

Words Matter

#WordsMatter

We are committed to a conference framework that truly supports children and families impacted by incarceration. We encourage presenters to include session content that will combat stigma by using language that does not label children, stereotype families or demonize incarcerated parents. In addition, perspectives that highlight an intergenerational cycle of crime or incarceration should be carefully crafted to accurately support the underlying causes of parental incarceration such as poverty, trauma and racism.

Think of how a child might feel when their parent is called a “criminal.” To children they are moms and dads first and forever. #WordsMatter and can signal to a child struggling with their parent’s incarceration that you are a safe space. Creating safe spaces for children of incarcerated parents can reduce stigma and negative effects of separation from a parent. Join us in using thoughtful language when speaking of and with people with criminal justice involvement and their families.

Together we can change the narrative.

three quick tips

1 Children are not targets. Please refrain from using the word “target” when discussing an area of focus for Policy & Practice. Instead use “designed to support” or “will focus on the needs of.”

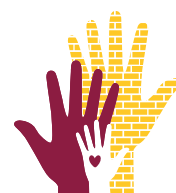
2 When referring to Native Americans, please refer to that person as a Native Person, Indigenous, or use their tribal association. Please stay away from the phrase American Indian.

3 When discussing incarceration we can use justice involved, justice impacted, incarcerated people, people convicted of crimes to describe individuals experiencing incarceration.

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The Osborne Association

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**Children of
INCARCERATED
PARENTS**
3rd National Conference

Suggested phrasing surrounding justice related issues & the incarcerated

Instead of...	Try...
Felons	People convicted of felonies
Criminals, Convicts	People convicted of crimes
Inmates	People in prison or jail
Prisoners	People who are currently incarcerated
Offenders	People who have committed offenses
Defendants	People accused of crimes
Illegal immigrants, Illegal aliens	People without documentation
Worst of the worst	People who have committed serious offenses
Violent offenders	People who have committed serious offenses
Nonviolent offenders	People who have committed less serious offenses
Ex-cons	People who have paid their debt to society
Parolees	People on parole
“Bad guys” or “crooks”	People charged with or accused of a crime
Sex offenders	People convicted of a sex crime
Juveniles	Youth or young people
Racial disparities, gaps	Obstacles to equal justice
	Discriminatory school justice
	Racial profiling
	Unconscious bias
	Resulting in unequal rates of arrest, incarceration, long sentences
Intergenerational cycle of incarceration	Intergenerational trauma or poverty, or systemic racism
Dangerous neighborhoods	Communities experiencing high levels of violence
Poor, at risk	Underserved, neglected
Minorities	People of color (or specific groups)
Homosexual, gay lifestyles	Gay, lesbian, LGBTQ people and their lives
Federal, state and local governments	Federal, state, tribal and local governments
Rape victim	Sexual assault survivor
Prostitute	Sex worker
Children at risk	Children of promise and resilience
Nonviolent drug offenses	Appropriate offenses, less serious offenses
Balancing safety and reform	Advancing safety and fairness
Citizens, taxpayers	The community, the public, people
Victims versus offenders	Promoting healing for all who have been harmed
Punish crime	Prevent harm, promote community safety
Law and order	Accountability, rehabilitation, restoration, equal justice, due process
War on crime/drugs	Prevention, community safety, treatment, solutions and alternatives, doing what works
Tough on crime	Smart and appropriate responses



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