To meet the complex needs of children and families, Montanans need resources; resources that are both practical and have direct benefits. This inaugural issue of *The Montana Minute* provides valuable advice to better educate, treat, and care for children whose parent(s) have been, or are currently incarcerated. Explaining a parent's incarceration is never easy and it's helpful to know what age-appropriate words to use and how much detail to provide so both young children and older teenagers can understand the family's current circumstances, know that they aren't to blame, and have some skills for dealing with the normal, although upsetting emotions they experience. Adults also need skills in identifying and reacting to acting out behaviors that children frequently display.

This month's toolkit that focuses on incarcerated parents is housed in our vast library of training modules, podcasts, toolkits, and tip sheets on topics that address the needs of high risk children and families. If you have any suggestions for additional resources, email them to ccfwd@umontana.edu.

*The University of Montana's Center for Children, Families, and Workforce Development was established in 2015 to partner with the child protection, health, educational, and judicial systems to develop and deliver educational and training resources to professionals and caregivers statewide. The Center also conducts research that focuses on solving problems that impact children and families. The Center receives support from the University of Montana, College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences, and School of Social Work.*
Carolyn Esparza, author of *The Unvarnished Truth about the Prison Family Journey*, describes her 30 years working to support families who have an incarcerated family member. She explains how so many families are traumatized and stigmatized when a family member is sentenced to prison, identifies the risks and potential blessings that can result, and describes resources so those impacted can find guidance and support.

**Listen**

**How to help a child whose parent is in jail.**

A recent national study estimates that 5 million children (7%) have lived with a parent who has been in jail or prison (2% currently have incarcerated parents). These children often experience health, mental health, behavioral, and educational problems. Many also exhibit symptoms of depression, anxiety, and nightmares that contribute to their own poor choices if not given support. Here are some ways to help:

**Link to toolkit**

**Upcoming Events:**

**Register for Grief and Loss!**

Registration is now open for this informative workshop and is available in two different locations and dates. Use the following links to register;

- **Great Falls, February 21st**
- **Fairmont, February 28th.**

**March training on Visitation!**

Registration will soon be open for this engaging workshop. We will be offering this training in **Miles City on the 13th** and **Missoula on the 20th**, so mark your calendar and be sure to register.