

## Educators offer help when Mommies and Daddies are jailed

*Book seeks to answer children's questions*

by Susan Singer-Bart, Staff Writer  
Dan Gross/The Gazette

When they worked at Wyngate Elementary School in Bethesda, Judi Goozh and Sue Jeweler, both of Rockville, regularly ran into students who displayed behavior problems, were depressed or had falling grades.

Inevitably, they would learn through the grapevine that the student's mother or father was in jail.

The problem cuts across socioeconomic levels, they said. The school system does not record how many children are affected, they added.

When they went to the school counselor for guidance on how to deal with the children, no literature was available on the issue, Jeweler said.

"Then we started doing the research," she said.

Goozh, 68, a retired speech and language pathologist, and Jeweler, 63, a retired elementary school teacher, wrote "Mommies and Daddies in Jail," to help children understand what has happened to their parents. The book, which is written on a third or fourth grade level, is available in English and Spanish.

"The child with an incarcerated parent is the elephant in the room," Goozh said. "You didn't discuss it because you didn't know what to say." When teachers see a child whose parent is in jail, they believe the child is destined to follow that path, she said. Parents and guardians often do not tell the schools because they do not want to stigmatize or embarrass their children.



Judi Goozh (left) and Sue Jeweler, two retired Montgomery County Public Schools educators, wrote a book, "Mommies and Daddies in Jail," that is distributed free of charge at county jails, libraries and schools. They have recently put it on the Internet.

“We’ve got to be able to break the cycle,” Jeweler said.

Young children can be helped with early intervention, academic and social support, she said.

Adults sometimes keep information from the child because they do not know what to say, Goozh said.

The book attempts to anticipate and answer questions children have about jail. It is filled with pictures taken inside the Montgomery County Correctional Facility in Clarksburg, including a cell, recreation area, library and the visiting area.

“One of the things we found so important was the need to be honest, to clear up the unknowns,” Jeweler said.

The book explains, “When you see your daddy, he is behind a glass window. You pick up a phone to talk to him. You cannot hug, kiss or touch him.”

At a 2009 conference of county school psychologists, when Jeweler and Goozh asked for a show of hands of those who had a student with a parent in jail , nearly every one of the more than 144 people in the room raised their hands, Jeweler said.

School system psychologist Jeff Seltzer, who works with preschool children, finds the book helpful.

“The book provides something that fills in the gaps,” he said.

The question-and-answer format gives adults ideas about the questions on children’s minds and offers responses, he said.

“Kids this age think they cause things,” Seltzer said.

The book helps in letting children know they did not cause their parent’s arrest, nor did the police officers who arrested the parent.

The book was first published in 2007 and was geared toward a parent in prison. But at the suggestion of Montgomery County Director of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Arthur Wallenstein, the authors rewrote the book in 2009 to focus on county jails, adding pictures from the correctional facility in Clarksburg. It is now available online.

Copies can be found in school counselors’ offices, the jail waiting room and the jail and county libraries.

“It’s really popular here and I’m assuming it’s helpful,” said Deputy Warden Suzy Malagari.

Wallenstein’s department has paid more than \$8,900 to print and distribute the book. “Over 6,000 [copies] have been distributed to schools, school counselors, human service organizations/government, not-for-profit service providers and other groups and individuals,” Wallenstein said in an email. “Judi Goozh and Sue Jeweler have just kept at it and seek to place more and more copies in appropriate locations and sensitive school principals, teachers and counselors to this aspect of criminal justice that is simply not well understood.”

Books are available for \$5 online by writing to [creativefamilyprojectsllc@gmail.com](mailto:creativefamilyprojectsllc@gmail.com).