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For Caregivers: CPL 204

Tips for Caregivers —from Caregivers

By Ann Adalist-Estrin

- **Talk about feelings with children**

“You look sad. Are you missing Daddy?” or, “When you get that angry at little things I wonder if you are also angry at your Mom for going to jail?” or, “I wish your dad could have seen you play ball tonight and I bet you do too.”

- **Be as honest with children as possible**

“Mommy won’t be coming home for a very long time. It will be 4 more birthdays (or 2 more summer vacations).”

- **Remember to keep your feelings separate from each child’s**

“We feel different things about this, I am angry at your dad and don’t really want to see him but I want you to go because he’s your Dad and you love him.”

- **Set up family discussion times**

Tuesday night is the family “meeting.” Or Wednesday night is “Let’s wait for dad’s call tonight and talk about how we are all doing with this.” Or Saturday morning’s breakfast is a “prison and jail talk is off limits” time—a moment of relief to those who need a break from the subject.

- **Talk about the family’s choice to tell others or keep it a secret from certain people.**

Let children know why the choice is necessary. Provide plenty of opportunity to talk about it at home.

- **Encourage children to write or talk to their parents whenever possible.**

For ideas on this, see CPL 106, Jail and Prison Procedures and

CPL 107, Communication Tips.

- **Help children to start a picture or story that their parent adds onto, then the child adds on, and so on and so on by mailing it back and forth.**

- **Read with your children.**

Encourage your library to include books and pamphlets about children of prisoners in its collection.

- **Get support and help for the children and yourself...through friends, clergy, or counselors.**



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About the Children of Prisoners Library (CPL)

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The Children of Prisoners Library was written by Ann Adalist-Estrin, who adapted material from *How Can I Help* and authored other materials in the Children of Prisoners Library. It was edited and published by Jim Mustin.

