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# Parenting programmes for incarcerated fathers : clinical and research recommendations

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# **Parenting Programmes for Incarcerated Fathers: Clinical and Research Recommendations**

## **Abstract**

There is a significant gap in our knowledge and understanding regarding how to most effectively support incarcerated parents (particularly incarcerated fathers) to ensure that they can be the most effective parents they can possibly be. Currently, there is relatively little understanding regarding the specific factors which can facilitate change in parenting approaches for incarcerated fathers (Fowler et al., 2017). There is a very real need for more research in this area which can help inform and improve current prison policies and practices. This paper presents some of the key clinical and research recommendations based on careful review of the literature.

**Keywords:** Prison-Based Parenting programme, Prison, Dads, Paternal, Fathers, Evaluation, Feasibility trial

### Prevalence of paternal incarceration

Estimating the prevalence of fathers in prison is methodologically challenging (Waldegrave & Woodall, 2016). Research conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) has suggested that, at the time they entered prison, 54% of prisoners had a child under the age of 18 (Williams et al., 2012). However, it is important to emphasise that non-disclosure may be particularly high as prisoners can be fearful and wary about any negative consequences for their child such as them being taken into care. As a result, there exists a subgroup of infants and children who are invisible to services who could provide them with support (Boswell, 2002; Mazza, 2002; Prinsloo, 2007; Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2008; Raeder, 2012; see Waldegrave & Woodall, 2016).

### Impact of paternal incarceration on children

An increasing number of studies are indicating that children appear to respond in different ways to paternal incarceration (e.g., Hansen, 2018). For some children, paternal incarceration can be a relief, most often in cases where there is high levels of alcohol and/or drug abuse and violence within the family (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). However, for most having a father in prison can be an extremely difficult and traumatic experience for a child (Boswell, 2002). Numerous studies have found that having a father in prison can have a negative impact on the child's emotional health, internalising or externalising behaviour (Miller, 2006, Wilbur et al., 2007, see also Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012); behavioural and mental health problems (Murray & Farrington, 2005, Wildeman, 2010; Jones et al., 2013); criminal behaviour (Hjalmarsson & Lindquist, 2011, Hjalmarsson & Lindquist, 2012); school performance (Hairston, 2002, Foster & Hagan, 2007, Cho, 2009a, Cho,

2009b) and there is also some evidence of attention problems (Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher, & Mincy, 2012).

Studies have also indicated that having a father in prison can increase the likelihood that the child will be incarcerated when they are older. For instance, when their parent is incarcerated, children may experience a range of both emotional and social difficulties. These difficulties may subsequently develop a number of long-term adjustment issues (Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012). Bushfield (2004) found that, when they are older, they are as much as five times more likely to be imprisoned. It has been shown that the incarceration of a father can have a negative impact on children's functioning (Cunningham, 2001; Boswell, 2002). This negative impact on children functioning may be even more marked when the children's environment and social context includes negative factors including prior family disruptions and violence (Murray et al., 2014). The separation from their father for some children "may exacerbate an already unstable and dysfunctional home situation and a range of adverse circumstances" (e.g., poverty, poor education, insecure attachment, trauma and mental or physical health issues) (e.g., Carlson & Shafer, 2010; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; see Fowler et al., 2017, pp. 693).

#### The experience of being a father in prison: Challenges and barriers

It has previously been highlighted that most incarcerated fathers wish to have contact with their children (Hairston, 2002) and continue to see the importance of their role of as a parent (e.g., Dennison & Smallbone, 2015). Other studies have shown that if, before they were incarcerated, they were living with their children then they also have the expectation that they will be living with their children again when they are released from prison (Dennison, Stewart, & Freiberg, 2013). Incarceration "reduces the quality of the father-child relationship by impeding critical features of effective proximal processes"

such as the frequency, timing and intensity of exposure (Dennison, Smallbone, & Occhipinti, 2017, pp. 18).

An increasing number of studies are showing that father's experiences of their parental involvement during their time in prison include feelings of helplessness, self-doubt and uncertainty about their role and also their identity as a father (Dyer, 2005; Tripp, 2009; Arditti, Smock, & Parkmann, 2005; Clarke, O'Brien, Day, Godwin, Connolly, Hemmings, & Van Leeson, 2005; Dennison, & Smallbone, 2015). There have been a number of studies which have described that incarcerated fathers have to repress their fatherhood identity (e.g., Arditti et al., 2005; Hairston, 2002). For instance, Arditti and colleagues (2005) explored the experiences of 51 fathers who were incarcerated, the perceptions they had of fatherhood and the relationship or involvement that they had with their children. The 51 fathers were interviewed about one month before they were released from prison. Findings revealed that the fathers had feelings of helplessness and difficulties with being a "good father" while in they were incarcerated. With respect to fatherhood, incarceration was a dormant time and their release back to their families offered them the chance to start again with their children. Additionally, some fathers in the study reported that their involvement with their children when they were incarcerated was significantly restricted and they were completely dependent on the non-incarcerated mothers or caregivers to enable contact with their children. Specifically, that there was a gatekeeping role of some of the non-incarcerated mothers and caregivers (Arditti, Smock, & Parkmann, 2005; Roy & Dyson, 2005). There are a number of fathers who perceived the gatekeeping of the mothers' or their attempts to prevent contact as evidence of their lack of power (Arditti et al., 2005).

Prison based parenting programmes for incarcerated fathers

Hayes and colleagues (2018) have recently emphasised that prison-based parenting programmes in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia have aimed to reduce the negative consequences that can occur due to separation by increasing the levels of family contact and enhancing parenting skills (Hoffmann, Byrd, & Kightlinger, 2010; Meek, 2007; Newman, Fowler, & Cashin, 2011). A parenting programme in Northern Ireland aimed to address this by offering the fathers the opportunity for extra telephone access and special monthly family-friendly visits which are all in addition to the normal prison visits (Hayes et al., 2018). Emotions such as pain, weakness, fear and loneliness are challenging and difficult topics to discuss in the context of the prison (Magaletta & Herbst, 2001, see Hansen, 2017). The focus on children and family through prison based parenting programmes for incarcerated fathers provides a justification for talking about these “soft” emotions. Outside of the parenting programme, issues surrounding fatherhood and the challenges they experienced was not something they could talk about. The program sessions provided a setting where they could focus on discussing fatherhood and receive support (Hansen, 2017). There has been a feasibility trial of an adapted version of the Mellow Dads parenting programme in Greenock prison aimed to meet the need for a relationship focused programme in the prison setting and to improve the bond between fathers in prison and their children in the community. The evidence for Mellow Dads in the community is still in its early stages but results have been promising thus far, with group participants showing improvements on all subdomains of the Adult Wellbeing Scale; significantly so for anxiety and outward directed irritability (Adult Wellbeing Scale, Snaith et al., 1978). Participants also show significant improvements in their perceived intensity and frequency of hassles as a parent (Parental Hassles Scale, Crnic & Greenberg, 1990) and report significant improvements in levels of conduct problems and hyperactivity in their children based on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire developed by Goodman (1997) (Ibrahim et al., 2014). Delivering a parenting programme within a prison requires much compromise and negotiation. There are a number of aspects that facilitators need to carefully consider the programmes structure, the practicalities surrounding bringing children into the prison context, the

content of the programme for their specific participants and also the unique influence of the prison environment.

## **Clinical Recommendations**

### *Lack of strong, policy-relevant research*

As highlighted recently by Dennison and colleagues (2017), there exists a significantly complex relationship between prisoners' and their families (Hairston, 2002; Wakefield, 2016). However, despite this, there is relatively little policy-relevant research available to help professionals identify which families may benefit the most from engaging in programs and under which particular conditions. There still remains the need to further understand how to more effectively engage with caregivers in order to facilitate the contact between the father and their child or children. It would be more effective to carry out research to investigate this in order to inform the development of both policy and the development of programmes (Wildeman, 2016). However, as pointed out by Dennison and colleagues (2017), there may be some occasions where it may be “prudent to move forward carefully, drawing on broader family systems research, and coupling new policies and programs with evaluation research” (Dennison et al., 2017, pp. 34).

### *Fathers need to be able to continue to use their parenting skills throughout the remainder of their imprisonment if they are to retain these skills*

It is important when delivering a prison-based parenting programme that the imprisoned fathers are given opportunities to rehearse the skills that they are acquiring during the programme. Only by rehearsing the parenting skills they have acquired during the programme will they be able to master the performance of these skills and employ them in order to improve father–child relationships (e.g.,



Lindhiem, Higa, Trentacosta, Herschell, & Kolko, 2014; Hayes et al., 2018). When establishing and delivering a prison based parenting programme there needs to be careful consideration of the existing opportunities there are for family contact in order to determine if these opportunities for family contact are “sufficient for mastering the parenting skills being taught on the programme, facilitate quality father–child interactions and cope with the length of time fathers are imprisoned for” (Hayes et al., 2018, pp. 191). It has recently been suggested by Hayes and colleagues (2018) that only fathers who are coming towards the end of their prison sentence participate in the parenting programme. However, there may be some challenges with this approach. For instance, by the time the fathers are coming to end of their sentence, their relationships with their family may be irreparably damaged (Hayes et al., 2018). Another important consideration was emphasised by McCrudden and colleagues (2014) who stated that the learning and awareness that has been acquired during the prison-based parenting program needs to be followed up with aftercare. This has also been indicated by previous studies (e.g., Jarvis et al., 2004). It would be useful to carry out a survey about what incarcerated fathers would want in terms of when they think is best to engage in a prison-based parenting programme and also what type of follow-up aftercare, etc they would like, if any. To the authors’ knowledge, no such work has been carried out to date.

### *Separating the causal effects of parental incarceration from pre-existing risk factors*

Numerous studies have found that children who grow up with an incarcerated parent tend to have worse economic, behavioural and educational outcomes when compared to children whose parents were not incarcerated (e.g., Murray, Farrington, & Sekol 2012). Such findings are now well-established. However, studies to date have not been able to disentangle the causal effects of parental incarceration from pre-existing risk factors (e.g., living in an unstable or abusive home, attending a low-quality school, and growing up in a neighbourhood where there are high rates of crime) (Wildeman

and Western, 2010). Another area which remains unclear is the causal effects of parental incarceration as the removal of an abusive or negligent parent may have a significant positive impact on the child's home environment (Dobbie et al., 2018). Therefore, when considering the impact of paternal incarceration on the children, it is important that policymakers and researchers take into consideration the variation in the children's family life, the nature of their relationship with their parents as well as the nature of their parents' relationships with each other. By taking these elements into consideration, a fuller and more detailed understanding of what paternal incarceration means for children's well-being across a broad spectrum of children's backgrounds will be developed (Washington, 2018).

#### *Gender differences in the ways in which paternal incarceration may impact children*

Studies are also increasingly recognising the need to consider the gender of the child of the imprisoned father. Research has indicated that there may be gender differences in the ways in which paternal incarceration (as well as parents' marital status) may impact children (Michael, 2018). Given these studies findings Michael (2018) has advocated the need for child welfare professionals (e.g., social workers, psychologists, counsellors) to work differently with boys than they do with girls.

#### *Each case should be considered individually*

There will be some cases where a prison-based parenting programme, which aims to maintain close relationships between the incarcerated fathers and their child or children, may not always be in the best interests of the child. Take for instance, the situation where the father prior to their incarceration inflicted violence on their family. The value of trying to establish and maintain a close relationship in such cases is highly questionable (Swanson et al., 2013). Therefore, it has been suggested that "each case should be considered individually and when the conditions are appropriate, strengthening family

ties should be recommended due to their possible positive impact on the children's, as well as the prisoners', functioning" (Michael, 2018, pp. 75).

## **Research Recommendations**

### *Parental Incarceration may impact boys and girls differently: The need for gender-responsive correctional programming*

A recent study conducted by Michael (2018) found evidence indicating that the impact of parental incarceration differs between boys and girls. This is something that is worthy of further investigation. The notion that the impact of parental incarceration influences boys and girls differently is consistent with the well-established literature which has found that when exposed to trauma boys are more likely to externalise their distress while girls have the tendency to internalise it (Buckner, Beardslee, & Bassuk, 2004; Foster, Kuperminc, & Price, 2004). In a study carried out in Denmark, Wildeman and Andersen's (2016) findings indicated that parental incarceration increases criminal behaviour for boys but not girls.

The studies above suggest that the gender of the child is an important factor that is necessary to consider when studying the relationships between children and their incarcerated fathers. In their study, Geller and colleagues (2009) found more behavioural problems in boys with a history of paternal incarceration which is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Murray et al., 2014). Highlighting some important steps forward in this field, Burgess-Proctor and colleagues (2016) have also argued that when investigating the impact of parental incarceration on children there is a need to adopt a gendered, developmental framework such as gendered pathways. Additionally, they advocate the need for a gender-responsive correctional programming (Burgess-Proctor, Huebner, & Durso, 2016).

### *Need for randomised control trials, longitudinal studies and larger samples*

There is a need for further studies to include longer term follow ups to see if the impact of the parenting programme is maintained (McCrudden et al., 2014) and if patterns of reoffending decrease (Barr et al., 2014). Future research should also aim to examine the way in which prison policies, procedures and practices impact on the long-term outcomes of engagement in prison-based parenting programmes (Hayes et al., 2018). It is important when carrying out longitudinal inquiries that there is a sensitivity to the “dynamics and complex ways families relate to one another and cope with changes in relationships during separation” (Adams, 2018, pp. 8).

As highlighted by a number of studies investigating the effectiveness of programs for incarcerated fathers (e.g., Barr, Morin, Brito, Richeda, Rodriguez, & Shauffer, 2014; Skar, von Tetzchner, Clucas, & Sherr, 2014) future studies need to include a randomised control group (e.g., a prison control group) in order to assert with some level of confidence that any positive effects which are found can be attributed to the prison based parenting program as opposed to other contextual factors which may impact on the parenting capacity of the fathers who are incarcerated. Without the inclusion of comparison control groups it remains unknown whether the outcomes which are found are unique to children whose fathers are incarcerated or they can also be generalised to other disadvantaged populations (Skar et al., 2014; Michael, 2018). Research needs to examine the negative impact on families on a number of factors (including health, economics and family relationships) when a father has been involved with the criminal justice system but has not been physically detained in order to try and isolate the influence of the incarceration as a context. In other words, exploring to what extent “are these outcomes to families because a father is confined away from them, compared to just having a felony record but remaining at home” (Adams, 2018, pp. 8).

Interestingly, in their study, Porter and King (2015) compared adolescents who had experienced paternal incarceration to adolescents who will experience paternal incarceration. In order

to create the ‘highly comparable reference group’ of adolescents who will experience paternal incarceration, Porter and King exploited the longitudinal nature of the data and used children whose fathers will be incarcerated. They argued that both of these groups should share a number of commonalities (e.g., environmental). However, only one of these groups has actually experienced the impact of paternal incarceration. They argue that this is a useful way forward in the field for ‘reducing unobserved heterogeneity’ (Porter & King, 2015). Additionally, most studies investigating the effectiveness of prison-based parenting programmes for incarcerated fathers investigated the outcomes immediately after completing the programme (e.g., Barr et al., 2014; McCrudden et al., 2014).

There is also a need for future studies to use larger samples. Only with larger samples will it be possible to investigate any differences between subgroups. For example, is there any difference in the impact of paternal incarceration between boys and girls depending on if the incarceration occurred during early childhood versus adolescence, for instance (but see Murray et al., 2007; Rakt, Murray, & Nieuwbeerta, 2012). In sum, in order to more thoroughly examine the long-term risks for children following parental incarceration, studies need to use larger samples, consider the disproportionate impact on families of color, include appropriate control groups (e.g., a prison control group or community group) and have longer-term follow-ups. To date, there have been only a few studies which have done this (for review see Murray & Farrington, 2008).

#### *Employing standardised measures of variables in question*

Studies have shown that fathers are usually satisfied with the parenting programs and also tend to self-report greater levels of engagement with their children following their engagement in the program (e.g., Robbers, 2009; Buston et al., 2012). Despite this, however, when relying on parental self-report alone, it is difficult to evaluate the efficacy of such an intervention (Barr et al., 2014). Therefore, there is a very real need for future evaluation work to use standardised measures of the variables of interest

such as child–parent relationship, parenting practice, fathers’ psychosocial functioning and longer term child outcomes (amongst other variables of interest) which would be completed by individuals who are blind as to whether or not parents took part in the prison based parenting programme or not (McCrudden et al., 2014). Future research could include qualitative semi-structured interviews in addition to standardised questionnaires. Some examples of useful standardised measures include: the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997) which is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire that gives a balanced overview of children and young people’s behaviours, emotions and relationships. The 25 items in the SDQ are split into five scales and each consists of five items: emotional symptoms, behavioural conduct problems, peer problems, pro-social behaviour and hyperactivity (Michael, 2018). Barr and colleagues (2014) also used a standardised measure, namely, the Individual Growth and Development Indicators for Infants and Children: Indicator of Parent Child Interaction (IGDI-IPCI; Baggett & Carta, 2006) in order to examine the quality of parent– child interactions within the context of typical daily activities (Carta, Greenwood, Walker, & Buzhardt, 2010). The purpose of the development of the IPCI was to provide a measure of the sensitivity and responsiveness of caregivers to children who are between 2 to 42 months old (Carta et al., 2010). The study by Skar and colleagues (2014) used a number of measures which would be useful to include in future work investigating the effectiveness of the Mellow Dads prison-based parenting programme. Some examples of some of the useful measures used by Skar and colleagues include: the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moor, & Runyan, 1998); the Basic Emotion Trait Test (BETT) (Vittersø, Dyrdal, & Røysamb, 2005) and the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The BETT consists of 15 items, three for each of the five basic emotions (Pleasure, Explore, Anger, Fear and Sadness). Each item is scored from 1 (never) to 7 (all the time).

Another standardised measure that would be useful to use in future evaluation work of a prison-based parenting programme for fathers is the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI, Furman &

Buhrmester, 1985), which is a 30-item measure. The NRI examines a total of ten relationship qualities. Specifically, seven emotional provisions (reliable alliance, companionship, instrumental aid, intimacy, affection, nurturance, and admiration) and three additional relationship qualities (conflict, antagonism, and relative power) designed to assess negative interactions (Michael, 2018). The seven emotional provisions were derived from Weiss's (1974) model of emotional provisions. Other measures which have been used in research in this field include: the InsideOut Dad® Survey Instrument (<http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/135704/file-561437088-pdf>), Parental Stress Index (PSI) and the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI, Bavolek & Keene, 1999). The AAPI is a 32-item inventory widely used to identify adolescents and adults at risk for inadequate parenting behaviours. The Parenting Stress Index–Short Form (PSI-SF) (Abidin, 1995), a 36-item, standardized instrument used to measure stress related to parenting and parent-child interactions, is commonly used in investigations of parenting stress and intervention research. The PSI-SF is standardised for use with parents of children from one month to 12 years of age.

Children's social competence as a child outcome has not been well explored in the parental incarceration literature. This is a significant oversight as studies have shown that children's social competence is predictive of children's successful development and later well-being (Carlton & Winsler, 1999; see Washington, 2018). Lastly, future studies should also try to include assessments which are gathered from a wide range of stakeholders (not least children and parents/partners). These other assessments will also help to substantiate the fathers' self-reports (McCrudden et al., 2014).

#### *Comparing agreement of child- and parent reports across a range of outcomes*

In incarceration research, children are an under-accessed population despite potentially being able to offer insights into their experiences that adult could not provide (Adams, 2018). Haskins (2015) maintains that children are the most accurate informants of their behaviour and skills and therefore,

studies that rely just on parent perceptions of children's behaviours may potentially be over-estimating the negative impact of paternal incarceration. Washington (2018) has emphasised that there is more research needed to obtain a more detailed and fuller understanding of children's reactions to the incarceration of a parent. In particular, the literature has a number of areas which need to be addressed. First, there is an overreliance in the literature on the reports of mothers and caregivers of children's well-being. Second, in the existing literature, there is a focus on problem behaviours and school related outcomes with relatively little focus on children's social competence. This is somewhat surprising given the literature which shows that social competence is an indicator of children's social-emotional functioning which is well-known to impact on their behaviour and school performance. Lastly, researchers have only recently begun to consider children of incarcerated parent(s) as individuals who may have varying reactions to a parent's incarceration (Washington, 2018). In sum, there is a need for future work to compare the agreement of child- and parent reports across a wide range of outcomes (Haskins, 2015).

*Investigating how paternal incarceration may impact on children and adolescents differently at various developmental stages*

Another important consideration in future work is to take into account how paternal incarceration may have a differential impact on children depending on the developmental stage that the incarceration occurred (Washington, 2018). The timing of the fathers' incarceration is another important factor to consider when investigating the effectiveness of a parenting programme for incarcerated fathers. For instance, in their study Rakt and colleagues (2012) found that, compared to when having a father imprisoned during adolescence, having a father imprisoned when children are young (until 12 years) has only a marginally greater effect on children's criminal careers. This is consistent with the findings from earlier studies (e.g., Murray et al., 2007). Moreover, Rakt and colleagues only found partial



support for a dose–response association between father incarceration and the rate of child convictions (Rakt, Murray, & Nieuwbeerta, 2012).

*Effect of fathers' incarceration on children might depend on children's exposure to family violence and parental criminality*

Research has advocated that it is crucial that the context in which families experience difficulties and how each context can play a role in the various pathways of both risk and resilience for families is considered (Turney, 2017). Washington (2018) provides a framework for attempting to understand why the impact of fathers' incarceration on children's well-being may be dependent on the children's exposure to violence. There is very little research which tries to explain this relationship beyond simply the fact that exposure to violence can have a negative impact on children (Murray, Loeber, & Pardini, 2012). It is just simply assumed that findings relating to the moderating influence of fathers' violence is the same across the whole range of child outcomes. To date, there are no studies which would support this assumption (Washington, 2018). Investigating the influence of how other types of family violence may possibly contribute to the relationship between paternal incarceration and children's social-emotional functioning would also be useful to consider in future evaluation work (Washington, 2018). Another question remaining unanswered is whether parental incarceration has any unique effects if the parent was in the household before they were imprisoned (Porter & King, 2015).

Moreover, there is also a need for future research to take into account more accurate assessment of when the fathers' use of violence took place in relation to the incarceration (Washington, 2018). Lastly, Rakt and colleagues (2012) argue that there is a need to disentangle the influence of parental incarceration from the effects of parental criminality given the studies which suggest that prisoners tend to be highly criminal and the intergenerational transmission of crime is well-established (Farrington, Coid, & Murray, 2009; van de Rakt, Nieuwbeerta, & de Graaf, 2008; Rakt et al., 2012).

### *Controlling for confounding factors*

There are a number of potentially confounding factors that would be useful to consider in future research studies in order to explore if they influence the effectiveness of a prison-based parenting programme. Some of these factors include: family living arrangements prior to incarceration, the quality of the parent–child relationship prior to incarceration, the age of the child at the time of their fathers incarceration, the nature and duration of sentence, alternative care arrangements, contact with the incarcerated parent and how well other family members handle the incarceration (Arditti, 2012; Murray, Bijleveld, Farrington, & Loeber, 2014, see also Michael, 2018).

### *The importance of investigating the intra-personal skills or characteristics of the incarcerated father*

As previously pointed out by Dennison and colleagues (2017) there has been relatively little research investigating the intra-personal skills or characteristics of the incarcerated father and how this might impact on the father's ability to engage in positive and nurturing relationships with their children. Instead, the majority of empirical studies investigating imprisonment and family relationships are focused instead on external barriers to parenting. Some of these external barriers include the prison environment and the nature of the relationship with caregiver of the father's children. Some of these intra-personal skills or characteristics would include domains such as: feelings of helplessness; self-doubt and uncertainty about their role and identity as a father; the communication and parental competencies of the father; their feeling of closeness to their child/ren and their ability for generative thinking and future script writing (see Dennison et al., 2017).

## **Conclusions**

Currently, there is relatively little understanding regarding the specific factors which can facilitate change in parenting approaches for incarcerated fathers (Fowler et al., 2017). This paper presents some of the key clinical and research recommendations based on careful review of the literature and clearly highlights the very real need for more research in this area which can help inform and improve current prison policies and practices. As highlighted by Dennison and colleagues (2017): “...*there is currently sufficient evidence to warrant improving prison policies and practices to facilitate regular, meaningful and enjoyable contact between imprisoned parents and their children*” (Dennison et al., 2017, pp. 35-36).

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