



**CONNECTING
4JUSTICE**
INTERNATIONAL

ADVOCACY
IN
ACTION
COALITION



DIGITAL

toolkit

TAKING STEPS

to help Yourself

how to advocate

FAMILY MEMBER INCARCERATION

DIGITAL TOOLKIT

1

Get Involved: Let your advocacy voice be heard through the law, policy, and testifying at hearings

2

What You Can Do: Steps to help yourself and your family

3

Get Support: Attend support meetings & collaborate

4

Stay Connected: Join social media groups, attend conferences

5

Calendar: Structure your time wisely

6

Get Informed: Info on mass incarceration and its impacts



The Advocacy in Action Coalition meets every other month following each conference. We present at the Connecting 4 Justice International annual conference and set the agenda for the upcoming year's advocacy focus. To be included as an Advocacy in Action Coalition Member, please visit <https://www.connecting4justice.org/volunteer/>.

1 get involved

Your councilmember, mayor, legislators, policy makers, and other lawmakers have the power to shape the agenda that affects your loved ones (e.g., how many prisons are built, how much budget goes to reentry, when or if the government pays for intervention). **Your voice shared during public testimony can make a difference.** People like you and me testify with just a little bit of preparation. Most testimony is between 3 to 5 minutes. You can say a great deal and make an incredible, passionate impact by using your voice for social change. Take a listen to Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson during her testimony regarding children with incarcerated parents rights to privacy: <https://youtu.be/miXGr0eDFMw?t=4404>.

✓ basic testimony guide

- Introduce yourself, include your full name and your neighborhood or vicinity.
- State your demand, needs, or request.
 - For example: We are in a real public safety crisis. Reentry services add to the public safety focus. Recidivism will actually make us less safe. We must invest our money in jobs, housing, and reentry services.
- Say why the social change matters to you.
- Expand on the demand: Families are the core support for returning residents. Healthy families contribute to healthy communities.

2 what you can do

Steps to help yourself and your family:

Do not go it alone! There are many people who have thought at one time they could not survive the incarceration of a loved one. They also had concerns about talking to their children about incarceration. Consider helping yourself through these tools and resources:

Read about overcoming the odds when a loved one is incarcerated:

Read about how others have weathered the experience of family member incarceration.

Make a plan to rebuild your life:

To ensure that you are addressing your mental and physical well-being, check-in with yourself. Journal your goals and make a plan to survive this family crises through active participation in rebuilding your own life. Redefine who you are. You are not your circumstances nor are you your incarcerated spouse's circumstance or family member's situation. Redefine who you are and who you wish to be. Then do it. You *can* and *will* rise to the level of overcoming the difficulties by holding on to hope and stepping into your redefined purpose.

Storybooks to explain incarceration: Check out these books by DC Project Connect on explaining incarceration to children under 10 years of age.

Understand your human rights: Read this one-pager on human rights and its links to advocacy.

3 get support

Attend a meeting & collaborate!

You are not alone. There are virtual and in-person support meetings that enable you to go about your busy life, yet attend to your emotional well-being. Humans need to connect. There are groups that meet monthly. Groups like DC Project Connect provide family resources as self-help tools.

Consider These Resources:

- [Assisting Families of Inmates](#)
- [C4J's Advocacy in Action Coalition](#)
- [DC Project Connect](#)
- [Extended Family Resource Database](#)
- [Michigan Citizens 4 Justice](#)
- [Mothers of Incarcerated Sons Society](#)
- [National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated](#)
- [Prison Families Alliance](#)
- [Texas Inmate Family Association](#)

4 stay connected

Join social media groups, attend conferences, and learn about changes in public policy.

Social media updates are more than a 'social event'! It is a way of being informed of the latest legislation and information regarding prisons and corrections institution. It helps to know that other people are advocating and staying connected during the year long after the conference is over.

Facebook:

- [Connecting 4 Justice International](#)
- [Prison Family Alliance](#)

Websites:

- [ACLU](#)
- [Connecting 4 Justice International](#)
- [DC Project Connect](#)
- [Equal Justice Initiative](#)
- [Essie Justice Group](#)
- [Families Against Mandatory Minimums \(FAMM\)](#)
- [National CURE](#)
- [Prison Fellowship](#)
- [Prison: The Hidden Sentence](#)
- [Prison Policy Initiative](#)
- [The Sentencing Project](#)
- [We Got Us Now](#)



5

calendar

See frequent meetings for personal support and for reentry-related groups. Check-in often to see updates.

See Calendar Link: <https://PrisonFamiliesAlliance.org/calendar>



6 get informed

Information on mass incarceration and its impacts.

In 2016, the Advocacy In Action Coalition authored a series of white papers that may help inform your decisions to testify, give guidance on priority issues and also help you better understand the criticality of advocacy. Take a look at our white paper and send us any questions and/or ideas you may have on the topic.

In the meantime, you are welcome to join us every other month. For more information, [click here](#).



team work

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The Advocacy in Action Coalition is chaired by Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson. The team meets every other month with the exception of the last two months approaching the conference. Contact Dr. Avon: avonhartjohnson@gmail.com

Each year, following the Conference, the team meets to decide upon a new initiative and set of goals. This year, the AIAC team decided to prepare a digital toolkit. This document/toolkit is a result of this brainstorming and the collective insights of its members.

While the AIAC membership roster is over 150+ combined nonprofits, organizations, agencies, and individuals, the "AIAC Working Group" is a smaller subset that carries out the mission and vision of the AIAC. The following people are the members who met consistently during 2021.

Our thanks go to:

DR. AVON HART-JOHNSON, AIAC CHAIR
MS. CAROLYN ESPARZA, IPFC CHAIR
MR. JIM PRAGER
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Thank you