

Barriers to Engagement

➤ **Non-Incarcerated Parent/Extended Family Members/Other Caregivers:**

Success in maintaining ties often depends on the quality of the relationship between the caregiver and their children. Family members on the outside might not be supportive of visitation and contact by the child with the incarcerated parent. Resource parents, likewise, may not be supportive of visitation.

➤ **Distance/Transportation:**

It is common for an incarcerated parent to be institutionalized a hundred miles or further from their children. There are few programs assisting with transporting parents and children to correction facilities.

➤ **Hostile Environment:**

Correction facilities focus on security first. Prison staff often view visitation as an added burden. Visitation provides an opportunity for contraband to be smuggled into the prison. As a result, visitors are often treated poorly, forced to wait long periods, and often turned away for a small infraction such as some dress code violation.

➤ **The System:**

Individuals in the social services and related systems may not value or possess the knowledge and skills to work effectively with the incarcerated parents and their families. Agencies might not accept collect calls from incarcerated parents.

➤ **Communication:**

Loss of connection to one's family is identified as the leading cause of depression for the incarcerated parent. While there is some contact through letter writing and telephone contacts, most parents do not receive visits from their families. The longer the incarceration, the less frequently contacts occur.

➤ **Finances:**

Money is tight. Many families fall below poverty guidelines and are on fixed incomes. The cost of long distance phone calls and visitation takes a toll.

➤ **Legal Timeframes:**

Tightened guidelines for making permanency plans put added burdens on the incarcerated parent.

➤ **Lack of Programs/Services:**

Incarcerated parents might lack access to needed services during incarceration or not meet participation requirements.

➤ **Personal Circumstances:**

Many incarcerated parents suffer from mental health issues, learning disabilities, and other concerns affecting their ability to comply with the expectations of child welfare and the courts.

