

# MATERNAL INCARCERATION & CHILDREN

...giving children a voice, creating an agenda for action...

A joint project of.....



Council of  
Elizabeth Fry  
Societies  
of Ontario



The federal government has funded us to learn more about the opinions and needs of mothers and children separated by incarceration.

- Are you the mother of a child or children under 18 years old?
- Were you recently released from a provincial prison sentence?
- Would you be willing to help with a research project?

If so, please take 20 minutes to fill out this survey about how you and your children were affected by the separation.

Hearing from you helps us improve our services, design new programs, and advocate on behalf of women and children.

This survey is **voluntary**, **anonymous** and **confidential**. Skip over any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. When finished, seal it in the big brown envelope and return it to one of the staff.

Thank you for helping us understand your situation.

How many children do you have **under** 18 years of age? \_\_\_\_\_ How many 18 or over? \_\_\_\_\_

We will be asking about the children who are **under** 18 years old.

Including detention and sentence, how long were you separated from your child or children because of a stay in custody? \_\_\_\_\_

How long ago were you released? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current correctional status?      " on probation      " on parole      " on bail      " nothing  
" other \_\_\_\_\_

How were you released?      " parole      " TA      " end of sentence      " appeal bail  
" other \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have contact with your children when in custody?      " No      " Yes (some or all of them) by:

" letters                                      " video/audio tapes                                      " telephone calls  
" by contact through others                                      " visits  
" another way or ways, \_\_\_\_\_

If they did **not** visit you, why is that? Several reasons may apply so check all that do.

- " they lived too far away
- " not enough money to make the trip
- " the caregiver did not believe they should come to see me
- " I didn't want my children coming here
- " I spent such a short time in custody
- " the visiting arrangements were not nice for children
- " other reason or reasons, \_\_\_\_\_

Before you entered custody, how much time was there to arrange where your children would live?

- " no time at all                                      " a day                                      " a few days                                      " a few weeks                                      " a few months

Were you breast feeding a baby or had to ween a baby when you entered custody?      " yes      " no

Were you pregnant at any point during your stay in custody?      " yes      " no

Today, do you and your children live together?      " yes                                      " some children                                      " no, because.....

Are you now living with a partner or spouse who is a parent or like a parent to your children?

- " Yes, the same partner from before my stay in custody
- " Yes, in a new relationship
- " No, because my relationship ended because of the prison sentence or at the same time
- " No, I had no such partner before I went to custody and I do not have one now

**Some women have problems getting their family back together. Did any of these apply to you?**

finding a place to live that is okay for children

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't need this

finding a place to live that I can afford

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't need this

dealing with an abusive ex-partner

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't have one

getting Ontario Works for me and my children

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't need this

finding a job

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't need this

getting back to school

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't need this

getting day care

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't need this

finding a counsellor or other advocate to help me work out some issues

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem       I don't need this

dealing with people who think I am a bad mother

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem

other, \_\_\_\_\_

not a problem for me       was a problem       still is a problem

Did you have to get custody of one or more children back from the CAS?

no       yes       the CAS still has one or more of my children

Did you have to get custody back from the children's father?

no       yes, some children       yes, all the children       we share custody

**What things help you in getting back to being a mother?**

a supportive partner/spouse

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " I don't have a partner

a supportive family

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " I don't have a family

good friends

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " I don't have friends

parenting programs in the institution

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " there was no such program

other programs in the institution, such as \_\_\_\_\_

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " there were no programs

my probation/parole officer

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " I don't have a P.P.O.

the Elizabeth Fry Society

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " I had no contact with Eliz. Fry

other counsellor or advocate

- " helped a lot
- " helped a little
- " not a help to me
- " I don't have a counsellor

What kind of things would make it easier for women?

**These questions are about you. Please don't answer any that make you feel uncomfortable**

How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ When your first child was born, how old were you? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you describe yourself as one of Canada's indigenous/Aboriginal peoples? " yes " no

Do you describe yourself as a visible minority? " yes " no

Were you born in Canada? " yes " no, I was born in \_\_\_\_\_ and came to Canada in \_\_\_\_\_ (year)

Is English your first language? " yes " no, my first language is \_\_\_\_\_

In general, how is your health? " excellent " very good " good " fair " poor

Are you employed now? " no " full time " part time

Were you employed at the time you were arrested/charged? " no " full time " part time

How are you supporting yourself now? [*several of these may apply to you*]

" employment of myself and/or partner " disability pension " other type of pension " Ontario Works  
" EI benefits " workers compensation " child support/alimony " own business  
" other, \_\_\_\_\_

At the time of your arrest/charge that led to the custody stay, how were you supporting yourself?

" employment of myself and/or partner " disability pension " other type of pension " Ontario Works  
" EI benefits " workers compensation " child support/alimony " own business  
" other, \_\_\_\_\_

Before I was admitted to custody, I lived in a safe and stable residence that met my family's needs. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

" strongly agree " agree " neither agree nor disagree " disagree " strongly disagree

Not including kindergarten, how many years of elementary and secondary school did you finish? \_\_\_\_\_

Any post-secondary? \_\_\_\_\_

When you were a child or teenager, was one of your parents ever in prison?

" no " yes, father or father figure " yes, mother or mother figure " both

If yes, how has that experience affected you in your life?

**Being a mother is a very important role. Yet every woman faces some challenges to being the best mother she can be. Do any of these factors affect you as a mother?**

problems with my health	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
not having family to help me	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
having a special needs child	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
an abusive partner or ex-partner	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
my own abuse as a child	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
not having enough money	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
not being confident in my parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
spending too much time at work	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
conflict with their father	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
living in a bad neighbourhood	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
too many other responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
my problems with substance abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
my problems with alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
other, _____	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
other, _____	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting

**Which factors help you in your role as a mother?**

I love my kids deeply	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
I have supportive family & friends	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
I have lots of practice with kids	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
I have really good kids	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
other, _____	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting
other, _____	<input type="checkbox"/> does not apply to me	<input type="checkbox"/> a little bit	<input type="checkbox"/> this affects my parenting

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The next pages have questions about your child or children.

There is one page for each child.

If you have more than one child, start with your eldest child under 18.

If there is not enough room for an answer, write on the back of the  
page

If you have more than six children, and want to tell us about all of  
them, please ask for extra pages.

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These questions are about your **eldest** child, your **only** child, or your **only child under 18**.

Is this child...  female  male How old was s/he when you were admitted to custody? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to this child?

biological child  step child  adopted child  child of a family member  other \_\_\_\_\_

Was this child living with you when you were arrested?  yes  no, s/he was living with \_\_\_\_\_

Is this child living with you now?  yes  no, s/he is living with \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship right now between this child and his or her biological father?

live together  regular visits  occasional visits  no contact  other \_\_\_\_\_

How many different residences did this child have while you were in custody? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did this child live with when you were in custody? [*or spent the most time with if more than one*]

my mother/parents  my sister/brother  one of my older children  other family member  
 friend  the child's father  the child's step-father  foster care  
 other, \_\_\_\_\_

Was the Children's Aid Society involved with this living arrangement?

no CAS involvement  supervision order  wardship  other, \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child have to change residences to live with that caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child have to change schools to live with that caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child live apart from some or all brothers or sisters?  yes  no  has no sibs

Did this child know you were separated because of a prison sentence?  yes  no

Have you discussed your incarceration directly with him or her?  yes  no

Depending upon their age, these are some of the common reactions in children. Have you noticed any of these emotions or behaviours in this child since your return?

clinging to you, anxious  acting younger  
 anger at you for leaving  acting older  
 pre-occupation that you might leave again  problems in school  
 sadness  other things that worry you, \_\_\_\_\_

What were or are your biggest worries about this child because of the separation from you?

Was this the first time this child was separated from you because of incarceration?  yes  no

*If this is your **only** child, or your **only child under 18**, please turn to the back page of this form.*

These questions are about your **next** child, or your youngest if you have two children under 18.

Is this child...  female  male How old was s/he when you were admitted to custody? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to this child?

biological child  step child  adopted child  child of a family member  other \_\_\_\_\_

Was this child living with you when you were arrested?  yes  no, s/he was living with \_\_\_\_\_

Is this child living with you now?  yes  no, s/he is living with \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship right now between this child and his or her biological father?

live together  regular visits  occasional visits  no contact  other \_\_\_\_\_

How many different residences did this child have while you were in custody? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did this child live with when you were in custody? [*or spent the most time with if more than one*]

my mother/parents  my sister/brother  one of my older children  other family member  
 friend  the child's father  the child's step-father  foster care  
 other, \_\_\_\_\_

Was the Children's Aid Society involved with this living arrangement?

no CAS involvement  supervision order  wardship  other, \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child have to change residences to live with that caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child have to change schools to live with this caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child live apart from some or all brothers or sisters?  yes  no  has no sibs

Did this child know you were separated because of a prison sentence?  yes  no

Have you discussed your incarceration directly with him or her?  yes  no

Depending upon their age, these are some of the common reactions in children. Have you noticed any of these emotions or behaviours in this child since your return?

clinging to you, anxious  acting younger  
 anger at you for leaving  acting older  
 pre-occupation that you might leave again  problems in school  
 sadness  other things that worry you,  
\_\_\_\_\_

What were or are your biggest worries about this child because of the separation from you?

Was this the first time this child was separated from you because of incarceration?  yes  no

*If you have **two children**, or two children under 18, please turn to the back page of this form.*

These questions are about your **next** child, or your youngest if you have three children under 18.

Is this child...  female  male How old was s/he when you were admitted to custody? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to this child?

biological child  step child  adopted child  child of a family member  other \_\_\_\_\_

Was this child living with you when you were arrested?  yes  no, s/he was living with \_\_\_\_\_

Is this child living with you now?  yes  no, s/he is living with \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship right now between this child and his or her biological father?

live together  regular visits  occasional visits  no contact  other \_\_\_\_\_

How many different residences did this child have while you were in custody? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did this child live with when you were in custody? [*or spent the most time with if more than one*]

my mother/parents  my sister/brother  one of my older children  other family member  
 friend  the child's father  the child's step-father  foster care  
 other, \_\_\_\_\_

Was the Children's Aid Society involved with this living arrangement?

no CAS involvement  supervision order  wardship  other, \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child have to change residences to live with that caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child have to change schools to live with this caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child live apart from some or all brothers or sisters?  yes  no  has no sibs

Did this child know you were separated because of a prison sentence?  yes  no

Have you discussed your incarceration directly with him or her?  yes  no

Depending upon their age, these are some of the common reactions in children. Have you noticed any of these emotions or behaviours in this child since your return?

clinging to you, anxious  acting younger  
 anger at you for leaving  acting older  
 pre-occupation that you might leave again  problems in school  
 sadness  other things that worry you, \_\_\_\_\_

What were or are your biggest worries about this child because of the separation from you?

Was this the first time this child was separated from you because of incarceration?  yes  no

*If you have **three children** under 18, please turn to the back page of this form.*

These questions are about your **next** child, or your youngest if you have four children under 18.

Is this child...  female  male How old was s/he when you were admitted to custody? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to this child?

biological child  step child  adopted child  child of a family member  other \_\_\_\_\_

Was this child living with you when you were arrested?  yes  no, s/he was living with \_\_\_\_\_

Is this child living with you now?  yes  no, s/he is living with \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship right now between this child and his or her biological father?

live together  regular visits  occasional visits  no contact  other \_\_\_\_\_

How many different residences did this child have while you were in custody? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did this child live with when you were in custody? [*or spent the most time with if more than one*]

my mother/parents  my sister/brother  one of my older children  other family member  
 friend  the child's father  the child's step-father  foster care  
 other, \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child have to change residences to live with that caregiver?  yes  no

Was the Children's Aid Society involved with this living arrangement?

no CAS involvement  supervision order  wardship  other, \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child have to change schools to live with this caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child live apart from some or all brothers or sisters?  yes  no  has no sibs

Did this child know you were separated because of a prison sentence?  yes  no

Have you discussed your incarceration directly with him or her?  yes  no

Depending upon their age, these are some of the common reactions in children. Have you noticed any of these emotions or behaviours in this child since your return?

clinging to you, anxious  acting younger  
 anger at you for leaving  acting older  
 pre-occupation that you might leave again  problems in school  
 sadness  other things that worry you, \_\_\_\_\_

What were or are your biggest worries about this child because of the separation from you?

Was this the first time this child was separated from you because of incarceration?  yes  no

*If you have **four children**, or four children under 18, please turn to the back page of this form.*

These questions are about your **next** child, or your youngest if you have five children under 18.

Is this child...  female  male How old was s/he when you were admitted to custody? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to this child?

biological child  step child  adopted child  child of a family member  other \_\_\_\_\_

Was this child living with you when you were arrested?  yes  no, s/he was living with \_\_\_\_\_

Is this child living with you now?  yes  no, s/he is living with \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship right now between this child and his or her biological father?

live together  regular visits  occasional visits  no contact  other \_\_\_\_\_

How many different residences did this child have while you were in custody? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did this child live with when you were in custody? [*or spent the most time with if more than one*]

my mother/parents  my sister/brother  one of my older children  other family member  
 friend  the child's father  the child's step-father  foster care  
 other, \_\_\_\_\_

Is the Children's Aid Society involved with this living arrangement?

no CAS involvement  supervision order  wardship  other, \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child have to change residences to live with that caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child have to change schools to live with this caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child live apart from some or all brothers or sisters?  yes  no  has no sibs

Did this child know you were separated because of a prison sentence?  yes  no

Have you discussed your incarceration directly with him or her?  yes  no

Depending upon their age, these are some of the common reactions in children. Have you noticed any of these emotions or behaviours in this child since your return?

clinging to you, anxious  acting younger  
 anger at you for leaving  acting older  
 pre-occupation that you might leave again  problems in school  
 sadness  other things that worry you, \_\_\_\_\_

What were or are your biggest worries about this child because of the separation from you?

Was this the first time this child was separated from you because of incarceration?  yes  no

*If you have **five children**, or five children under 18, please turn to the back page of this form.*

These questions are about your **next** child, or your youngest if you have six children under 18.

Is this child...  female  male How old was s/he when you were admitted to custody? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to this child?

biological child  step child  adopted child  child of a family member  other \_\_\_\_\_

Was this child living with you when you were arrested?  yes  no, s/he was living with \_\_\_\_\_

Is this child living with you now?  yes  no, s/he is living with \_\_\_\_\_

What is the relationship right now between this child and his or her biological father?

live together  regular visits  occasional visits  no contact  other \_\_\_\_\_

How many different residences did this child have while you were in custody? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did this child live with when you were in custody? [*or spent the most time with if more than one*]

my mother/parents  my sister/brother  one of my older children  other family member  
 friend  the child's father  the child's step-father  foster care  
 other, \_\_\_\_\_

Is the Children's Aid Society involved with this living arrangement?

no CAS involvement  supervision order  wardship  other, \_\_\_\_\_

Did this child have to change residences to live with that caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child have to change schools to live with this caregiver?  yes  no

Did this child live apart from some or all brothers or sisters?  yes  no  has no sibs

Did this child know you were separated because of a prison sentence?  yes  no

Have you discussed your incarceration directly with him or her?  yes  no

Depending upon their age, these are some of the common reactions in children. Have you noticed any of these emotions or behaviours in this child since your return?

clinging to you, anxious  acting younger  
 anger at you for leaving  acting older  
 pre-occupation that you might leave again  problems in school  
 sadness  other things that worry you, \_\_\_\_\_

What were or are your biggest worries about this child because of the separation from you?

Was this the first time this child was separated from you because of incarceration?  yes  no

Is there anything else you want to tell us about you or your children?

Would you like a copy of the research report that comes out of this study?

If so, use the white envelope and the letter inside it to send us an address where we can mail you the report.  
The report will be finished in December of 2002.