Working with Children and Families
with Parents Involved in the Criminal Justice System

A Toolkit for Law Enforcement Personnel

This web-based toolkit can be found on the following website:
www.childrensjusticealliance.org/resources

Children’s Justice Alliance
Prioritizing, Parenting and Protecting Our Children

Ocober 2010
Working with Children and Families
with Parental Involvement in the Criminal Justice System

A Toolkit for Social Law Enforcement Professionals

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Art work in this document was done by inmate parents Ben Black and Josh Cook.
Introduction

The children who are the most likely to fail in school, to become drug addicted as adults, and to experience violence are children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system. The Children’s Justice Alliance works to improve outcomes for these children and their families. We do that through supporting stable, healthy families, creating systems change and contributing to public policy discussions.

This Toolkit is part of our systems change work to ensure that the needs of children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system are recognized, considered and addressed by all parts of the systems with which they come in contact.

When a parent is incarcerated, children experience trauma and loss. They often do not know why their parent has left nor do they understand their parents’ actions. They may learn from the actions and attitudes of those around them that incarceration is shameful, leading them to feel stigmatized and isolated. Typical feelings include vulnerability, anger, guilt, depression, and anxiety. Behavioral symptoms they may exhibit include:

- Separation anxiety and fears of abandonment
- Fear, sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem, and emotional withdrawal from friends and family
- Use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Anxiety, attention disorders and developmental regression
- Physical aggression, withdrawal, acting out, academic and classroom behavior difficulties, and truancy

Awareness of the issues and emotions experienced by children of incarcerated parents can help law enforcement personnel and agencies better serve their needs. This toolkit will provide information to help officers develop resources for dealing appropriately and effectively with these children, their caregivers and their parents.
Children of Incarcerated Parents Project

The Children of Incarcerated Parents Project workgroup first convened in 2000, to better understand the issues of children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system and to develop recommendations aimed at meeting children’s needs when a parent becomes involved in the criminal justice system. The work group was comprised of representatives from over 20 organizations, including Child, Adult and Family Services, the Oregon Youth Authority, mental and public health, the Oregon Social Learning Center, Early Head Start, Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), Oregon Relief Nurseries, Inc., Ecumenical Ministries, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, Portland State University, county jail managers, and community corrections agencies.

Upon the recommendation of the workgroup, in 2001, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 133 creating a planning and advisory committee that was directed to develop recommendations on how to increase family bonding for children who have parents incarcerated in state or community corrections systems for the purposes of reducing antisocial behavior and attachment disorder and reducing the intergenerational cycle of criminality. The planning and advisory committee consisted of representatives from:

- The Department of Corrections;
- The Oregon Youth Authority;
- The State Court Administrator;
- The State Commission on Children and Families;
- The Department of Education;
- The Department of Human Services;
- Local public safety coordinating councils;
- Local family law advisory committees;
- Local commissions on children and families;
- Local public health agencies; and
- Research and advocacy groups working on issues related to children of incarcerated parents.

Recommendations from the committee were submitted to the Oregon Legislature in December 2002. The committee developed recommendations across the criminal justice spectrum — arrest, jail, sentencing, prison and reentry — that will help support
children during the process of their parent’s involvement in the criminal justice system. Recommendations included:

- Developing child-sensitive arrest practices;
- Providing resources such as the booklet “How to Explain Jail and Prison to Children - A caregiver’s Guide” to parents and to caregivers;
- Providing officers of the court with resources to be used in judicial proceedings that will minimize trauma and disruption to children;
- Gathering information on children during the booking process;
- Reviewing policies on visiting, phone calls and mail to improve communication between parents and children;
- Providing inmate support during incarceration in the form of parenting skills classes and child-friendly visiting rooms;
- Developing a parent management skills program specifically for parents involved in the criminal justice system (the evidence-based Parenting Inside Out program was developed as a joint venture of the Oregon Department of Corrections and the Oregon Social Learning Center and is now offered in the majority of Oregon’s prisons);
- Developing an Early Head Start at the Coffee Creek Women’s Correctional Facility to give mothers and young children an opportunity to bond;
- Developing the Even Start Family Literacy program (the first in the nation);
- Providing corrections staff with training on understanding and responding appropriately to inmate families.

Since 2006, CJA has delivered its And How Are the Children? summit, a community approach to prioritizing, protecting and parenting children of incarcerated parents in ten Oregon counties. The summit acts as a catalyst, inspiring the county and its community members to commit themselves to systems improvements that will better support children of justice-involved parents and their families. The And How Are the Children? summit raises awareness of the challenges faced by children whose parents are justice-involved and provides strategies for communities and their justice and human service partners to work together to better meet the needs of these children. The issues associated with children of justice-involved parents are community issues and as such are best addressed by a community response. The primary goal of And How Are the Children? is to build a base of understanding and awareness that includes information about the impact of parental criminality on child development, family dynamics and the parent-child relationship.
As needed, and some on regular schedules, county and state representatives participate in meetings and information sharing with their perspective Children of Incarcerated Parents Projects. The meetings provide an opportunity for partners to share information, announce updates and events, and support one another’s initiatives within the context of improving outcomes and conditions for children with criminal justice involved families.

Positive outcomes resulting from the And How Are the Children? summits include:

- The Oregon Departments of Corrections and Human Services have worked together to support policies and programs which support the families they encounter. For example, improving visitation for children of incarcerated parents and providing Parenting Inside Out training for parents both in prison and in the community;
- The development of the Center for Family Success model, which gives communities a roadmap for developing partnerships and delivering services to better meet the needs of children of justice involved parents and their families;
- The development of jail and prison intake processes that collect information about the children, allowing for their needs to be considered.
Suggestions for Law Enforcement Officers

Practitioners and educators have long observed the effects of child traumatic stress, but it did not receive focused attention at the national level until 2001 when the Donald J. Cohen National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative improved access to care and encouraged cross-agency cooperation through a series of grants administered by SAMSHA and other agencies.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network defines two types of trauma – acute and chronic. Acute traumatic incidents include:

- Serious injury to one’s self or the witnessing of the serious injury or death of another
- Imminent threat of serious injury or death to one’s self or others
- Violation of personal safety or physical integrity

The sudden or violent loss of a loved one is classified as an acute trauma. When a parent is arrested children experience the immediate loss of their parent, as well as the fear of danger to the parent, and the uncertainty about who will take care of them. In such situations children may exhibit anxiety, anger, intense terror or shock.

As first responders, police officers are particularly well situated to both identify children who are exposed to violence and to ensure that to the greatest extent possible, the arrest event does not become a traumatic event.

The following suggestions for police officers were organized by GayLynn Pack and Troy Clausen of the Marion County, Oregon Sheriff’s Office, based on the work of Ann Adalist-Estrin at the Family & Connections Network and the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (www.fcnetwork.org), and are used with permission. Police officers can reduce the stress of arrest by:

- Remembering that, regardless of age, children will display a wide range of reactions in the presence of law enforcement
- Realizing that children watch every move an officer makes and remember what they see. Officers can leave a lasting impression on a child - positive or negative
- Understanding that children living with parents or caregivers in situations involving criminal behavior have complicated feelings about their parents.
Reducing Trauma for Infants

Infants are afraid of:

- Strangers
- Loud or sudden noises
- Loss of support
- Separation from parents

The implications for officers are:

- A crying infant can intensify the arrest situation and decrease cooperation from adults at the scene
- **If it does not compromise the integrity of the arrest or the safety of the officers:**
  - Avoid loud or sudden noises
  - Set the example by keeping your tone calm and soothing
  - Acknowledge the parent/child relationship
  - Allow the parent to comfort the child and give the child to another adult
  - Consult the parent about the appropriate caregiver or discuss the need to call DHS
  - Avoid multiple separations for the infant
  - Show concern with words and actions

Reducing Trauma for Toddlers

Toddlers are afraid of:

- Anything or anybody new, different, or unpredictable
- The dark, unexpected noises, dogs
- Being restrained, loss of autonomy
- Separation from parents

Implications for police:

- A toddler’s tantrums can unnerve everyone
- Parents may discipline toddlers by hitting
- **If it does not compromise the integrity of the arrest or the safety of the officers:**
  - Avoid surprising movements, loud noises or yelling
  - Set the example by keeping your tone calm and soothing
  - Allow the parent to comfort the child and/or give child to another adult
Avoid criticizing the parent’s parenting
Consult the parent about the appropriate caregiver or at least allow the parent to understand policy regarding DHS involvement
Allow the parent to say goodbye to the child
Suggest that the toddler be distracted by a familiar adult and show concern through your words and actions

Reducing Trauma for Preschoolers

Preschoolers (3-5 year olds) feel:

- Loss of control & powerlessness
- Guilt and worry about the parent/caregiver
- Scared of the unknown
- Loyalty conflicts
- The need to make sense of the situation

Implications for police:

- Preschoolers see police as good or bad and are looking for confirmation of that belief
- Police attempts to settle the scene can be complicated by preschooler’s questions
- Stress between parents/caregivers increases anxiety for the child
- Preschoolers thoughts and words may not sound logical to adults
- Preschoolers frequently display anxiety by whining, which can be unnerving and distracting
- **If it does not compromise the integrity of the arrest or the safety of the officers:**
  - Avoid having the child witness the restraint of the parent/caregiver
  - Set the example by keeping your tone calm and soothing
  - Allow/expect the parent to want to explain to the child what is happening and what comes next
  - Let the parent suggest an activity to distract the child
  - Reiterate or clarify for the child what will happen next
  - Verbally acknowledge the child’s feelings
  - Answer the child’s questions carefully
Reducing Trauma for School Age Children

School age children (5 - 8 years old) feel:

- Afraid of being blamed
- Worried about their own safety
- Concerned that their parents can’t take care of them
- Tempted to be “bad” so they can go to jail to be with their parent
- Powerless when logic fails them

Implications for police:

- Children may defend their parents and minimize the situation
- Children can be very argumentative, even belligerent
- They may unconsciously try to divert police/adult attention
- They may refuse to answer questions
- Children should not be asked to act as translators between their family, friends and the police
- They may become aggressive toward police/adults
- If it does not compromise the integrity of the arrest or the safety of the officers:
  - Engage with the child quickly
  - Set the example by keeping your tone calm and soothing
  - Verbally acknowledge the child’s feelings
  - Ask the parent/caregiver what would help the child cope
  - Use simple, honest and non-judgmental language to explain what is happening
  - Avoid using the incident as a “learning experience” for the child

Reducing Trauma for Pre-teens

Pre-teens (9 - 12 years old) feel:

- Suspicious - they know that what you see is not always what you get
- Scared of being implicated, blamed or questioned by police
- Worry about getting “lost in the system”
- Nervousness about the police presence and protective of their property
Implications for police:

- This is an age where the long term consequences of engaging well with the child are significant, but the short term goal of an effective arrest may be in the way
- It is often tempting for police to solicit the cooperation of children in this age group, resulting in children feeling trapped by loyalty conflicts and moral dilemmas
- Be understanding of the child’s resistance if calling DHS is necessary
- If possible, avoid searching property or parents in front of the child
- Remember the long term implications of being a positive role model without criticizing the parent
- Children should not be asked to act as translators between their family, friends and the police
- **If it does not compromise the integrity of the arrest or the safety of the officers:**
  - Be honest and fair
  - Set the example by keeping your tone calm and soothing
  - Respect the child’s opinions
  - Ask the child how they are doing and verbally acknowledge the feelings that are presented or displayed (even if they are not stated by the child)
  - Limit or avoid questioning the child about the parent you are arresting

Reducing Trauma for Teens

Teens may:

- Size up the situation based on their role in the family
- Feel blamed, implicated, responsible, threatened or relieved
- Take all comments about them or their family personally
- Attempt to exert some power and control over the situation by trying to leave, or engaging in a power struggle with parents or police

Implications for police:

- Teenagers may be the parents of young children themselves
- Friends of teens may be present, exacerbating feelings of shame
- Teens may be engaged in peripheral drug/alcohol activity
- Family response to teen reactions may complicate the situation
- Teens should not be asked to act as translators between their family, friends and the police
• If it does not compromise the integrity of the arrest or the safety of the officers:
  - Set the example by keeping your tone calm and soothing
  - Encourage the parent to talk with and say goodbye to the teen quickly
  - Secure support for the teen and separate him/her from the arrested parent if difficulty looks likely
  - Don’t take comments from youth personally
  - Avoid comments or questions that connect the teen with the parent
  - Remove the teen prior to searching the property or parent, if possible
  - Remember all teens are different; avoid stereotyping or judging by appearance
  - Set limits clearly and respectfully, if necessary

Reducing the Trauma of Parental Arrest for All Age Groups

What can police do?

• Examine your own biases, perspectives and experience
• Understand the influence you have on the children you contact during work
• Be armed with general information about children
• Expect that children may be present when you make an arrest
• Assign an officer to attend to children during the arrest process
• Help restore the child’s sense of safety
• Speak to children at eye level
• Acknowledge the fact that children do have feelings
• Consult the parent/caregiver and locate an adult the child trusts
• Contact DHS if arrest is imminent and children are known to be present
• Collaborate with DHS and the caregiver in explaining what will happen next
• Carry materials to give to caregivers
• Encourage parents to tell the truth to the child
• Avoid hostile, critical or inappropriate language during arrest
• Avoid questioning children at the scene
• Protect children from observing the searching of their home and personal belongings
• Avoid if possible restraining the parent in front of the child
• Develop partnerships with resource agencies that specialize in providing services to children
On Line Resources for Officers, Caregivers and Families

**How to Explain Jails and Prisons to Children: A Caregiver’s Guide** (Children’s Justice Alliance). Contains suggestions for caretakers on how to discuss incarceration with a young child. It includes a “story” to read with children which helps explain basic concepts.

**Resource Guide for Teens with a Parent in Prison or Jail** (Project What). Written for teens in California, but contains information relevant for all teens with a parent in prison or jail.

**Focus on Children with Incarcerated Parents: An Overview of the Research** (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007). This report provides an overview of major research findings on children whose parents are incarcerated as a means of further informing this developing area of research, practice, and policy. The findings and policy and program suggestions offered in this synthesis are based primarily on research published during the last 20 years.

**Broken Bonds: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents** (Urban Institute, 2008). This report reviews the current research on children with incarcerated parents and offers recommendations on how to reduce the negative impact of parental incarceration, with particular attention to the role of supportive relationships with the incarcerated parent and other adults.
Books for Officers, Caregivers and Children

Links for ordering books can be found at the Children's Justice Alliance website www.childrensjusticealliance.org, on the “Recommended Books” tab under the “Resources” page.

Providers and Caregivers

All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated
Author: Nell Bernstein (New Press, 2005)

Children of prisoners: who even thinks about them? Journalist Bernstein, who grew up with an incarcerated father, puts a face on this population with staggering statistics and personal stories of children like Susana, who has embraced her father only once in her life, and Carl, who told the jailhouse Santa that all he wanted for Christmas was for his mother to come home. The book includes suggestions for policy makers and social service providers.

Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families and Communities

Editors: Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul (Urban Institute Press, 2003)

For every person who goes to prison, there is a family and community left behind. This book looks at family functioning during a period of imprisonment, and how families are affected by the return of an incarcerated parent.

Loving Through Bars: Children with Parents in Prison

Author: Cynthia Martone (Santa Monica Press, 2005)

Written by an educational administrator, this book explores the difficulties children face in maintaining relationships with incarcerated parents. Not only are these children “innocent victims,” they can also be lost in a vicious cycle that can lead to future criminality and deviant social behavior. The author provides dramatic and haunting testimony of the devastating impact parental incarceration has on children.

Children

What is Jail, Mommy?

Author: Jackie Stanglin (Lifevest Publishing, 2006)

This book was inspired by a five year old whose father had been incarcerated most of her life. One day after visiting with friends who have both devoted parents in the
home, this little girl blurted out to her mother in frustration, "What is jail anyway, and why can’t Daddy be home with us?" She needed answers! When the truth is withheld from children they tend to blame themselves for other’s mistakes and shortcomings. Also in Spanish.

When Andy’s Father Went to Prison
Author: Martha W. Hickman (Albert Whitman & Company, 1990)
A factual yet sensitive picture book about a boy’s father being sent to prison. The black-and-white illustrations of predominately white characters match the detailed story of the sobering event. One feels the quiet sadness Andy experiences in first discovering his father is guilty of a crime, and then the harder task of facing the day-to-day changes this fact has made in his life.

A Terrible Thing Happened - A story for children who have witnessed violence or trauma
Author: Margaret M. Holmes
Sherman Smith saw the most terrible thing happen. At first he tried to forget about it, but something inside him started to bother him. He felt nervous and had bad dreams. Then he met someone who helped him talk about the terrible thing, and made him feel better. This is a wonderful book for teachers or parents to use with younger children.

Support Organizations
Many organizations provide support or information for children and families of incarcerated persons. The following is a partial listing of these organizations.

The Children’s Justice Alliance supports stable, healthy families through programming at its Center for Family Success and promotes systems change through public information campaigns and trainings.

The National Institute of Corrections provides a wealth of information and resources for inmates and their families from incarceration through reentry.

Family and Corrections Network (FCN) has resources and referrals for kinship caregivers and others with incarcerated family members.

The Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents (CCIP) offers counseling and support services for prisoners and their children.
The **Offender Preparation and Education Network Inc.** (OPEN) provides self-help resources and other information for offenders and families on subjects ranging from addiction and motivation to employment and reentry.

The **San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership** formulated the “Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights” based on the work of Friends Outside. They offer training for agencies and groups interested in learning more about children of incarcerated parents.

**Lives in Focus: Family Life Behind Bars** provides networking and other information for families affected by incarceration.

The **National Incarcerated Parents and Families Network** (NIPFN) offers on-line support for families and training for professionals working with incarcerated parents.

**Pennies for Prison** is a project raising money to provide parenting programs for inmate parents. It also offers networking, information and supports.

**Mentoring and Support for Children**

**Big Brothers Big Sisters.** Big Brothers Big Sisters have been providing mentors for youth for more than 100 years. A mentor can provide the child of an incarcerated parent additional focus and attention they may be lacking while his/her parent is absent.

**Mentoring Children of Prisoners: Caregiver’s Choice MENTOR.** MENTOR’s role is to bring mentoring programs and children with incarcerated parents together to facilitate quality new mentoring relationships. The Oregon partner for MENTOR is **Oregon Mentors.** MENTOR helps caregivers find the right mentoring program for the children in their care.

**Amachi.** Amachi is a partnership of faith-based and secular organizations offering mentoring to children of incarcerated parents. In Oregon, Amachi is part of **Big Brothers Big Sisters Columbia Northwest.**

**Oregon Youth Conservation Corps** provides grants to counties for summer youth camps for youth. The website lists the grantees each year who can be contacted about youth employment opportunities.
Girl Scouts Beyond Bars. Girl Scouts Beyond Bars operates a program for girls whose mothers are incarcerated at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville.

Research on Children of Incarcerated Parents

The Effects of Childhood Stress On Health Across the Lifespan (US DHHS CDC 2008). This report succinctly summarizes the short and long-term effects on children of chronic and/or severe stress, including incarceration of a family member. Data focuses on the results of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study.

Parental Incarceration and Child Wellbeing in Fragile Families (Fragile Families Research Brief, Princeton/Columbia 2008). This paper summarizes an extensive study of urban families with an incarcerated parent, including effects on economic outcomes, family stability, and child development.

Childhood Loss and Behavioral Problems: Loosening the Links (Viboch, Vera 2005). This article explains the connection between parental incarceration and child misbehavior. The effects of grief and loss, responding effectively to children’s feelings of loss, helping kids understand parental incarceration, and fostering stability and security for children are presented.

Broken Bonds: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents (Vigne, Davies, Brazzell, Urban Institute 2008). This report summarizes the impacts that the changes in daily life related to the incarceration of a parent brings to a family including the emotional and behavioral impacts on children and protective factors that help children build resilience.

Families Left Behind: The Hidden Costs of Incarceration and Reentry (Travis, McBride, Solomon, Urban Institute 2005). Oriented towards social service providers, this report summarizes developmental the effects of parental incarceration on children including how imprisonment alters family dynamics, the challenges and benefits of visitation and contact, challenges of reunification, reintegration and the role that families have in providing support and stabilization.

Children of DOC Incarcerated Parents Use DSHS Services at Very High Rates (DSHS 2008). This link provides a report issued in August 2008 by DSHS’ Research and Data Analysis Division. It includes initial data that matches DSHS data sources to DOC and Department of Health data and provides information on what social services children of incarcerated parents receive, and where they live within the state of Washington.
Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights

Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights (San Francisco Partnership of Incarcerated Parents)

1. I have the right TO BE KEPT SAFE AND INFORMED AT THE TIME OF MY PARENT’S ARREST.
2. I have the right TO BE HEARD WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT ME.
3. I have the right TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT MY PARENT.
4. I have the right TO BE WELL CARED FOR IN MY PARENT’S ABSENCE.
5. I have the right TO SPEAK WITH, SEE AND TOUCH MY PARENT.
6. I have the right TO SUPPORT AS I STRUGGLE WITH MY PARENT’S INCARCERATION.
7. I have the right NOT TO BE JUDGED, BLAMED OR LABELED BECAUSE OF MY PARENT’S INCARCERATION.
8. I have the right TO A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH MY PARENT.
Locating Inmates and Visitation Procedures for Oregon Prisons

DOC Inmate Locator

Inmates in the Oregon Department of Corrections can be located through the Oregon Department of Corrections website (Find Offender Information): http://docpub.state.or.us/OOS/intro.jsf

You will need the inmate’s name or SID number.

Inmate Services Unit
The Inmate Services Unit administers visitation. Information on visitation rules and mail rules can be found at: http://www.oregon.gov/DOC/OPS/inmate_services_unit.shtml

Information on Oregon’s correctional institutions can be found at: http://www.oregon.gov/DOC/OPS/index.shtml

Each institution has its own web site, which can be accessed from the link above.

A list of DOC institutions is included in this document and can be found on page

Information on Reentry and transitional services can be found at the Oregon Reentry Wiki: http://oregonreentry.wikidot.com/start

Locating Inmates and Visitation Procedures for Oregon Jails

Each county has its own website. From the county website homepage you can navigate to the sheriff’s office web page where there are links to the inmate locator and visitor information.

County web sites can be located through the Oregon Blue Book at: http://bluebook.state.or.us/local/counties/counties.htm

Locating Inmates and Visitation Procedures Federal Prisons

To find parents housed in a federal prison go to the federal inmate locator. Each federal facility has its own visitation hours and procedures. General visitation and contact guidelines can be viewed here.
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<th>List of Oregon Prisons</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coffee Creek Correctional Facility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24499 SW Grahams Ferry Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilsonville, OR 97070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information: (503) 570-6400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s minimum and medium security</td>
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<td><strong>Columbia River Correctional Institution</strong></td>
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<td>9111 NE Sunderland Avenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portland, Oregon 97211-1799</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information: (503) 280-6646 ext 241</td>
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<td>Men’s medium security</td>
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<td><strong>Deer Ridge Correctional Institution</strong></td>
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<td>3920 East Ashwood Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madras, Oregon 97741</td>
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<td>Information: (541) 325-5999</td>
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<td><strong>Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution</strong></td>
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<td>2500 Westgate</td>
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<td>Pendleton, Oregon 97801-9699</td>
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<td>Information: (541) 276-0700</td>
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<td>Salem, Oregon 97310-0505</td>
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<td>Information: (503)378-2453</td>
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| Men’s medium security | }