

## **Vulnerability of Children of Incarcerated Addict Mothers: Implications for Preventive Intervention**

This is a preliminary report on the characteristics, experiences, and behavior of 88 adolescent, primarily African-American, children of incarcerated urban addict mothers that examines the association of age, gender, and risk factor profiles with the children's adjustment status defined in terms of self-reported questionnaire information and selected personality/behavioral assessment inventories. In spite of the existence of adverse circumstances in their lives, including the incarceration of their substance-abusing mothers, results revealed that the majority of these children were neither especially deviant nor maladjusted, all but a small percentage having successfully avoided substance abuse and the adoption of a deviant lifestyle at this point in their development. In most cases, mother surrogates (usually a grandmother or other family member) had for many years functioned as primary caregivers of the children prior to the incarceration of their birth mothers, which may have attenuated the negative impact ordinarily associated with a mother's absence from the home. However, there was a general indication of problematic school behavior and vulnerability to deviant peer influences that should be addressed in efforts aimed at preventing the escalation of deviant activity in such children. Also, in almost all cases, there was a readily observable need for the provision of caseworker support services to the current caregivers of the children.