



# Parenting Issues During Incarceration

Creasia Finney Hairston, Ph.D.

November 6, 2006

# Introduction

Parenting during imprisonment is difficult and very different. Many parent-child relationships are permanently severed during incarceration. Despite many challenges, some parents are able to maintain connections with their children and resume parenting responsibilities following their release from prison.

# Preprison Lifestyles and Conditions Affect Prison Parenting

- Criminal involvement, substance abuse and poverty
- Different family structures
- Different relationships with different children and the children's primary caregivers

# Prison Parenting Challenges

- Coparenting Issues
- Long Distance Relationships
- Confinement Conditions

# Coparenting

- Prisoners and caregivers assume different primary parenting roles
- Parents and caregivers may have different views and concerns
  - ◆ Caregiver resource needs
  - ◆ Parental worries

# Long Distance Parenting

- Parent absent from the realities of day to day child rearing
- Parent and child communicate by phone, visits, and letters
- No privacy here and emotions are often controlled

# Confinement Conditions

- Prisoner in dependent position
- Communication is expensive with costs borne by family
- Prison norms different from social norms
- Prison rules indifferent to cultural norms

# Some of us keep trying

- Family Actions
  - ◆ Many families visit regularly
  - ◆ Some families communicate by phone and/or letter regularly
  - ◆ Family members pitch in
- Organizational Programs
  - ◆ Parent education
  - ◆ Family advocacy