



## Hold Parents Accountable in Ways That Allow Them to Care for Their Children

Children need their parents to care for them and work to meet their basic needs. Unfortunately, in Kentucky 15 percent of children have had a parent separated from them due to incarceration—the 2nd highest rate in the nation. Children whose parents are incarcerated have to move more often, are more likely to drop out of school, and are more likely to experience poor physical and mental health as adults. These children need a system of justice that holds parents accountable effectively and focuses incarceration on adults who pose a risk or a threat to public safety.

### **To minimize the impact and long-term consequences of parental incarceration:**

#### **When it is safe to do so, release low-level offenders prior to trial so parents can work and care for their children**

For people who have committed less serious offenses and do not pose a risk to public safety, options such as administrative release would allow parents to continue to work and remain in the home to care for their children. This could be especially beneficial when mothers are incarcerated because those children are more likely to be placed in foster care—a system already strained. Additionally, limiting the use of monetary bail would avoid incarceration simply because someone could not pay their bail.

#### **Focus incarceration on the most serious offenses**

Kentucky has seen a significant increase in the number of people entering prison for the lowest level of felony offenses, including a doubling in prison admissions for drug possession. More women are being locked up for low-level drug offenses, and focusing on substance abuse treatment would be most effective for helping mothers and their children.

#### **Allow formerly incarcerated parents to provide for their families by minimizing financial barriers after they leave prison**

Once parents return home, fines, fees, and court costs may force some parents to choose between feeding their child or risk going back to jail. By minimizing these barriers and establishing solutions like payment plans and delayed due dates, parents would be able to use the resources they have to better provide for their children. Parents making an effort to contribute to their community should be supported in their ability to rehabilitate and take care of their children.

### **Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Solution:**

Hold parents accountable in ways that allow them to care for their children and focus incarceration on serious offenses.



[kyyouth.org/blueprintky](http://kyyouth.org/blueprintky)