal supports and benefits

The program will be considered effective if:

- Needs of children and caregivers are assessed
- A communication agreement is developed between parent and caregiver
- Families know about, seek out, and use formal and informal community supports and benefits
- Caregivers, children, and parents are referred to community services and resources.
- Children are referred for and receive behavioral health services as appropriate
- Families have access to Medicaid food stamps, TANF, SSI, if eligible and appropriate
- Parent and family are assessed for post release needs.
- A transition program is developed as parents are being released from incarceration linking families with community services as necessary for family reunification.

Schedule of Program Activities

CAP programs must design a level of intensity, duration and frequency to deliver services that develop a trusting relationship between the CAP worker and the children, caregivers and parents and at a minimum include the following:

- a uniform process to identify children of parents being arrested and ensure their safety without unnecessarily involving the child welfare system;
- home visits and case management services to connect the children and their caregivers to available services and resources to ensure the safety, permanency and well being of the children;
- uniform visitation practices for arrested parents and their children to enhance child well being. This includes conducting parenting classes for the arrested parent and assistance with their parenting skills.

The services detailed above should be delivered based on family needs including services during non-traditional working hours.

Services will normally be scheduled in the child's natural environment, with an alternative location at the detention center or other appropriate place to address the family's need.

Parenting Curriculum

CAP programs have a core curriculum designed for enhanced parenting skills and to develop healthy bond between the arrested parent and their child(ren). The curriculum is taught in a detention center setting and involves class discussion, resource information, and thoughtful assignments.

Curriculum topics include:

- parenting and culture
- child development
- roots of behavior
- talking with children about prison
- discipline
- visits, letters and phone calls
- child safety and placement options
- step parenting
- domestic violence
- child abuse and neglect
- promoting school success
- injury prevention
- employment

Parents must be admitted into the parenting class by agreement of the detention center staff and the CAP worker, based on a parent screening. A class participation agreement must be secured between the CAP worker and the parent, indicating that the parent is aware of the class responsibilities, facility rules, and to practice parenting skills during interactions and visitations with their children.

Client Recruitment and enrollment

Families are identified by law enforcement upon the arrest of the parent, or by CYFD for children in need of emergency services. In addition, CAP personnel are expected to coordinate with local detention facilities to interview arrestees regarding their parenting status and the safety needs of their children. Within 3 days of arrest, CAP worker must interview inmates at the detention center to identify children who are affected by their parent's arrest.

CAP personnel must respond to law enforcement notification within one hour via telephone and within two hours on site to provide assistance to children whose parents are being arrested. A preliminary safety plan must be developed with children within 72 hours of the receipt of the referral.

Referrals may be received from relatives, detention facility staff, courts, tribal entities, school and others when adults with minor children are incarcerated.

CAP providers must maintain a 24 hour emergency response line to respond to referrals.

Enrollment forms and other required program forms are found in Program Records/Evaluation section.

CAP Staff

CAP staff caseload should not exceed 35 families. CAP programs must adjust the caseload of those staff who serve families actively engaged in individual visitation and who otherwise present complex issues and demands.

CAP program staff are composed of degreed professionals and non-degreed professionals with knowledge and skills to conduct safety assessments, knowledge of child development, and the ability to navigate service systems including within detention facilities.

Staff must be able to assess family strengths and needs and communicate effectively with caregivers. Staff must have the ability to engage in parent-child parenting support and in teaching parenting skills in a group setting. They must have familiarity with resources in

their region and the ability to assist families and caregivers to secure needed resources. The program staff may be a social worker, psychologist, educator, community worker, or have experience in another related field.

CAP programs must have working relationships with licensed, clinical professionals who are knowledgeable in affects of parental incarceration on children.

CAP staff must either be bi-lingual in the language of the family served or must include as part of the team an individual that is bi-lingual in the language of the family served.

All CAP staff must undergo a criminal record check.

CAP programs must have a staff training plan in place that supports CAP workers to develop the necessary competencies that will achieve the state CAP outcomes.

CAP programs must provide Masters level supervision at least twice a month with at least one individual session for CAP staff. Supervision should be provided individually and enhanced through group sessions. Supervision must be documented by a sign-in sheet to include a short summary.

During the initial months of CAP program implementation, video networking training and technical assistance opportunities and staff support for all providers and CYFD local county staff will be coordinated and facilitated.

CAP supervision must:

- review safety and placement information
- review family records and observations
- ensure parent child contact is in the best interest of the child
- ensure a trusting relationship exists between worker and family/caregiver
- review support services and connection to them
- accompany newly employed CAP workers at least twice in their first year and at least once a year in subsequent years

Program Records and Evaluation

CAP program records at a minimum must contain:

1. A safety assessment for child placement
2. A communication agreement
3. Family intake and assessment to include:
 - caregiver profile
 - child/adolescent profile
 - family profile
 - case management needs assessment
 - staff recommendations for programming

4. Memorandum of agreement with law enforcement
5. Inmate clearance for parenting class and visitation
6. Preliminary child safety plan including a power of attorney for child placement
7. Parent release plan to include services needed upon release from the detention facility and a safety plan
8. Individual family service plan to include family strengths, stressors, resources needed, goals, potential barriers and implementation steps

CAP programs must survey caregivers, parents and children for their satisfaction with CAP services offered.

CAP programs must enter program records electronically and maintain a data base of information. They must have a system to measure the achievement of the state outcomes and report on these outcomes each six months.

Evaluation will also include the CAP provider's attainment of the state Performance Measures:

1. 90% of the referrals will have a response time to law enforcement within 1 hour via telephone and within 2 hours on-site when it is necessary and appropriate to provide temporary childcare for parents who are being arrested and where the parent is being arrested and has voluntarily placed their children with a caregiver
2. 90% of the children served will not be the subject of a substantiated report of child maltreatment within six months of establishment of service.
3. 90% of children served will have an initial safety plan developed within 72 hours of receipt of referral
4. 90% of the children served will have phone contact or visitation within 72 hours of parent being incarcerated
5. Establish a safe, stable, and secure environment for children within 8 days of receiving referral. For those who are not able to avoid out-of-home placement but exit in less than 8 days, establish a safe, stable and secure environment and no re-entry of care within 6 months.