



See Us,  
Support Us

## #WordsMatter

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.**



[www.osborneny.org](http://www.osborneny.org)



New York Initiative for  
Children of Incarcerated Parents



## #WordsMatter



People talk about our parents in ways we wouldn’t even talk about them. They do not stop being people, or parents, when they go to prison or jail, and neither should we stop treating them as such.



– Melissa Tanis, daughter of an incarcerated parent

*Instead of “inmates” or “offenders” say...*

Parent

People  
who are  
incarcerated

People who  
have been in  
conflict with  
the law

*Instead of “felons” or “ex-cons” say...*

Formerly  
Incarcerated  
Person

Returning  
Citizen

People with  
prior criminal  
justice  
involvement

Join us in changing the narrative—by listening to the children who are directly affected, celebrating their resilience, and using humanizing language when referring to people who are incarcerated.

Find more resources at: [www.osborneny.org/susu](http://www.osborneny.org/susu)

