

The Effect of Parental Incarceration on Early Adolescent's Eating and Sleeping Habits

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Abstract : In the United States, over 2.5 million children have incarcerated parents. Recent studies have shown 13% of young adults and one-fourth of African Americans will experience parental incarceration. The increasing numbers of incarcerated citizens have left these children as collateral damage and are often forgotten, their special needs inadequately meet or understood. Parental arrest and incarceration creates a uniquely traumatic experience in childhood and has long-term consequences for these children. Until recently, the eating and sleeping habits following parental incarceration had been nonexistent in the literature. However, even this groundbreaking study on eating habits and sleeping disorders following parental incarceration did not touch on the root causes of unhealthy eating which may be influenced by food and housing insecurity and environmental factors that may impact a child's healthy eating and sleeping behaviors. This study will examine those factors as it could greatly aid in the policies and programs that affect children's health and development. This proposed study will examine the impact of traumatic stress reactions to parental incarceration by studying sleep and eating habits as the hypothesis is that parental incarceration will lead to disordered eating and sleep disturbances in early adolescents.

Keywords : parental incarceration, eating disorder, trauma, family instability

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