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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO INCARCERATED PARENTS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that during the 1990s,  
2 the number of incarcerated parents in the United States grew by  
3 approximately fifty-nine per cent. The legislature further  
4 finds that currently there is no means of determining the exact  
5 number of incarcerated individuals with minor children in Hawaii  
6 as no procedure is in place for collecting such data. However,  
7 it is estimated that there are approximately 3,163 parents of  
8 6,665 children in Hawaii's prison system.

9           An increased focus needs to be placed on the children of  
10 incarcerated individuals to maintain a parent-child bond.  
11 Intervention is also needed with parent-child relationships in  
12 the non-incarcerated offender population. Studies indicate that  
13 the children of incarcerated individuals suffer from a multitude  
14 of negative consequences, including possible displacement from  
15 their home and separation from their primary or secondary  
16 caregiver. As a result, these children experience strong  
17 emotional reactions to the incarceration and disruption in their



1 home life, leading to a significant increase, up to six times  
2 more likely, of becoming involved in the criminal justice system  
3 themselves.

4 State policies contribute to the breakdown of the family by  
5 failing to facilitate the continued relationship between  
6 incarcerated individuals and their children when the  
7 relationship is in the best interests of the child. Denial of  
8 visitation is a means of punishment or discipline of the  
9 incarcerated individuals, but those who truly suffer are the  
10 children. The strengthening of family relationships has a  
11 positive effect on recidivism as studies have shown it lessens  
12 the possibility of future incarceration after an inmate's  
13 release from a correctional facility. Studies have also shown  
14 that therapeutic involvement with families during incarceration  
15 builds better and stronger relationships between the  
16 incarcerated parent's children and the incarcerated parent once  
17 the parent is released.

18 A successful model already has been developed and  
19 implemented in the State: the Strengthening Keiki of  
20 Incarcerated Parents (SKIP) Project aims to strengthen families,  
21 decrease abuse and neglect of children of incarcerated parents,  
22 and decrease the occurrence of repeat incarceration. The SKIP



1 program works with incarcerated fathers at Waiawa correctional  
2 facility, and has been a model for projects in correctional  
3 facilities for both male and female inmates and institutions  
4 servicing other offender populations, such as No Na Kamalii and  
5 Ohana Strengthening at the Maui community correctional center  
6 and Makua Keiki at the Kauai community correctional center. A  
7 partnership is currently underway to replicate the program in  
8 the Hawaii community correctional center, as well. All of the  
9 related SKIP programs have formed a coalition known as the SKIP  
10 Partnership.

11 In addition to an educational playgroup, the program also  
12 enrolls the incarcerated parents in parenting programs, such as  
13 Nurturing Fathers and Supporting Parents as First Teachers, to  
14 help them reflect and heal from their neglectful and abusive  
15 childhoods, begin to learn how to nurture themselves and others,  
16 and to develop good parenting skills. The combination of  
17 education, play and learn groups, and support groups is aimed to  
18 increase an incarcerated parent's ability to provide a safe and  
19 nurturing environment for young children.

20 The legislature determines that the State should take an  
21 active role in aiding these families through the provision of  
22 incarcerated and non-incarcerated offender parent-child



1 interaction programs, such as the SKIP program, to ensure that  
2 these children can build and maintain strong relationships with  
3 their parents and grow into well-adjusted, contributing members  
4 of the community.

5 The purpose of this Act is to support the continuation and  
6 expansion of parent-child interaction programs, such as the SKIP  
7 program, at other state correctional facilities and institutions  
8 servicing other offender populations to facilitate appropriate  
9 interactions and bonding between offender parents and their  
10 children.

11 **SECTION 2. Incarcerated parent-child interaction programs.**

12 (a) Within the department of public safety, incarcerated  
13 parent-child interaction programs, such as the SKIP program,  
14 shall be developed for both male and female state correctional  
15 facilities and institutions servicing other offender  
16 populations. Funding may be used for:

17 (1) The purchasing, development, and implementation of  
18 offender parent-child interaction programs that meet  
19 security requirements, such as the SKIP program,  
20 throughout the state correctional system and for  
21 institutions servicing other offender populations;



- 1           (2) The collection of best available demographic data on  
2           the children of incarcerated parents including the  
3           number of children each incarcerated parent has; the  
4           children's ages, resident addresses, and schools;  
5           custody and caregiving arrangements; and needed  
6           services provided that such data is to remain  
7           confidential and made available for the sole use of  
8           government agencies and government-contracted service  
9           providers and for the sole purpose of providing  
10          services to these children; and
- 11          (3) An independent review of the programs using  
12          researchers such as the University of Hawaii at Manoa,  
13          public policy center.
- 14          (b) Funding may also be used for:
- 15           (1) The training of public safety personnel on the merits  
16           of the programs; and
- 17           (2) The hiring of additional public safety personnel to  
18           facilitate the implementation of the programs.
- 19          (c) The independent reviewer contracted by the director of  
20          public safety shall submit a report, including its findings,  
21          recommendations, and any proposed legislation, to the



1 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of  
2 the 2008 regular session.

3 (d) The department of public safety shall take steps to  
4 implement incarcerated parent-child interaction programs such as  
5 the SKIP program. The department shall contract with nonprofit  
6 health and human services and other relevant agencies or  
7 organizations to develop and implement the recommended programs  
8 or services. The contract shall be executed in accordance with  
9 chapter 103F, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

10 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ , or so  
12 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2007-2008, and  
13 the same sum, or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
14 year 2008-2009, for incarcerated parent-child interaction  
15 programs at state correctional facilities and institutions  
16 servicing other offender populations.

17 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
18 of public safety for the purposes of this Act.

19 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2007.



**Report Title:**

Incarcerated Parents

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for the expansion of incarcerated parent-child interaction programs, such as the Strengthening Keiki of Incarcerated Parents Project, at state correctional facilities and institutions servicing other offender populations. (SD1)

