



Kentucky can...

## Hold parents accountable in ways that minimize the impact of parental incarceration on children

Children need their parents to care for them and work to meet their basic needs. Unfortunately, in Kentucky **13 percent of children** have had a parent separated from them due to incarceration—the **2nd highest rate in the nation**. Parental incarceration has been referred to as a “**shared sentence**” due to the short and long-term effects it has on children’s physical health, mental health, and educational achievement. Children experiencing parental incarceration need a system of justice that will hold their parents accountable and reserve incarceration for those who pose a risk or threat to public safety.

### Kentucky can improve the system by:

#### 1. Limiting the use of money bail for people who commit low-level or non-violent crimes

For people who have committed less serious offenses and do not pose a risk to public safety, **limiting the use of money bail** would avoid incarceration simply because the person could not pay their bail. People who are not deemed a risk to public safety and who are likely to return to court could then **continue to work and care for their children**. When their parents are jailed, children are more likely to be placed with a relative, family friend, or in foster care – a system that is already strained.

#### 2. Utilizing Family Recovery Court programs to support parents in achieving sobriety while safely caring for their children

Family Recovery Court is a voluntary program for parents who are involved with the Department for Community Based Services and the court system due to addiction. The **family-centered case management services hold parents accountable while ensuring they focus on achieving and maintaining sobriety, enhancing their parenting skills, and safely reunifying with and caring for their children**.

Given Kentucky’s increase in women locked up for low-level drug offenses and housed in county jails with limited access to substance abuse treatment, this would be a better intervention for mothers with drug charges and for their children.

### Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children Solution:

Minimize the impact of parental incarceration on children by limiting the use of money bail for people who commit lower level or non-violent offenses. Also, address the addiction crisis and its impact on families, the foster care system, and criminal justice system by utilizing state funds to establish Family Recovery Court pilot projects in select Kentucky communities.