

Kids-A-Part: A Realistic Evaluation of a Program for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Children with parents whom have been incarcerated are said to be at higher risk for a variety of behavioral and emotional issues. These children often contend with other factors such as financial instability, domestic violence, substance use, mental health issues of the caregiver, etc. Research has explored the psychological and behavioral impacts of incarceration on children, as well as protective factors to support their healthy development. More limited research has been done on how programs can impact the outcomes for this population. Programs that address the needs of this population improve both the lives of children and the communities in which they live. Kids-A-Part, a program in Vermont, provides a variety of services for children and families of incarcerated parents. The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions: What is the interaction between mechanisms and context that makes Kids-A-Part a successful program (and for whom)? What recommendations can be made for this program to be successful for its community and targeted population? Realistic Evaluation method provides a useful methodology for evaluating the Kids-A-Part program. One unique aspect of Realistic Evaluation is acknowledging the context within which a program exists. This evaluation method also provides room for joining with other methodological strategies. Hence, this evaluation uses a qualitative single case study methodology. Data will be collected using observations, file reviews, and interviews with participants, employees, and community partners and other stakeholders. Analyses will be conducted and results provided that will also include recommendations for the program.