



MEADOWS

MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY INSTITUTE

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Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Access to Care | Access to Justice

“Long Term Brain Health of Children Instilling a
Growth Mindset – in Individuals and
Communities”

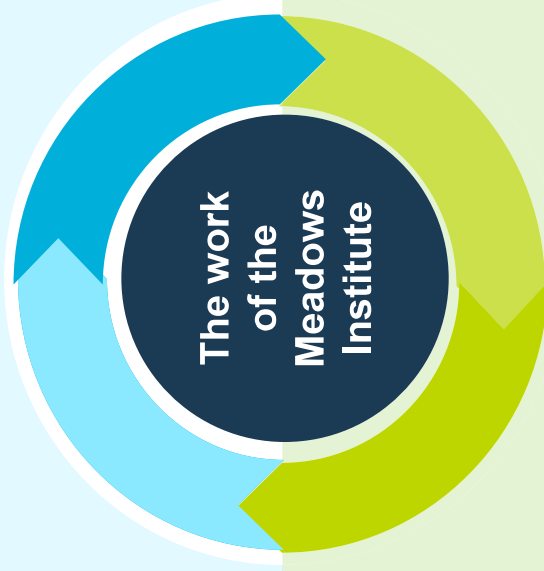
Our Unique Value: Intersection of Policy & Programs

**STATE AND
NATIONAL POLICY**

Extract lessons learned
and proof points

SOLUTIONS

Shape mental health policy



Enact mental
health policy

Develop, implement, scale, and finance evidence-based solutions in local, state, and national systems

**OUR
VALUES**

Collaboration and
partnership

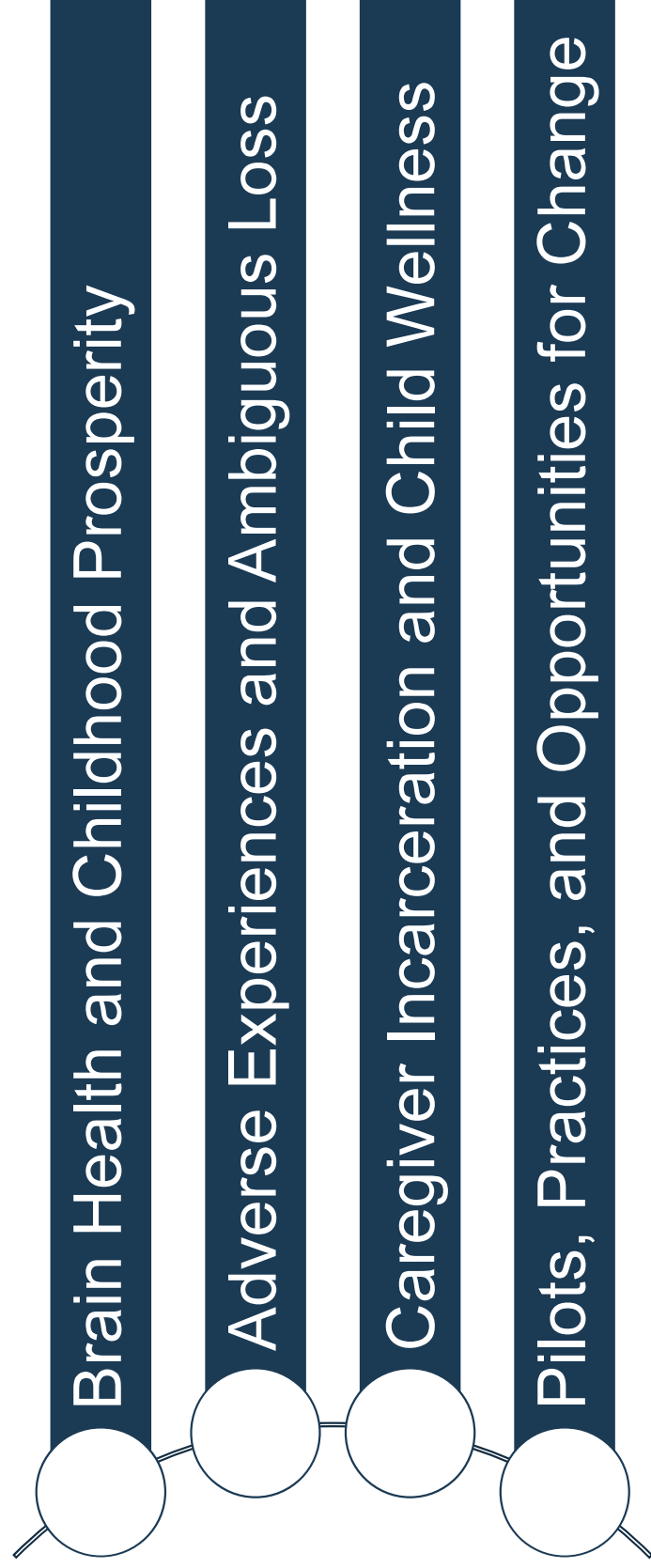
Data-driven and
evidence-based

Innovation

Nonpartisanship

Stewardship

Discussion Map



Our Image of All Children



Defining Brain Health and Childhood Prosperity

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Child Brain Health

Refers to the optimal functioning of the brain, including cognitive, emotional, and social development.

- Cognitive development
- Brain plasticity (adaptability)
- Neurotransmitter balance

Childhood Prosperity

Refers to a child's ability to thrive and reach their full potential.

- Economic security
- Educational stability
- Social & emotional well-being
- Safe and nurturing environments

Life Cycle of Experiences

The cost of inaction in childhood:
Health and behavioral issues

Infancy:

- Growth delay
- Cognitive delay
- Sleep disruption

Childhood:

- Asthma
- Learning difficulties
- Behavioral problems
- Infection

Adulthood:

- Obesity
- Bullying
- Teen pregnancy
- Violence
- Smoking

New Jersey Funders ACEs Collaborative. (2019, July). Adverse Childhood Experiences: Opportunities to Prevent, Protect Against, and Heal from the Effects of ACEs in New Jersey. Retrieved from <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/about/divisions/dccsc/2019-NJ-ACEsOpportunitiesReport.pdf>

Intersection of Brain Health and Childhood Prosperity

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- A child's early experiences shape their brain development, which, in turn influences their future potential.
- Intergenerational trauma challenges the foundation for optimal development and adaptability of children.
- Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant impact of childhood adversity on brain development
- Frequent exposure to highly stressful/adverse experiences can result in long-lasting, negative impacts.

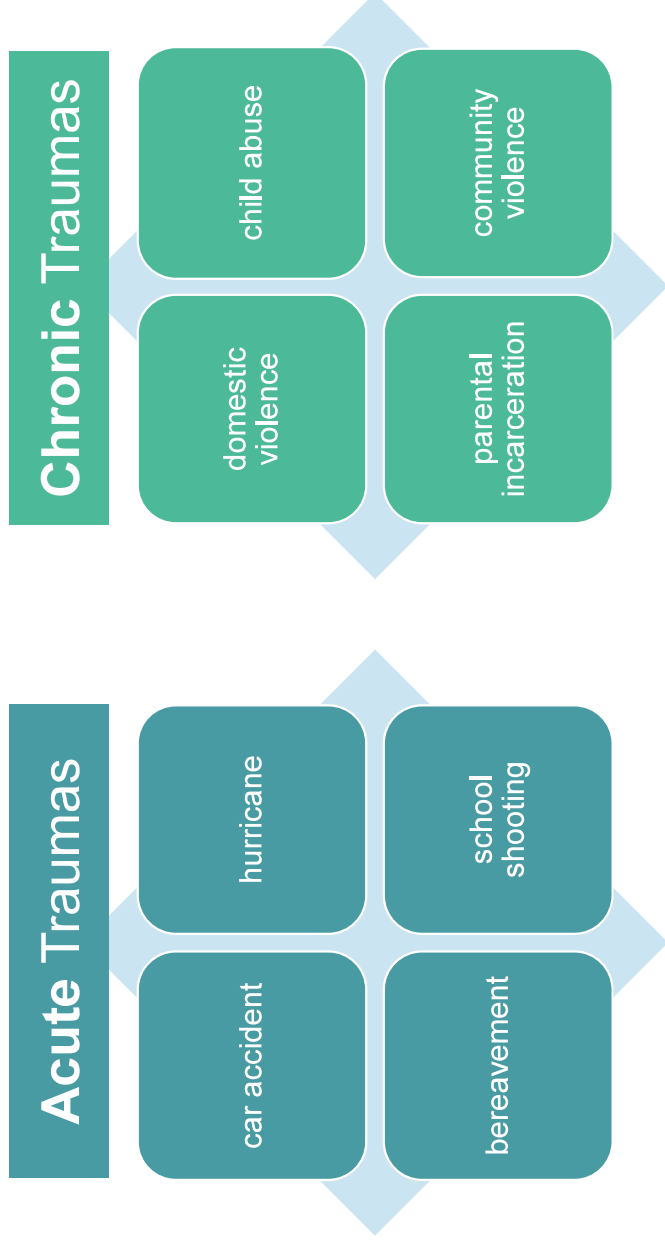


The greatest opportunity for lifelong impact on children's development is in the years from birth through age 8. Decades of research point to the early years as the most critical time for building intellect, strengthening social and emotional skills and setting a positive trajectory for life {long} success."

-Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Exposure to Childhood Trauma

Types of Traumatic Events



About 2/3 of children will experience at least one trauma before turning 16.

Long-term Consequences of Unaddressed Trauma

Smaller brain volume

Depression

Suicide risk

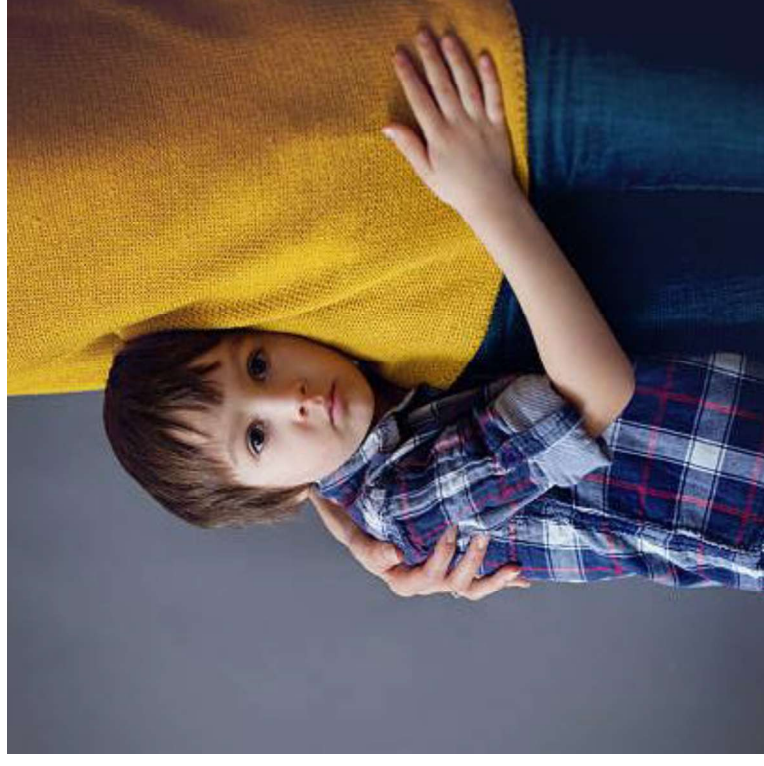
School problems

Problems with peer relations

Substance/drug abuse

Criminal/violent behavior

Intergenerational transmission of trauma



Our society's most significant problems stem from unresolved childhood trauma.

Why Focus on Bereavement?



Most frequently reported type of trauma in clinic-referred youth
(Pynoos et al., 2014)



Most common form of trauma worldwide
(UNICEF, 2017)



Most distressing form of trauma among adults and youth in the general population
(Breslau et al., 2004; Kaplow, Saunders, Angold, & Costello, 2010)



Strongest predictor of poor school outcomes above and beyond any other form of trauma
(Oosterhoff, Kaplow, & Layne, 2018)

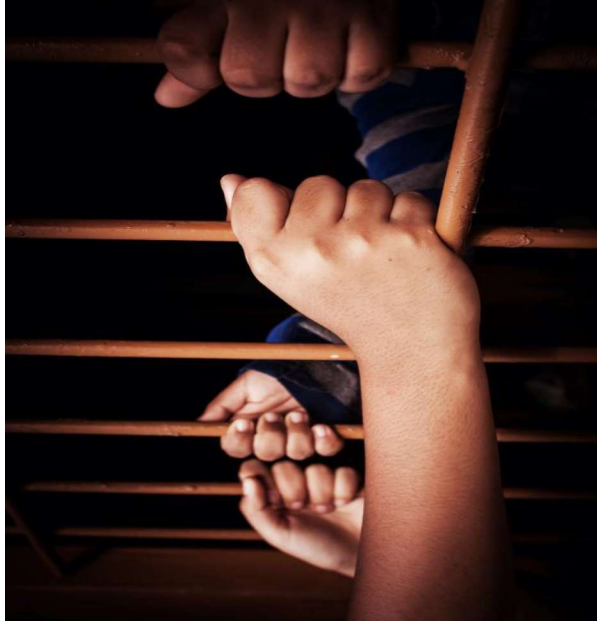
Bereavement Among Justice-Involved Youth

(Lansing, Plante, Beck, & Ellenberg, 2018)

Most detained youth report the death of a close loved one, with over 70% experiencing at least two or more significant losses.

Detained youth report experiencing their first death, on average, by age 5.

Deaths are most frequently characterized by violent losses.



Ambiguous Loss

Ambiguous loss differs from ordinary loss in that

- No verification of death (e.g., person is missing)
- No certainty that the person will come back
- No guarantee things will return to the way they used to be

Examples of ambiguous loss:

- Parental incarceration
- Deportation
- Deployment
- Kidnapping

Impact of Caregiver Incarceration on Child Wellness

Nearly

4 IN 10

Children in America grow up in households where a parent or co-residing adult face at least one criminal charge, has been convicted of a felony, or spent time in prison.

More Common Than:
Asthma
Vision Disorders
Cancer Diagnosis

Scope of the Issue

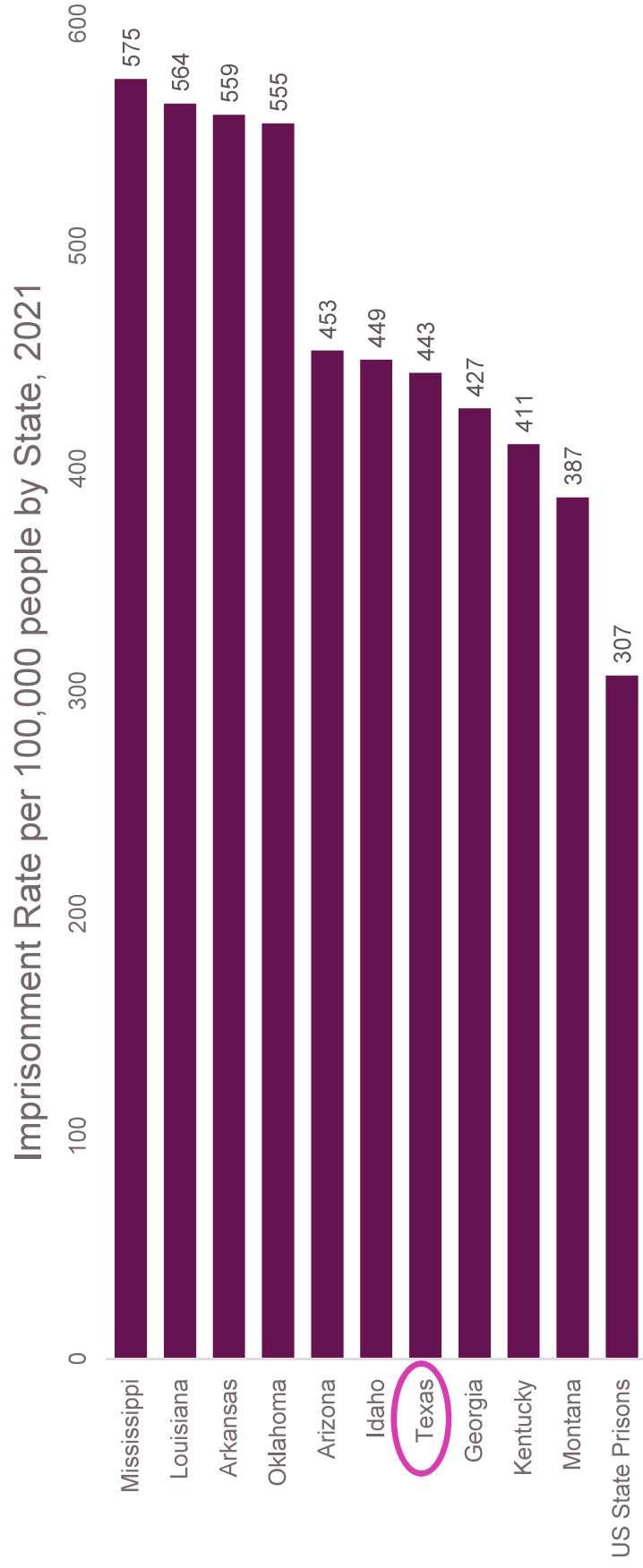
- Across local jails, state and federal prisons, almost 2 million people are incarcerated in the United States annually.
- More than 421,000 people entered prison, and people went to *jail* almost 7 million times.
- At the end of the 2021, 1.1 million people were incarcerated in state and federal prisons.
- People of color constituted over two-thirds (69%) of the prison population.
- Black and Hispanic people comprise 33% of the U.S. population but 56% of the incarcerated Population.

Sources: Carson, E. A. (2023, February). *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2021*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Quality Judges Initiative. *Judges in the United States*. Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System. State courts vs. federal courts. Judicial Learning Center. <https://judiciallearningcenter.org/state-courts-vs-federal-courts/>

Carson, E. A. (2022, December). *Prisoners in the United States, 2021*. Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Sawyer, W. (2023, March 14). *Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2023*. Prison Policy Institute. National Center for State Court 2022 Poll. <https://www.ncsc.org/consulting-and-research/areas-of-expertise/court-leadership/state-of-the-state-courts>.

With a rate of 443 people incarcerated per 100,000, Texas is among the country's top incarcerators.

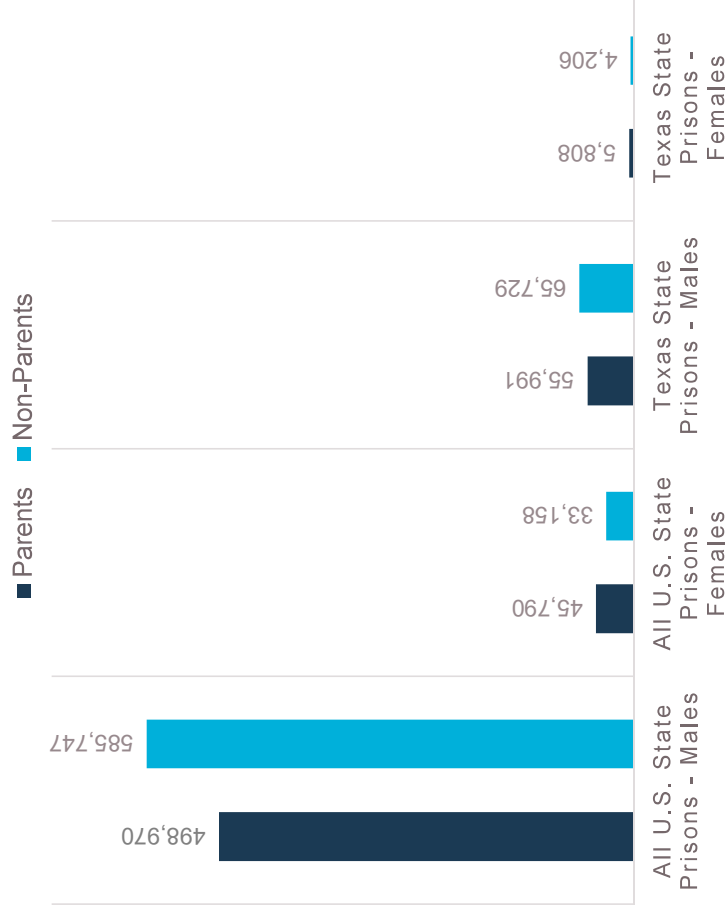


Source: Carson, E. A. (2022, December). *BJS prisoners in the United States, 2021* (p21st07). Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Why We Should Care

- A 2016 survey of prisoners found that 58% of women and 46% of men in state prisons were the parent of a biological or adopted child.
- BJS researchers estimated that around 1.5 million children have a parent in state or federal prison.
- Applying this data to the 2021 prison population, there is a minimum of 537,000 parents in prisons across the United States, with nearly 61,000 in Texas alone.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation estimates that 5% of children in Texas in 2021 lived with a parent or guardian who served time in jail or prison after the child was born. For young Black Texans, an estimated 9% had a parent who had served time in jail or prison.

Estimated Parents Incarcerated in State Prisons, 2021



Juvenile Justice System Profile

- Benchmarking the Bureau of Justice Statistics research and Texas Department of Criminal Justice, at least 64,119 of Texas' incarcerated population has at least one dependent.
- In 2023, 68% of youth admitted to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) noted having an incarcerated *household member*.
- Approximately 75% of youth in TJJD had 1 to 5 ACEs before admittance.
- Among admitted youth, many required moderate to high mental health and substance abuse treatment (77% and 84%, respectively).
- Overall, the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS) indicates that 61% of arrests among Texas youth are age 16 or younger.

Adolescents with a history of parental incarceration consistently have higher levels of problem behaviors between the 5th and 10th grades.

Considering Childhood Experiences

- Past parental incarceration is associated with **lower family income, parental education, socioeconomic status, and parental health**, and **higher levels of parental depression**, inappropriate and inconsistent **discipline**, youth problem **behaviors** and serious **delinquency**.
- Parental criminality and broken homes are **established risk factors for child antisocial behavior and mental health problems**.
- Children impacted by parental incarceration are likely to experience **high levels of grief**.



“IT’S LIKE A PHANTOM LIMB. IT FEELS LIKE IT’S THERE. IT’S SUPPOSED TO BE THERE, BUT IT’S NOT.”

Data Note: In a 2022 study by the Prison Policy Initiative, about 33% of all state prison inmates have or have had an incarcerated parent, and of that group, 67% are now parenting from behind bars.

Understanding Grief in the Context of Ambiguous Loss

Children can experience grief reactions in response to ambiguous loss.

Invisible Losses

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Disenfranchised grief: a loss that is not openly acknowledged, socially mourned, or publicly supported.

The more minority identities that a person carries, the more likely it is that their absence (or their loved ones' grief) will be minimized or ignored altogether.

"My teacher couldn't understand when I started crying in class after my brother was sent to jail. She was like, isn't this normal for you by now?" 16 year-old Black male



Multidimensional Grief Theory

Layne, Kaplow, & Pynoos (2011); Kaplow et al. (2013)



Separation Distress



Existential / Identity Distress



Circumstance-Related Distress



Helpful



Unhelpful

Facing the Challenge of Separation Distress



Facing the Challenge of Existential Distress



© 2017 Saltzman, Layne, Pynoos et al.

Facing the Challenge of Circumstance-Related Distress



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RETHINKING THE IMPACT

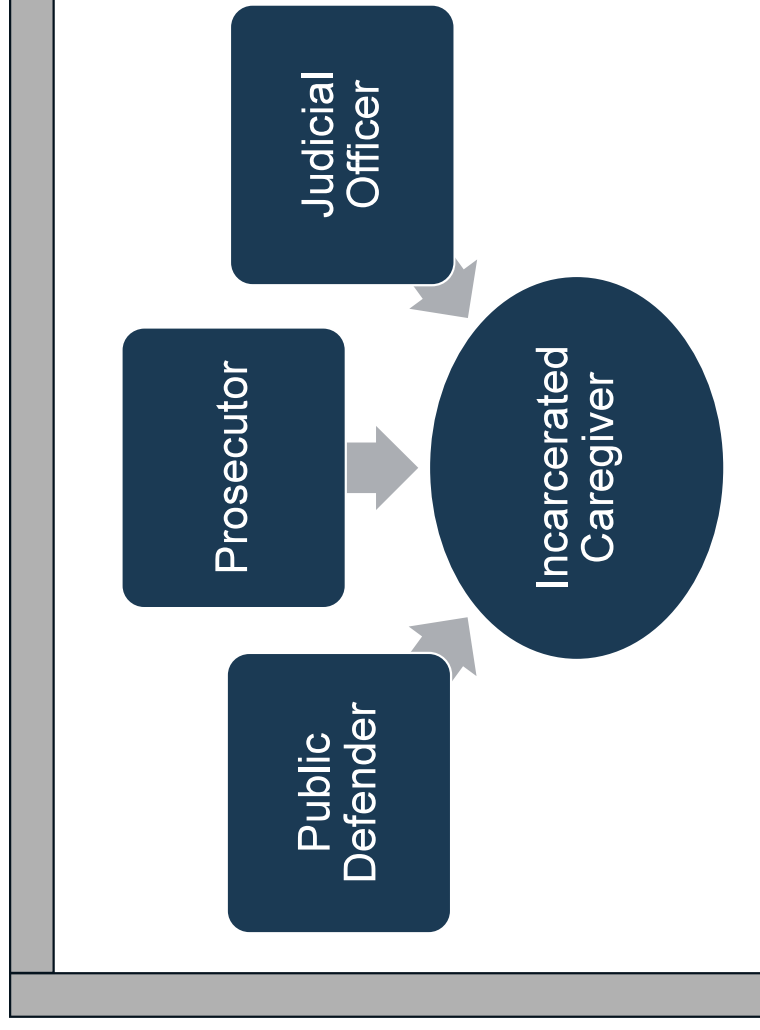
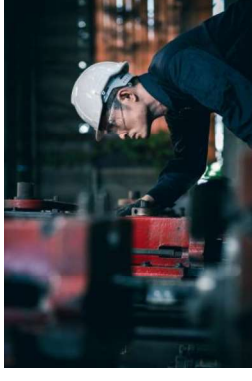
Practice Pilots and Strategies

Channels of Impact: Opportunities for Courts

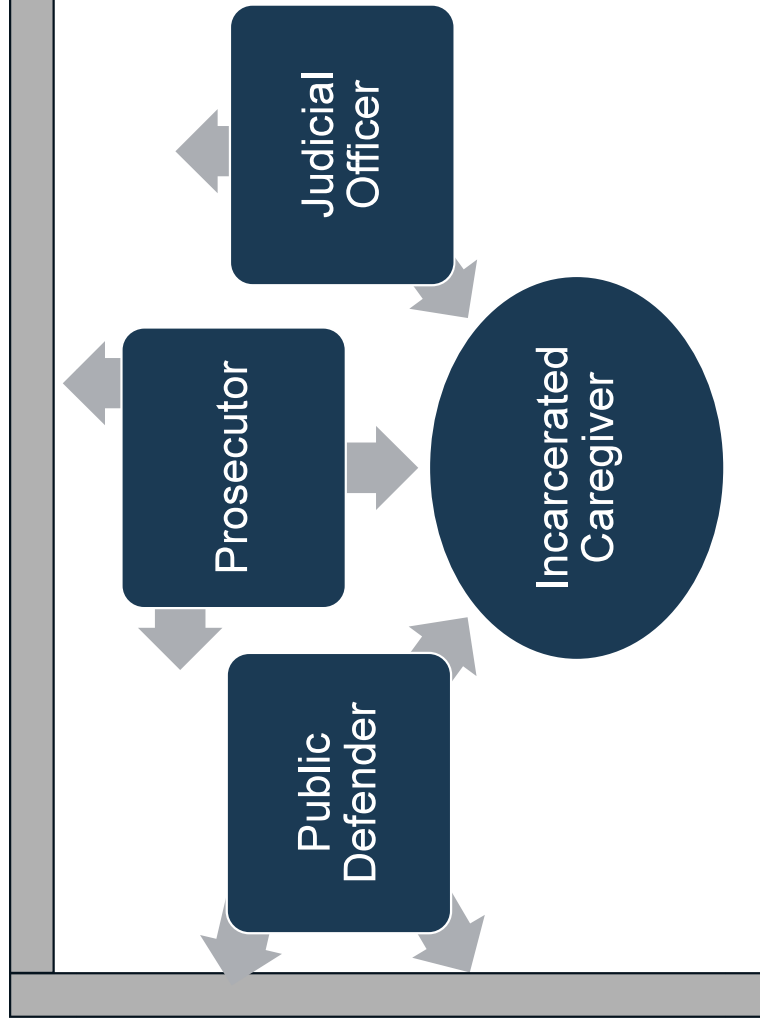
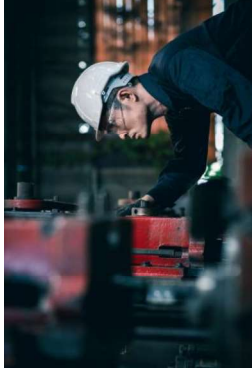
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Most criminal courts do not collect and analyze data on parental incarceration to inform policy development, resource allocation, and the development of evidence-based interventions.
- **Cross System Collaboration:** The issue is usually housed in juvenile courts, but improved outcomes require collaboration between the courts, child-serving agencies, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.
- **Resource Availability and Services:** Many courts lack system maps of resources for children of incarcerated parents, such as counseling, mentoring, and financial assistance.
- **Trauma- and Grief-Informed Care and Training:** Courts often lack access to trauma- and grief-informed practices to address the unique needs of these children.
- **Early Intervention:** Few programs focus on identifying and supporting children of incarcerated parents without juvenile justice system involvement



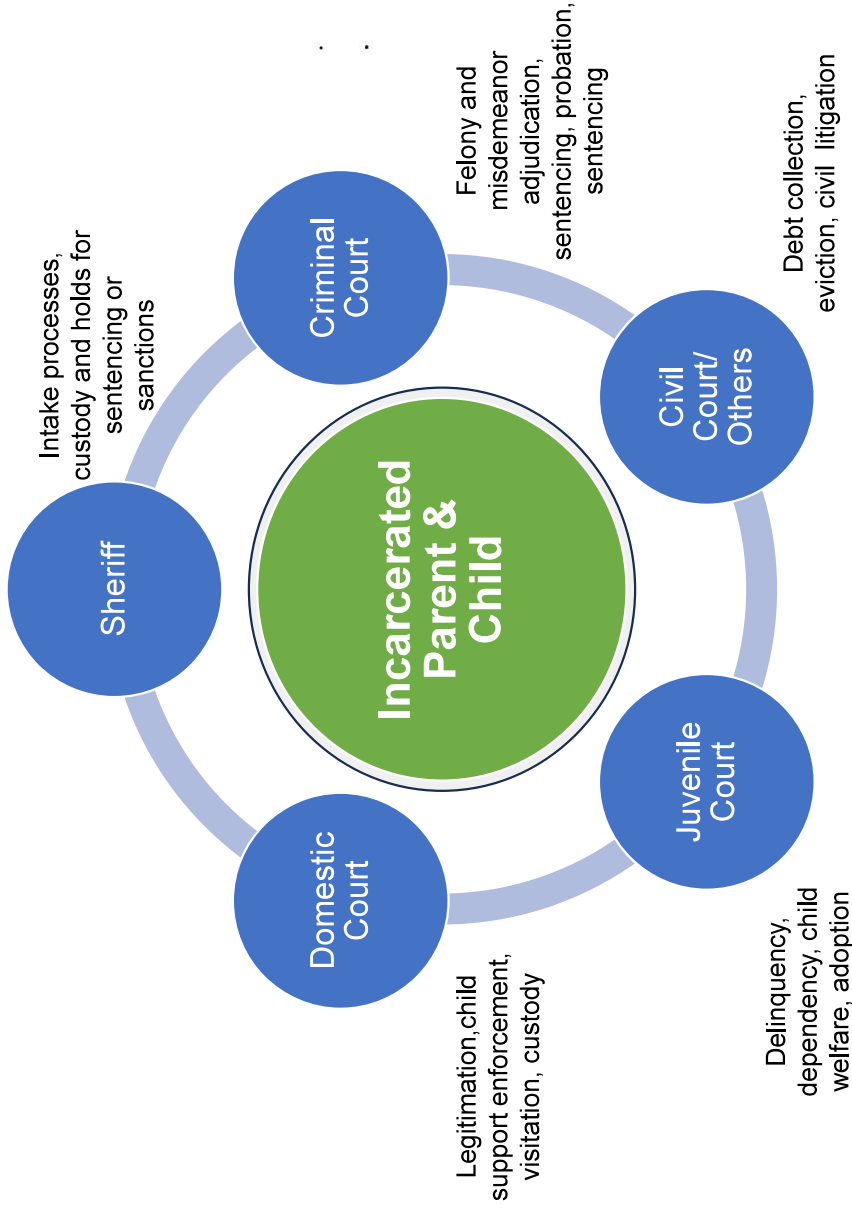
Inward Focus of Court Actors



Shift Our Focus Outward



The Legal Ecosystem: A Closer Look



The far-reaching consequences that ripple through multiple facets of the legal system:

- Most people are released at arraignment, but data shows the average stay in local jails is over three weeks.
- Parental incarceration can lead to civil disputes related to child support, property division, debt collection and may contribute to housing instability and eviction proceedings.
- Courts can often have multiple generations of family in a cycle of incarceration or judicial decisions.

Evidence-Based Prevention and Intervention: Opportunities for Further Impact

Keys to Effective Intervention for Trauma- and Grief-Exposed Youth

1. Early identification
(immediate aftermath of a trauma)
2. Meeting kids where they are
(in schools)
3. Enhancing communication between
law enforcement, schools, and
mental health providers



Handle with Care Program

Officers

- Encounters child/teen at a traumatic scene and responds sensitively
- Sends a confidential "Handle With Care" notification to the school via the online platform

School

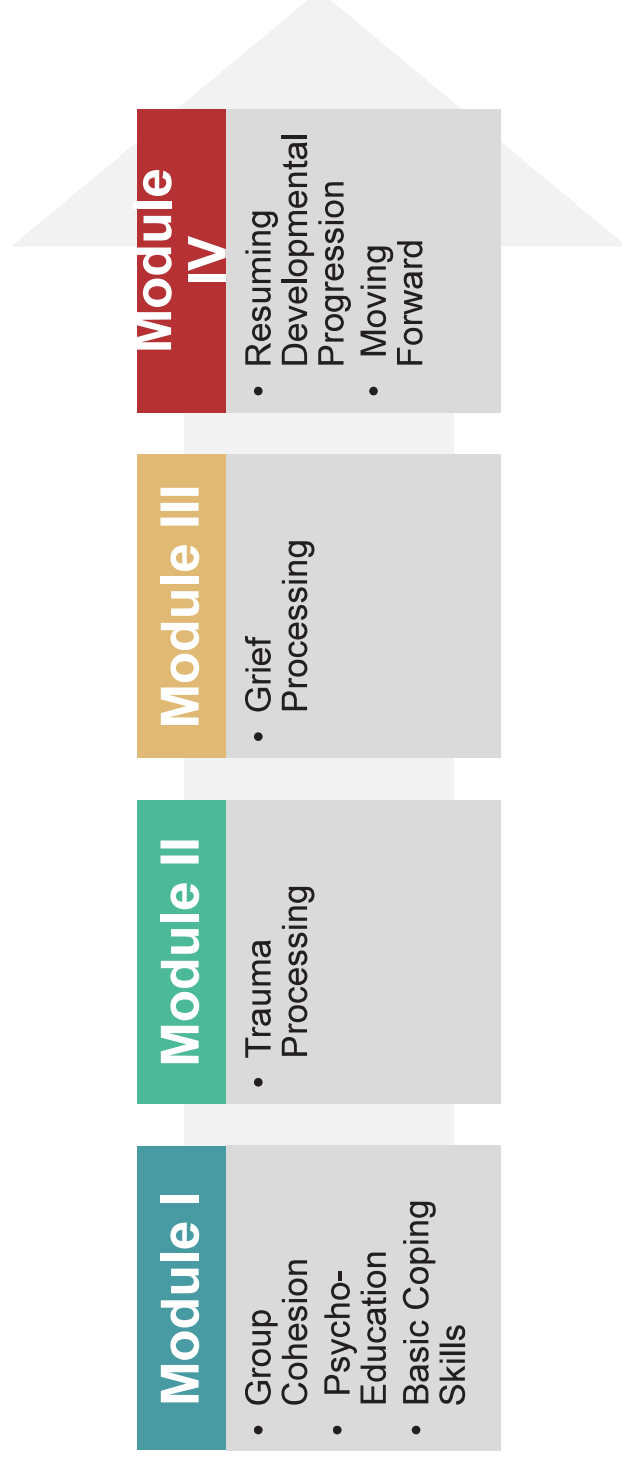
- Receives HWC notification and alerts the student's teacher(s)
- Teacher responds sensitively and observes student for behaviors suggesting need for additional support

Mental Health

- Teacher refers to internal mental health supports for intervention if needed
- School counselor/clinician refers to external resources for additional support if needed

Trauma and Grief Component Therapy

© 2017 Trauma and Grief Component Therapy. Saltzman, Layne, Pynoos, Olafson, Kaplow, & Boat



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Evidence of TGCT's Effectiveness

Grassetti et al., 2015; Layne et al., 2001; 2008; Saltzman et al., 2006

Results of effectiveness studies show:

Reductions in PTSD, depression, and maladaptive grief reactions

Improved school behavior including...

- enhanced **classroom rule compliance**
- enhanced **positive peer relationships**
- enhanced **school performance**
- increased **school interest**
- decreased **school anxiety/withdrawal**
- decreased **violence**

Use of TGCT in Juvenile Justice Settings

(Clow, Olafson, Ford, Moser, Slivinsky, & Kaplow, 2023)

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Among 63 incarcerated adolescent males, use of the Grief Module alone resulted in:

- Significant decreases in maladaptive grief scores
- 50% reduction in number of behavioral incident reports

Youth shared the following qualitative feedback:

“I learned that it’s ok to share how I’m feeling.”

“I been cool and more relaxed since being in the group.”

“Now I’m able to see that this lifestyle isn’t healthy.”

“I’m not going to let this happen to my own kids. I can stop the cycle.”

“I’m finding other ways to honor my brother – ways that won’t get me in trouble.”

“This group will help you in the long run.”

6. Meaning Making/Legacy Building



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Applying Best Practices to Parental Incarceration

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Grief-focused interventions for youth facing parental incarceration

- Preventive intervention to prepare for separation
- Ongoing intervention to maintain connection with the parent
- Intervention during reunification and beyond to adjust to a "new normal"

Practice Pilots and Strategies: Private-public partnership and Local Court Strategies

A Childhood Prosperity Approach

The Meadows Institute aims to transform how systems identify and coordinate timely care for children experiences caregiver incarceration to reduce the negative impacts.

The approach:

- Focuses on the judicial system, which offers the earliest opportunity to identify parents and children affected by the justice system.
- Emphasizes the experience of both trauma and grief and the need for evidence-based mental health interventions that effectively address each of these unique experiences.
- Establishes new data points by developing processes to identify adults with minor children and activate cross-system coordination in both adult and juvenile courts, child welfare, educational, and health systems to ensure care options are easily accessible.
- Engages multiple systems with the aim of creating dual intervention points for care for children that are system and non-system impacted (health equity).
- Identifies multiple points in the adjudication process to provide non-adversarial intervention.

Pilot Planning

Partners: Adult and juvenile justice system, academia institutions, behavioral health providers, education, business community, and social service agencies.

Collaborative Snapshot:

- Jurisdictions: Texas and Georgia
- Exploring multiple intervention points (post arrest, specialty court eligibility, pre-sentence, etc.)
- Infrastructure assessment (levers of access, data collection, research, and policy and practice recommendations)
- Increasing system collaboration and expanded access to community care service

Pilot Elements:

- **Early identification** of impacted children via arrest and incarceration of a parent or caregiver (adult)
- Create **bi-directional data** sharing in the adult and juvenile courts
- Design increased access points for **community-based care and resiliency support services**
- Develop and implement **specialized judicial and justice stakeholder training** around crisis, trauma and grief response

A Childhood Prosperity Approach

MEADOWS
MENTAL HEALTH
POLICY INSTITUTE

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ACCESS TO CARE: BREAKING A GENERATIONAL CYCLE OF INCARCERATION

AUGUST 2024

THE CHALLENGE

Georgia has one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation. The far-reaching consequences of parental incarceration on generations of children pose a significant challenge to the economic future of cities across the country. Children of incarcerated caregivers face a silent health crisis: family engagement in the justice system heightens adverse childhood experiences, which increases the risk of poverty, mental health trauma, educational setbacks, disproportionate representation in the child welfare system, and their own future engagement in the criminal justice system. The cycle of incarceration is relentless and affects more than 5 million children across America.

A PATH FORWARD

Atlanta's prosperity is inextricably linked to the well-being of its entire community. Atlanta is well-positioned to assemble leaders across sectors to build a more resilient city can transform this challenge into a unique opportunity. To address this challenge, a unifying health-forward approach is crucial. Bringing together leaders from the business, health, justice, and education sectors to focus on access to care strategies for youth impacted by caregiver's incarceration will define a turning point in the health and prosperity of a generation of at-risk youth. The cycle of incarceration is

Build a safer and more resilient community

Assemble a coalition of business and system leaders to design an innovate solutions that reduce the systemic impact of parental and intergenerational incarceration on community safety and wellness.

Optimize access to care

Optimize cross-system collaboration that address non-medical drivers of health for children and youth, improving individual and community resilience.

Empower the future workforce

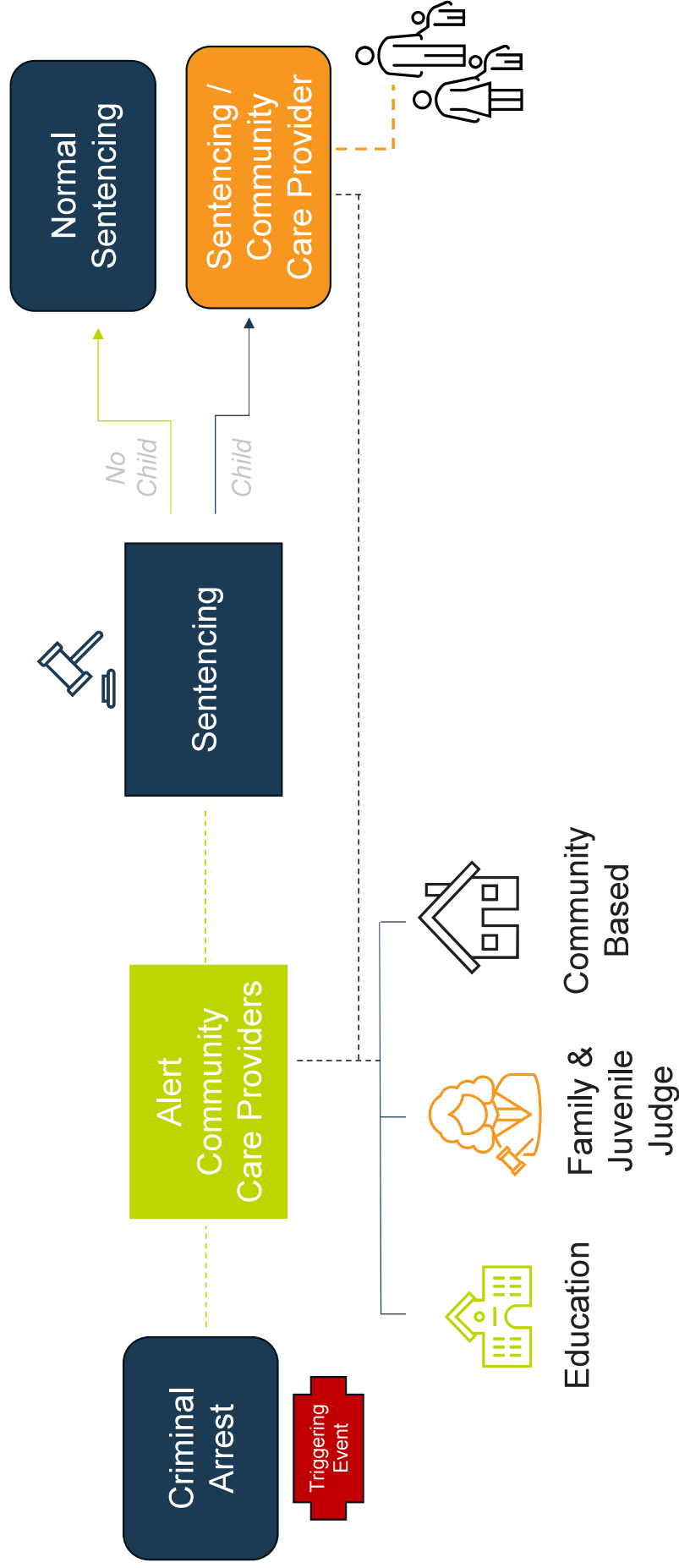
Empower the business community as a social innovator, investing in the development of a healthy and skilled future workforce while simultaneously improving the outcomes for children, families, and individuals affected by the criminal justice system.



AT A GLANCE

- Approximately 53% of Georgia inmates have a dependent child.
- 32% of incarcerated individuals have or had an incarcerated parent.
- One of the strongest risk factors for unemployment in adulthood is parental incarceration in childhood.
- Returning justice-impacted individuals disproportionately concentrate in Atlanta's economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Example: Expanded Handle with Care



Final Thoughts: Championing Change

- The court can champion long-term change
- Train, Track, and Connect
- None of it works without effective court and case management
- It can begin small, focusing on the areas with the greatest need
- Many of the pieces are already in place; we just need to connect them

Questions

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Thank You!

For more information visit mmhpi.org or tagcenter.org



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FOR MENTAL HEALTH

TRAUMA AND GRIEF CENTER AT
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SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

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