

## THE INTERSECTION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD: HOW TO MAXIMIZE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

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### I. INTRODUCTION: JJ INCARCERATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

#### A. *Cumulative Effects of Parental Incarceration on Early Childhood*

There are currently 1.1 million parents who are incarcerated.<sup>1</sup> This translates into between 2.3 million and 1.5 million children who have incarcerated parents.<sup>2</sup> While the absolute number of children with incarcerated parents has risen sharply in the last decade, the percentage of children with incarcerated parents has remained relatively constant, at about 57%.<sup>3</sup>

While fathers account for the majority of incarcerated parents (approximately 90%), the number of incarcerated women has more than doubled in the last decade.<sup>4</sup> There are also significant racial and ethnic disparities in this population. The percentage of incarcerated African-American parents is the highest (49% in federal prison; 47% in state prison) followed by Hispanic parents (30% and 19%) and then white non-Hispanic parents (22% and 29%). Reflecting this racial breakdown, 51% of incarcerated parents are African American while 30% are Hispanic.<sup>5</sup> Sixty percent of children who have an incarcerated parent are under 10; the average age of these children is eight years old.<sup>6</sup>

There are many ways to think about the effects of incarceration on children. One way to think about it is not as a discrete time period, but as a process that unfolds over time, and includes various stages<sup>7</sup>—including arrest and initial separation from the parent, unavailability of the parent during the period of incarceration, and the effect of reunification of the

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1. ROSS PARKE & K. ALLISON CLARKE-STEWART, EFFECTS OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION ON YOUNG CHILDREN I (2002).

2. *Id.* This includes both children who were born to incarcerated parents as well as children whose parents were incarcerated after they were born.

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.* at 1–2.

6. *Id.* at 2.

7. *Id.* at 3.

parent after incarceration.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, in thinking about the impact of incarceration on children, it is important to consider that these are indeed children; they are going through various developmental stages that worsen the initial trauma and uncertainty associated with abrupt parental loss, new caregiving arrangements, separation from siblings, and changes in schools and friendship networks.<sup>9</sup>

While the data on the impact of the initial arrest on the child is limited, there are studies documenting the long-term effect of parental incarceration on children. The long-term impact of incarceration on children depends on a variety of factors, including their age. A small number of mothers are pregnant at the time of their incarceration, and for those who are, they are typically provided only a few days with their newborn, before they must relinquish her.<sup>10</sup> This early separation can result in emotional behavioral problems for children.<sup>11</sup>

And, even for children who have developed a bond with their incarcerated parent, separation due to parental incarceration can affect the attachment between parent and child, which has been linked to poor child outcomes, including poor peer relationships and cognitive abilities.<sup>12</sup> This can result in up to “70% of young children with incarcerated mothers ha[ving] emotional or psychological problems.”<sup>13</sup> Other adverse outcomes associated with parental incarceration, which reflect children internalizing their circumstances, are anxiety, withdrawal, hypervigilance, depression, shame and guilt.<sup>14</sup> Eating disorders are also present in this population, as are anger, aggression, and hostility—particularly towards caregivers and siblings.<sup>15</sup>

School-aged children are often teased and ostracized due to parental incarceration. For school-aged children, parental incarceration is associated with poor grades, poor peer relationships, instances of aggression, and higher suspension and drop-out rates.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that studies on parental incarceration are correlational. Additionally, note that there are a number of cumulative risks that accompany parental incarceration. In many families facing parental incarceration, there may also be poverty, instability, domestic violence, child abuse, marital discord, homelessness, substance abuse,

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8. *Id.*

9. *See generally id.* at 3–5 (introducing statistics regarding the effects of parental incarceration on minor children and outlines some of the complex underlying issues).

10. *Id.* at 4.

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.* at 4–5.

13. *Id.* at 5.

14. *Id.*

15. *Id.*

16. *Id.*

and parental absence—which may have caused or made children more susceptible to the problems noted above.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the impact of the aforementioned conditions and/or incarceration, may depend on a number of factors, including the age of the child, the length of the separation, and also protective factors including the level of family and community support.<sup>18</sup>

### B. *Family Engagement Policy and Improved Outcomes in Adults and Young Children*

Family engagement refers to the systemic inclusion of family in activities that promote children’s development and overall well-being, including the planning, structure, implementation and evaluation of these activities.<sup>19</sup> Family engagement is central to child outcomes—to their intellectual, physical, socio-emotional development. It is well established that family engagement impacts health, development and academic outcomes for children.<sup>20</sup>

Studies clearly show the importance of nurturing, sensitive and responsive parenting to socio-economic competence and childhood success.<sup>21</sup> Fathers’ involvement in children’s lives has been connected to socio-emotional development as well as to healthy intellectual development, specifically, cognition and language.<sup>22</sup> When fathers talk and read more with their children, infant and toddler’s language and cognitive skills tend to improve.<sup>23</sup>

Positive relationships between providers and families, a key part of successful family engagements, necessitates providers that are culturally and linguistically sensitive to the families that they are serving.<sup>24</sup> This means, in part, that systems and personnel who are involved must recognize their own biases and work to overcome these in addition to

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17. *Id.*

18. *Id.* at 4–6.

19. See generally Felicity Sackville Northcott, *Pathways to Permanency: Supporting Cross-Border Family Finding and Engagement for Children in Foster Care*, 22 *TRANSNAT’L L. & CONTEMP. PROBS.* 623, 625 (2013) (pointing to a fuller explanation and background of “family engagement”).

20. *Id.* at 635.

21. Ross A. Thompson, *Early Attachment and Later Development: Reframing the Questions* in *HANDBOOK OF ATTACHMENT: THEORY, RESEARCH, AND CLINICAL APPLICATIONS* 330–31 (Jude Cassidy & Phillip R. Shaver eds., 3rd ed. 2016).

22. Natasha J. Cabrera et al., *Fathers’ Influence on Their Children’s Cognitive and Emotional Development: From Toddlers to Pre-K*, 11 *APPLIED DEV. SCI.* 208–09, 211 (2007).

23. *Id.* at 208–13; see also Helen Raikes et al., *Involvement in Early Head Start Home Visiting Services: Demographic Predictors and Relations to Child and Parent Outcomes*, 21 *EARLY CHILDHOOD RES. Q.* 2, 24 (2006) (exhibiting studies which show that family well-being is a key component to children’s success).

24. Raikes et al., *supra* note 23, at 19–20.

valuing those with different languages and cultures.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the key to successful family integration, is establishing a culture in which families are seen as partners in the success of their children, and specifically, partners in the creation of the systems and programs that are designed to serve their children.<sup>26</sup> The following principles have been identified as key to family engagement policies<sup>27</sup>:

- **Create Continuity and Consistency for children and families.** Promote a vision for family engagement that is consistent across systems and programs, and that can set the stage for families' involvement in their children's development and education at all ages.
- **Value respectful and trusting relationships between families and professionals.** Promote shared responsibility for children's healthy development, learning and wellness by valuing families' experiences and strengths, and providing opportunities for shared learning. Encourage two-way communication by welcoming information from families on all aspects of the child's life and development, including their culture, traditions, and home language.
- **Develop goal-oriented relationships with families that are linked to children's development and learning.** Develop ongoing relationships centered on children's well-being and success. Jointly work with families to identify specific strategies that support children's development and learning at home and in the classroom and community.
- **Engage families around children's health, mental health, and social and emotional well-being.** Engage families around children's development, learning, and wellness, including physical health, mental health, and social and emotional needs. Ensure that programs and families know about child development related to these areas and have access

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25. Studies also show that family well-being is a key component to children's success, and that family engagement programs should consider overall family.

26. See e.g., Raikes et al., *supra* note 23, at 20.

27. U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. & U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERV., POLICY STATEMENT ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FROM THE EARLY YEARS TO THE EARLY GRADES 8-9 (May 5, 2016), <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/policy-statement-on-family-engagement.pdf>.

to the tools they need. Ensure that families and staff are connected with relevant community partners, such as early childhood mental health consultants and children's medical homes, as needed.

- **Ensure that all family engagement opportunities are culturally and linguistically responsive.** Ensure to the maximum extent possible, that the environment, children's curricula and learning, and all family engagement opportunities respect, reflect, and embrace families' cultures, are devoid of bias, and are linguistically accessible.
- **Build staff capacity to implement family engagement practice principles.** Prioritize professional development opportunities that support staff to view parents as capable, competent partners. Strengthen staff's ability to form positive, goal-oriented relationships with all families.
- **Support families' connections and capabilities.** Provide opportunities for families to build upon their knowledge and skills to foster children's development, learning and wellness; advocate for their child and family; share experiences and expertise with other families; and take on leadership and advocacy. Connect families to family organizations that support families of children with and without disabilities, special health care and mental health needs; parent to parent programs; child care resource and referral agencies; parent teacher associations; parent advisory councils; and community-based organizations that serve diverse families, including families of dual language learners.
- **Develop strong relationships with community partners that support families.** Establish formal partnerships with community partners, such as after-school programs, social service agencies, adult education programs, one stop career centers, medical homes, public housing authorities, and libraries, to promote family wellness and adult learning, and enhance children's learning and family stability. Invite the community to celebrations and other events in the school and programs.
- **Continuously learn and improve.** Improve integrated and systemic family engagement practices by regularly collecting and analyzing data on the

effectiveness of the practices, in order to guide decision-making and policy change and to inform technical assistance and professional development.

## II. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND VISITATION POLICIES

### A. *What is family engagement in JJ?*

There is a growing movement within juvenile justice to engage families, but it is important to define what that means in the juvenile justice context. Based on a dictionary definition, to engage means to participate. Applied to a juvenile justice context, family engagement means families participate in the proceedings. This is distinct from family involvement, which means families are included in proceedings but not necessarily on par with decision makers.<sup>28</sup> Put another way, a justice organization that focuses on family engagement listens to families as partners, while a justice organization that focuses on family involvement talks to families about proceedings or plans.<sup>29</sup>

The opportunities for family engagement vary based on a youth's specific place in the delinquency proceeding. The nature of the delinquency proceedings and level of state intervention on parental rights vary from arrest to adjudication to disposition and aftercare.<sup>30</sup> As such, family engagement is expected to vary in each of these stages. Within these delinquency contexts, promoting family engagement is arguably the most difficult for families of incarcerated youth. For these youth, contact with their families may be limited to in-person visits, phone calls, and letters.<sup>31</sup>

The exact parameters surrounding how much contact youth may have with their families and when incarcerated youth may contact their families varies as a result of where, and by whom, youth are incarcerated. As an example, federal facilities hold weekends and holidays open for in-person visitation,<sup>32</sup> while state and local facilities, vary between weekly,

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28. See generally Sarah Cusworth Walker et al., *A Research Framework for Understanding the Practical Impact of Family Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System: The Juvenile Justice Family Involvement Model*, 56 AM. J. COMM. PSYCH. 408 (2015) (recounting the history of the "involvement" system).

29. See Larry Ferlazzo, *Involvement or Engagement?*, 68 SCHOOLS, FAMILIES, AND COMM. 10, 10 (2011).

30. Jeffrey D. Burke et al., *The Challenge and Opportunity of Parental Involvement in Juvenile Justice Services*, 39 CHILD YOUTH SERV. REV. 39, 42 (2014).

31. Michael Umpierre, NAT'L INST. OF CORR., *Rights and Responsibilities of Youth, Families, and Staff in* DESKTOP GUIDE TO QUALITY PRACTICE FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH IN CONFINEMENT 166, 176 (2015), <https://info.nicic.gov/dtg/sites/info.nicic.gov/dtg/files/DesktopGuide.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/HZ4U-6L7D>].

32. *General Visiting Information*, FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, <https://www.bop.gov/inmates/visiting.jsp> [<https://perma.cc/4TQY-2SVG>].

monthly or no set policies for visitation.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, case law asserts that juveniles be allowed to make a “reasonable number” of phone calls.<sup>34</sup> This standard lends itself to various interpretations, but the ACA and JDAI standards say this means at least two phone calls per week.<sup>35</sup> Finally, youth may receive any number of letters—but the extent to which staff reads and inspects them in order to prevent contraband or other misconduct varies.<sup>36</sup>

Although an arguably limited measurement of engagement, family visitation is the most frequently studied component of family engagement for incarcerated youth. Research suggests visitation by the youth’s parents is associated with positive behaviors for incarcerated youth. Incarcerated youth that receive visits from their parents have been found to have a reduction in depressive symptoms.<sup>37</sup> Further, the more frequent the visits, the stronger the decline in depressive symptoms.<sup>38</sup> Family visitation has also been associated with improved GPA while in custody and reduced behavioral infractions in the facility.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, the more frequent the visits, the greater the improvements in GPA and the greater the reduction in behavioral infractions.<sup>40</sup> There is very little research on the effects of visitation by youth’s own children.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, there are a number of logistical issues that typically need to be solved in order for a young child to visit with her incarcerated teen father. Thus, visitation between children and teen fathers is not common.

### B. *Use of tech video chat for visits*

One possible solution to the aforementioned logistical issues for visits between incarcerated teen fathers and their children is via video conference or video chat. Technology has rapidly evolved and many

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33. OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION, MODEL PROGRAMS GUIDE: STATUS OFFENDERS 1 (2015).

34. Mark Soler, *Conditions of Confinement: A Review of Case Law*, 23 CORR. COMPENDIUM 6 (1998).

35. See Umpierre, *supra* note 31, at 11.

36. *Id.*

37. See Kathryn C. Monahan, Asha Goldweber, & Elizabeth Cauffman, *The Effects of Visitation on Incarcerated Juvenile Offenders: How Contact with the Outside Impacts Adjustment on the Inside*, 35 LAW HUM. BEHAV., 143, 150 (2011).

38. *Id.* at 144 (pointing out that “among adults incarcerated in state facilities...receiving more frequent visits was associated with greater psychological well-being and lower rule-breaking activity” and implying that these results are likely observable in adolescents, as well) (*emphasis added*) (internal citations omitted).

39. See Sandra V. Agudelo, Issue Brief, *The Impact of Family Visitation on Incarcerated Youth’s Behavior and School Performance: Findings from the Families as Partners Project*, VERA INST. OF JUST. at 3–4 (2013).

40. *Id.*

41. ANNE M. NURSE, FATHERHOOD ARRESTED: PARENTING FROM WITHIN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM 52–54 (2002).

families use video chat (like FaceTime or WhatsApp) to maintain and strengthen relationships with remote relatives.<sup>42</sup> There are many features of video chat that make it well-suited for very young children.<sup>43</sup> For example, while children under 7 have difficulty understanding traditional phone calls, video chat provides a promising alternative because it allows young children to both see and hear their relatives, perhaps because babies and toddlers are highly attuned to faces. They can use and see non-verbal communication, like smiles and gestures, which are a critical part of early interactions with young children.<sup>44</sup> Video calls also include well-timed back and forth interactions. Video chat, though, may present some new challenges for young children (not to mention technical disruptions) such as resulting in replacing physical contact with their remote relative as well as misaligned eye contact and thus imperfect communication due to the location of video cameras.<sup>45</sup> Also, some studies suggest that it is difficult for young children to recognize people they see on video chat when they meet them in real life.<sup>46</sup> These factors may make it more challenging for young children to maintain relationships via video chat than via live face-to-face interactions. For very young children forming relationships with their parents, video chat is likely to be effective if it supplements rather than replaces face-to-face visitation.<sup>47</sup> Video chat supplementation could then increase the overall rate of contact but not replace it.

### III. HOW IS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND VISITATION ORGANIZED WITH BABIES IN MIND?

For incarcerated youth who are parents themselves, in-person visitation with their children in a space conducive to play is vital to supporting family engagement during incarceration. Juvenile justice facilities often have policies and practices that can hinder quality visitation, including visits in large communal spaces or requiring the incarcerated parent to wear shackles during visitation. Organizing visitation structures with the child's needs in mind<sup>48</sup> has the potential

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42. See, e.g., Elisabeth R. McClure et al., "Facetime Doesn't Count": Video Chat as an Exception to Media Restrictions for Infants and Toddlers, *INT'L J. CHILD-COMPUTER INTERACTION* 1, 1 (2016).

43. See, e.g., Elisabeth McClure & Rachel Barr, *Building Family Relationships from a Distance: Supporting Connections with Babies and Toddlers Using Video and Video Chat*, in *MEDIA EXPOSURE DURING INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD: THE EFFECTS OF CONTENT AND CONTEXT ON LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT* 227, 233 (Rachel Barr & Deborah N. Linebarger eds., 2017).

44. *Id.* at 232.

45. *Id.* at 234.

46. *Id.* at 232–33.

47. *Id.* at 344.

48. Rachel Barr et al., *The Baby Elmo Program: Improving Teen Father-child Interactions*

to improve the quality of parent-child interactions during visits,<sup>49</sup> improve behavior while in custody,<sup>50</sup> reduce recidivism,<sup>51</sup> and encourage successful reentry post-incarceration.<sup>52</sup>

The Just Beginning Program (JB) is a structured visitation program designed for young fathers in juvenile or criminal justice facilities that aims to maintain, build and strengthen the relationship between father and child during the period of incarceration. JB began in three counties in California in 2008 and has since expanded to 16 sites across 6 states.<sup>53</sup> The program is available to both mothers and fathers, but due to the much higher proportion of incarcerated fathers<sup>54</sup> an overwhelming majority of JB participants are teen fathers.

JB's goal is to enhance the quality of interactions, foster secure attachments, and maintain strong bonds with the child as well as encourage communication with the child's primary caregiver. The program consists of five sessions during which a JB-certified facilitator helps the father to master four key skills. 1) noticing the child's signals and cues; 2) following the child's lead; 3) talking to the child; and 4) encouraging and praising the child.

Each JB visitation session contains three components:

1. **Learn:** The father and facilitator meet for an introduction and discussion of the session skill. The skill is illustrated via video content modeling positive parenting skills. This use of media is designed to be a strengths-based approach since many adolescents are very familiar with media content and it also reduces literacy demands for a population that can encounter learning or reading

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*Within Juvenile Justice Facilities*, 33 CHILD. & YOUTH SERVS. REV. 1555, 1556 (2011).

49. *Id.* at 1561.

50. See, e.g., Rachel Barr et al., *Delivering Services to Incarcerated Teen Fathers: A Pilot Intervention to Increase the Quality of Father–Infant Interactions During Visitation*, 11 PSYCHOL. SERVICES 10, 11 (2014); Benjamin Richeda et al., *Baby Elmo Leads Dads Back to the Nursery: How a Relationship-Based Intervention for Fathers Enhances Father and Child Outcomes*, 35 ZERO TO THREE 25, 33 (2015).

51. E.g., Barr, *supra* note 48, at 1560.

52. *Id.*; see also Karen De Claire & Louise Dixon, *The Effects of Prison Visits From Family Members on Prisoners' Well-Being, Prison Rule Breaking, and Recidivism: A Review of Research Since 1991*, 18 TRAUMA, VIOLENCE, & ABUSE 185, 185 (2015) (citing a 1988 study stating "rehabilitation and re-entry of the offender into the community is the ultimate goal of the correctional system") (internal citation omitted).

53. Richeda, *supra* note 50, at 27.

54. See ANDREA J. SEDLAK & CAROL BRUCE, 2013-MU-FX-0005, SURVEY OF YOUTH IN RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT: YOUTH CHARACTERISTICS AND BACKGROUNDS, at 33 (2016), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/grants/250753.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/H4M6-M929>].

difficulties,<sup>55</sup>

2. **Do:** Father-Child structured visitation occurs in a child-friendly play space where the father practices the concept while playing with the child.
3. **Reflect:** The father and facilitator reflect on the practice of the play skills.

For the structured visit, a child-friendly play space is required. Some facilities have a dedicated JB space, while others are able to utilize multipurpose spaces and have a pop-up play space kit including play mats, toys, and books that can be assembled and disassembled rapidly and efficiently stored. Prior to JB implementation, parent-child visits have often been held in standard open visitation rooms that do not promote healthy and productive parent child interactions.

The photos below illustrate the difference between post-JB and pre-JB visitation rooms.<sup>56</sup>



Standard Visitation Room



JB Visitation Room

**Figure 1.** Image of visitation rooms prior to and after implementation of the JB program.

Before JB, I refused to see my son. I couldn't let my guard down to be a dad in regular visitation [areas]. In the JB room I feel relaxed to play with him and make funny faces with him.

- JB Teen Father Participant

55. See Mindee O'Cummings et al., Issue Brief, *The Importance of Literacy for Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System*, NAT'L EVALUATION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CTR. (2010).

56. Barr, *supra* note 48, at 1557 (pictures on this page).

Evaluations of JB have shown positive changes in the quality of father-child interactions for children ages 3–36 months in emotional responsiveness, warmth, and language stimulation, as well as increases in fathers' acceptance of, and awareness of, their influence on their child's development.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, while participants were in the JB Program, rates of behavioral infractions of the incarcerated fathers decreased by fifty to sixty percent.<sup>58</sup>

The following is data from a recent sample of 81 JB program fathers ranging in age from 14 to 20 years from juvenile justice facilities in California, Ohio, and Texas.

### Father's attitudes towards their children

Fathers in the JB program were interviewed using the "This Is My Baby Interview"<sup>59</sup> protocol which assesses a parent-child relationship before and after program completion. The interview is scored on three dimensions: (a) commitment, which assesses how strongly the parent considers the child his own and strives to build an enduring relationship; (b) acceptance, which measures the extent to which the parent views the child as a positive, unique individual; and (c) influence, which evaluates how fully the parent recognizes the immediate and long-term effects of his actions on the child's psychological and emotional development. Commitment, acceptance, and influence dimensions were assigned scores between 1 (lowest score) and 5 (highest score), including midpoints, by reliable coders.

**Table 1.** Father attitudes pre-JB collapsed across age of child and site.

This Is My Baby Interview			
Pre (n=72)	Acceptance	Commitment	Influence
Mean	2.62	2.84	2.40
SE	0.13	0.11	0.13

Table 1 suggests that fathers across sites enter into the program with a moderate level of commitment, acceptance, and awareness of influence.

57. McClure & Barr, *supra* note 43, at 230.

58. Shani King, Rachel Barr & Jennifer Woolard, *Cost-Effective Juvenile Justice Reform: Lessons from the Just Beginning "Baby Elmo" Teen Parenting Program*, 83 N.C.L. REV. 1381, 1411–12 (2015).

59. Brady Bates & Mary Dozier, "This Is My Baby Interview" and Coding Manual 1–14 (Aug. 8, 2005) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with the University of Delaware).

**Table 2.** Father attitudes pre-JB by age of child, under one-year-old or over one-year-old.

This Is My Baby Interview							
Under One				Over One			
Pre (n=25)	Acceptance	Commitment	Influence	Pre (n=24)	Acceptance	Commitment	Influence
Mean	2.54	2.90	2.44	Mean	3.17	3.09	2.68
SE	0.22	0.20	0.25	SE	0.20	0.21	0.22

Table 2 suggests that fathers in this sample with children over one enter into JB with higher levels of acceptance, commitment, and perceived influence than their counterparts with children under one.

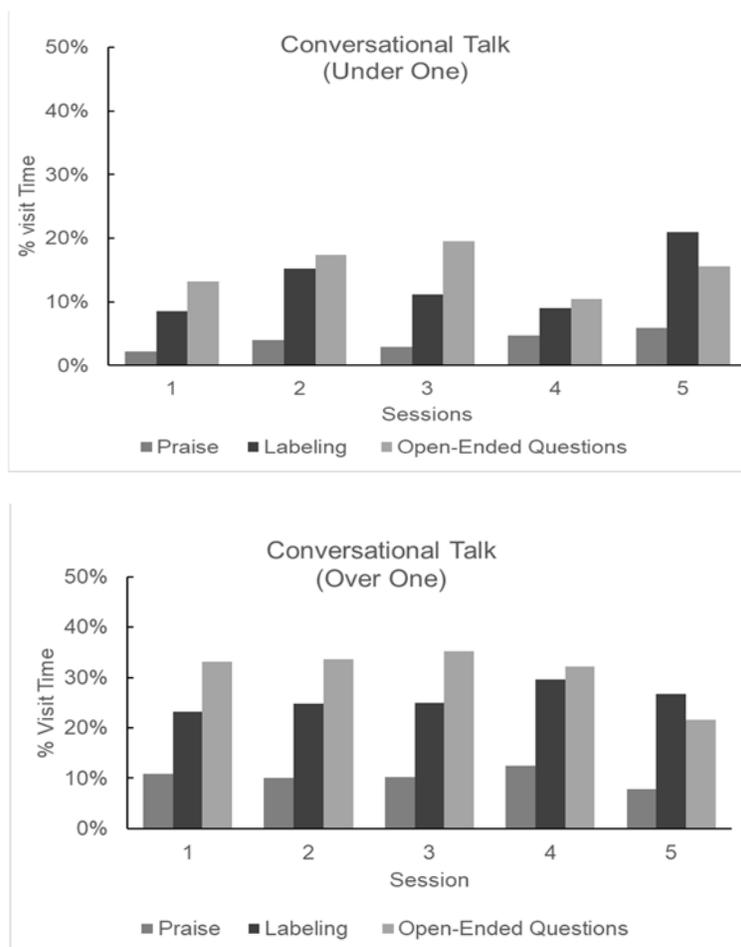
**Table 3.** Father attitudes pre-post JB by age of child, under one-year-old or over one-year-old.

This Is My Baby Interview							
n = 13				child ages: 7 over one, 5 under one, 1 age unknown			
Pre	Acceptance	Commitment	Influence	Post	Acceptance	Commitment	Influence
Mean	2.54	2.62	2.15	Mean	3.46	3.19	2.58
SE	0.22	0.14	0.26	SE	0.22	0.20	0.23

Table 3 shows that these pre-post attitudes collapsed across age of child and site of 13 participants who had pre- and post-data available. This data shows that these participants began the program at the same level as all participants but showed an increase in levels of acceptance, commitment, and perceived influence after participation in the program.

### **Father's use of language with their children**

A subset of 24 fathers across all sites had a set of play session video records available for analysis (75 play session videos in total). Play sessions were coded to measure the quality of the father's interactions across each session. Each interaction was coded as present or absent for each 30-second time block of 20-minute video-recorded play sessions. All interactions are reported as the average percent of time fathers spent engaging in that behavior during a session.



**Figure 2.** Top panel: total % of visit time spent on three target communication skills, praise/encouragement, labeling and open ended questions by fathers with children under one-year-old. Bottom panel: total % of visit time spent on three target communication skills, by fathers with children over one-year- old.

The graphs above show that fathers are able to learn the communication skills targeted in JB parent training sessions (encouragement, labeling, open-ended questions). These findings show that fathers were able to successfully implement positive parenting skills during interactions with their children and were able to focus on each skill as it was introduced. Fathers in the program with children under one tend to spend less time practicing language skills than fathers with children over one, but show a greater increase in skill use from session 1 to 5.

Session 4 focuses on the skill of praise and encouragement, and the data collected consistently reflects an increase in praise during the Session 4 play session. It is important to note, however, that for those with children under one year, it appears that Session 4 implementing praise/encouragement was the most challenging, but for parents with children over one, the most challenging session was the final session where the goal was to put all of the skills together.

**Table 4.** Ratings of caregiving, warmth, detachment and intrusion as a function of age.

Child Age	n	Parent			
		Caregiving	Warmth	Detachment	Intrusion
Over One	20	22.0%	49.8%	1.9%	0.0%
Under One	20	5.2%	58.7%	2.9%	0.5%

As shown in table 4, overall play sessions had a consistent warm and accepting tone across sites and child age. Not surprisingly, fathers with children under one spent more time in caregiving than fathers with children over one.

**Table 5.** Correlations of paternal warmth with age, praise, labeling and caregiving.

Correlation				
	Age	Praise	Labeling	Caregiving
Warmth	0.37	0.50	0.52	-0.20

Measures of paternal interactional quality were associated with each other and with child age. Fathers with younger children engage in more caregiving behaviors and more caregiving is associated with lower levels of paternal warmth; this may have been due to the stress associated with caring for a young child. Parental warmth is also associated with increasing child age, and with increased delivery of praise and labeling skills. This finding suggests that as fathers get to know their children better (see TIMB findings) there are increased levels of warmth, praise and labeling. Although we are not able to assess this with our current data, it is possible that as fathers increase labeling and praise/encouragement skills that warmth may also increase.

Overall, this snapshot evaluation of JB across three different states shows that implementation is feasible and that fathers and children can

engage in positive face-to-face interactions and build important relationship skills over a short period of time. This conclusion is speculative, of course, as the data discussed here reflect only the first five visits between fathers and their children. Typically, most youth remain in the facility after the intervention is complete and continue to have structured visitation with their children. This is recommended because the aforementioned skills continue to develop over the course of additional visits.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

##### A. *Recommendations for Juvenile Justice Facilities:*

1. Should consider a “Learn, Do, Reflect” approach to family engagement. The learn component provides a rationale for the family, the do component allows family members to participate and practice skills, and the reflective component incorporates the practice into everyday life.
2. Should broaden the concept of family engagement to include the youth’s own children.
3. Should provide a location that facilitates positive interactions between parents and children by setting aside an appropriate child-friendly play space. This can be a permanent space or a pop-up kitset used in a multi-purpose room.
4. Should include JB or similar programming to enhance parent-child bonding. These programs should be play based and involve facility staff.<sup>60</sup>
5. Should take advantage of new technologies to expand family engagement services. In doing so, existing opportunities for direct contact should not be curtailed; nor should phone-contact or letters. Instead, these should be supplemented via services like video chat. For example, after a father-child relationship has been reestablished, video chat might be used to help maintain contact, i.e., if it is used in the playroom where the child has been before, provided that in-person visits are continued. Video chat may also be used under conditions of inclement weather if the family is not able to attend in person.

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60. JUST BEGINNING (JB) PROGRAM, <http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/just-beginning-jb-program> [<https://perma.cc/R4DJ-FX3R>].

B. *Recommendations for Legal Advocates*

1. The quality of legal representation for youth who have contact with the juvenile justice system should be improved.
2. Bona fide family engagement of the type described herein should be incorporated into juvenile justice representation standards for all advocates representing children who come into contact with the juvenile justice system; this is particularly true for youth with children.
3. Legal advocates and others should take the position that family engagement is consistent with and essential to meeting the rehabilitative goal of juvenile justice systems and advocate for family engagement on this basis.
4. Aggressive and creative litigation strategies should be developed to protect the rights of youth confined in juvenile detention and commitment facilities, particularly as those rights relate to family involvement and family engagement.
5. Legal advocates should map existing local and state laws to better leverage current legal resources to enforce bona fide family engagement.
6. Legal advocates and others should maintain reducing youth incarceration and redirecting resources to community-based alternatives to jail and prison as key priorities.