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## Supporting Children and Families Impacted by Parental Incarceration

- RBI is a program of Lamoille Restorative Center
- Began as a pilot in 2003, “*Community Justice Project*”
- Goal is to **help children who experience the impacts of parental incarceration to avoid criminal behavior and adjudication as young adults** by addressing risk factors and increasing protective factors



## In Vermont how many children are we talking about?

2015 DOC legislative report stated that no department or agency collects this data; no way to identify these kids

Speculations from UVM point-in-time study suggest:

2,000 children in Vermont, on any given day,  
experience parental incarceration.

6,000 children a year—same as the number  
of babies born in Vermont every year.

1 out of every 17 Vermont kids  
has had a mom or dad in prison.

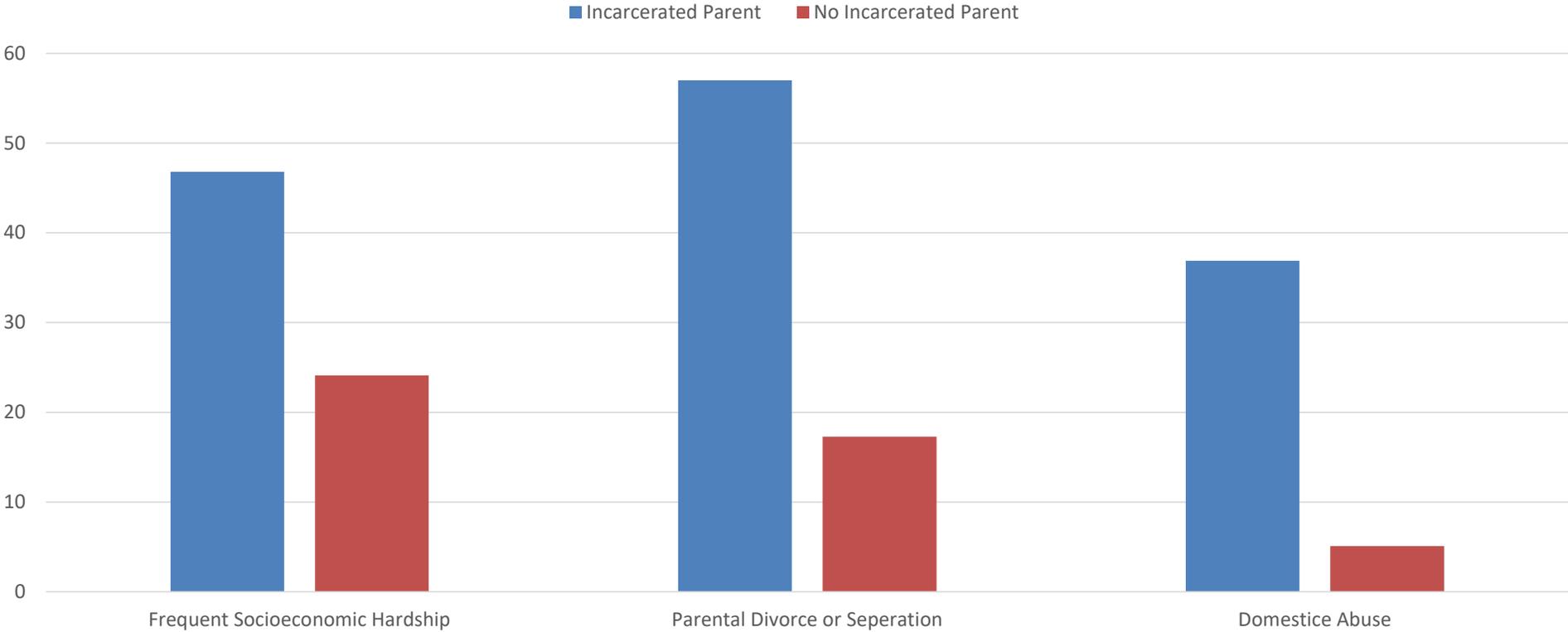


Hear from the children.

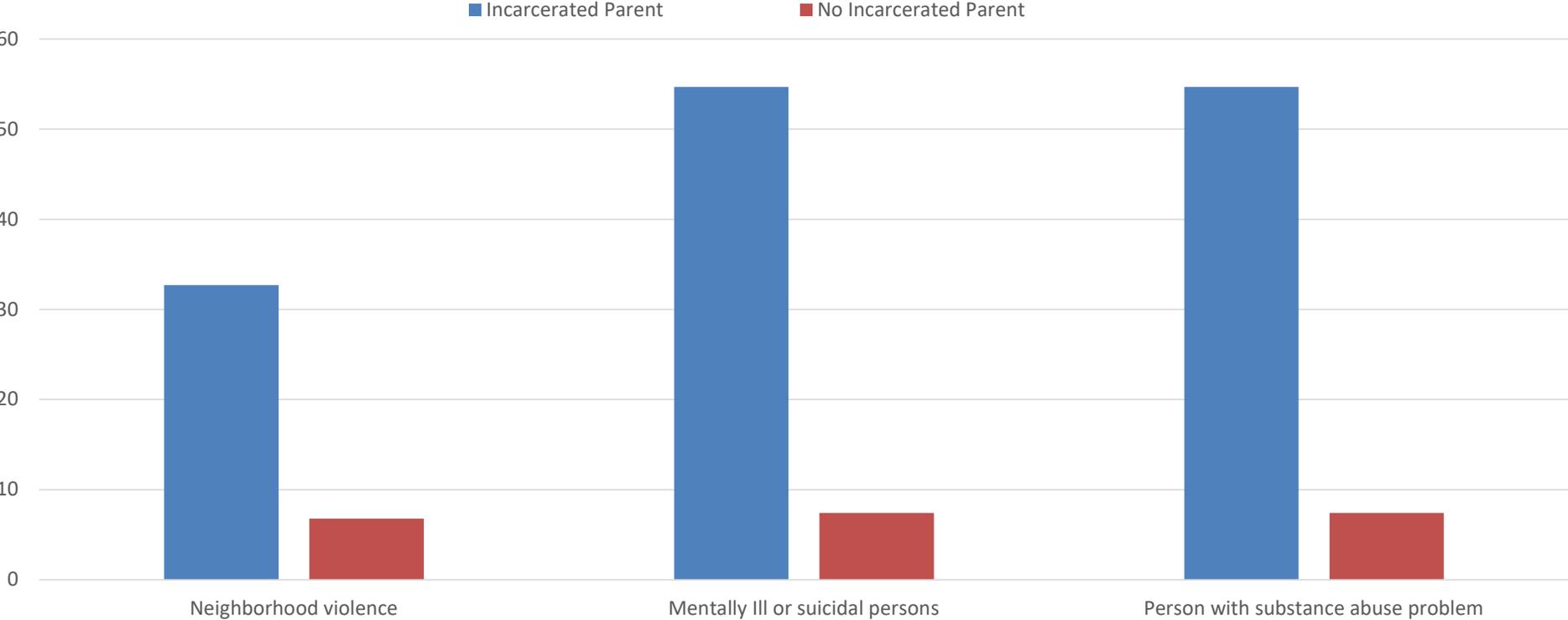
[Downstream Film](#)



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Children who have experienced the incarceration of their parent are **three times** more likely to also experience:

- Serious mental and physical health problems, substance misuse
- Learning disabilities and school drop-out
- Delinquency

AND greater chance for:

- Incarceration later in life





*Kids should not be made to suffer  
for their parents' actions.*

“It’s too bad for their kids, but that’s the  
price they have to pay for what they did.”



## Why we support H.399

- identifies impacted children
- focus on children's well-being
- recognizes parental responsibility
- helps to avoid inadvertently sentencing children



*When a parent serves time, their child also serves time.*

## Gender bias in Vermont



Children whose dad is incarcerated are treated differently than children whose mom is incarcerated.



## Parental Responsibility Assessment (PRA) is offered:

- *NOT* to minimize guilt
- to help the court safeguard minor children from suffering additionally and unnecessarily as a result of their parent's action
- to benefit children, families, and communities
- to create potential cost-savings to taxpayers



## Parental Responsibility Assessment (PRA) acknowledges:

- the parent's accountability for their crime and the harm it has caused others
- the parent's responsibility to care and provide for their children.



Parental Responsibility Assessment (PRA) includes questions intended to collect factual and objective data regarding:

- Defendant's relationship with and caregiving responsibilities for minor children
- Impact of incarceration on children
- Relatives who may (or may not) be available and willing to care for the children

## Our recommendations for H.399 language

- Replace "Family Impact Statement" with "**Parental Responsibility Assessment**" throughout document
- Page 2, lines 10-12
- Replace "The family impact statement may include testimony from family and community members, written statements, video, and other documentation." with "**The parental responsibility assessment collects factual and objective data regarding the defendant's relationship with and caregiving responsibilities for minor children, the impact of incarceration on children and identifies relatives available to care for the children.**"
- Page 2, lines 14-15 & 18
- Replace "primary caretaker" with "**primary caretaker or financial provider**"

## Closing remarks

"We often don't know what the defendant's relationship is with their children. The best way we can take that into consideration is to be provided that information. ...If people don't bring the information to our attention, we may not think of it as an important factor, because no one else in the process has."

Judge Brian Grearson  
Former Chief Superior Judge



# Downstream: The Effects of Parental Incarceration

Watch the trailer or the 1-hour film at [Downstreamfilm.com](http://Downstreamfilm.com)

