



## Criminal Justice Involvement and Parental Risk Factors Expose Children to Family Risks

Recent analysis of longitudinal data<sup>1</sup> on a sample of 1,420 children and their families representing the population of children in 11 counties in North Carolina found that parental criminal justice involvement (CJI) interacts with other individual factors for parents such as low educational attainment, substance abuse problems, and mental health issues to increase family risk factors.<sup>2</sup>

Specifically, children whose parents reported<sup>3</sup> a history of incarceration were almost twice as likely to suffer economic adversity and over twice as likely to have instability in living and school conditions than children of parents who had never been incarcerated. Instability was also nearly twice as likely to occur in families where a parent had a history of arrest not resulting in incarceration (i.e., not guilty, probation). Parental substance abuse was significantly related to all measures of family risks; mental health problems were tied to economic adversity, inadequate care, and instability; and low educational attainment was linked to stress in family structure and economic adversity.

The study found that while parental CJI and other individual risk factors for parents often co-occur and their negative effects interact, both CJI and other individual risk factors make significant and independent contributions to increasing family risk factors. Additionally, the removal of a parent due to CJI was not associated with any improvement in family structural risks or inadequate care.

Increased Odds of Exposure to Family Risks Based on Presence of Individual Risk Factors				
Individual Risks	Family Risks			
	Family Structure	Economic Strain	Inadequate Care	Instability
Incarceration	1.0	1.8*	0.9	2.3*
Arrest Without Incarceration	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.8*
Substance Abuse	1.3*	1.7*	1.6*	2.5*
Mental Health Problems	0.9	1.4*	1.7*	2.2*
Low Educational Attainment	.3*	2.5*	1.3	1.1

\*Statistically significant relationship.

**Source:** Phillips, S.D., Erkanli, A., Keeler, G.P., Costello, E.J., and Angold, A. (2006). Disentangling the risks: Parent criminal justice involvement and children's exposure to family risks. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 5 (4), 677-702.

<sup>1</sup>Data from The Great Smoky Mountains Study collected longitudinal data annually on 9-, 11-, and 13-year-old children and their families until the age of 16. The analysis compared children and families who had a history of CJS involvement to those without such history.

<sup>2</sup>These include: economic strain, inadequate parental care, instability in living arrangements and school routines, and family structural risk (such as a single caregiver household, large family size, or being placed in a foster home).

<sup>3</sup>Data were collected using The Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Assessment.

Prepared by TASC, Inc. TASC is an independent, not-for-profit agency that provides clinical case management and other services to men, women and adolescents with a variety of social and health-related needs. TASC serves approximately 30,000 clients in Illinois each year. For more information visit [www.tasc.org](http://www.tasc.org).

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