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SESAME STREET LAUNCHES NEW RESOURCES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AN INCARCERATED PARENT

“Little Children, Big Challenges” continues to build resilient skills in kids...

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. New York, New York, June 12, 2013. **The number of children with an incarcerated parent has increased nearly 80% in the past 20 years.¹ Nearly 2.7 million children have a parent in state or federal prison, yet few resources exist to support young children and families with this life-changing circumstance.²** In response, [Sesame Workshop](#), the nonprofit educational organization behind [Sesame Street](#), unveils its newest, bilingual (English/Spanish) initiative, [“Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration”](#), for families with young children (ages 3–8) who have an incarcerated parent and continue to develop skills for resilience. This resource will only be distributed through targeted outlets in communities by organizations, partners and individuals who reach these families.

Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration is designed to:

- support, comfort, and reduce anxiety, sadness, and confusion that young children may experience during the incarceration of a parent
- provide at-home caregivers with strategies, tips, and age-appropriate language they can use to help communicate with their children about incarceration
- inform incarcerated parents themselves that they can parent from anywhere, and provide them with simple parenting tips highlighting the importance of communication

Sesame Workshop is working closely with advisors and partners to distribute and integrate *Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration* resources into correctional facilities and organizations that specialize in early childhood education, mental health and counseling, parenting programs, foster care, and that have missions specific to helping families cope with the incarceration of a loved one. Sesame Workshop will also begin to pilot, in several key states (Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin), a deeper implementation of these resources.

“Sesame Workshop has always been at the forefront of creating resources for families with young children to help address some of life’s most difficult issues,” said Dr. Jeanette Betancourt, Senior Vice President for Outreach and Educational Practices at Sesame Workshop. “*Little Children, Big Challenge: Incarceration* tackles a very difficult topic, one for which there are scant resources to help young children, and best of all, it approaches these difficult transitions in the way that only *Sesame Street* and our trusted Muppets can.”

¹ Glaze, L., & Maruschak, L. (2008). *Parents in prison and their minor children*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report (NCJ 22984), pp. 1–25. Retrieved from: <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=823>

² Glaze, L., & Maruschak, L. (2008).

Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration initiative components include:

- **Multimedia resource kits**
 - **Sesame Street DVD** featuring a Muppet story, live-action films by filmmaker Jenifer McShane (*Mothers of Bedford*) showcasing real children and their families, and an animated short film by XYZStudios.
 - **Guide for parents and caregivers**
 - **Children's storybook**
- **Sesame Street: Incarceration app** for adults to use on tablets and phones, available on [Google Play™](#), the [App StoreSM](#), and the Amazon Appstore for Android on Kindle Fire
- **SesameStreet.org/Incarceration**
 - Online toolkit with downloadable versions of all materials
 - Tip sheet for incarcerated parents.
 - Training webinars to educate service providers on how to use the resources with children and families.
- **YouTube.com/SesameStreet** playlist of featured videos from the initiative.
- **Facebook.com/SesameStreetInCommunities** for sharing *Sesame Street's* free educational resources with adults.
- **Resource room for media & partners:** <http://www.sesameworkshop.org/news/pressroom/incarceration>

As with all content produced by Sesame Workshop, this outreach initiative began with formative evaluation, which included consulting with an [advisory board of key experts](#) in child development, early childhood, and mental health fields, in addition to experts working with incarcerated families to guide and shape key content messages and initiative goals. Continuing the process, Sesame Workshop conducted discussion groups with at-home caregivers, incarcerated parents, and service providers to ensure that all of the resources effectively meet the needs of children and families.

Major support for *Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration* is provided by BAE Systems. Generous support is provided by The Prudential Foundation, Department of Veterans Affairs, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the USO, the Military Child Education Coalition, and The Florence V. Burden Foundation

About Sesame Workshop: Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit educational organization that revolutionized children's television programming with the landmark *Sesame Street*. The Workshop produces local *Sesame Street* programs, seen in over 150 countries, and other acclaimed shows including *The Electric Company*, to help bridge the literacy gap. Beyond television, the Workshop produces content for multiple media platforms on a wide range of issues including literacy, health and resilience. Initiatives meet specific needs to help young children and families develop critical skills, acquire healthy habits and build emotional strength to prepare them for lifelong learning. Learn more at www.sesameworkshop.org.

Visit *Sesame Street* at:

www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits

www.facebook.com/SesameStreetInCommunities

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Embargoed for June 12, 2013

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