

- Adrienne Testa, Director of Exhibits & Facilities, Sciencenter
- Amanda Wilkening, Assistant Director of Visitor Engagement, Hands On Children's Museum
- Dené Mosier President/CEO, Kansas Children's Discovery Center, Association of Children's Museums, Board of Directors, Vice-President of Initiatives
- Suzy Mirvis, Associate Director of School and Community Programs, Children's Museum of Manhattan
- Dawn Taylor, Family, Religion, and Volunteer Services Correction Manager, Washington State Department of Corrections



**Keeping Families  
Intact**  
The Value Children's  
Museums Share With  
Prisons

# Mass Incarceration

## Incarceration Rates

among founding NATO countries

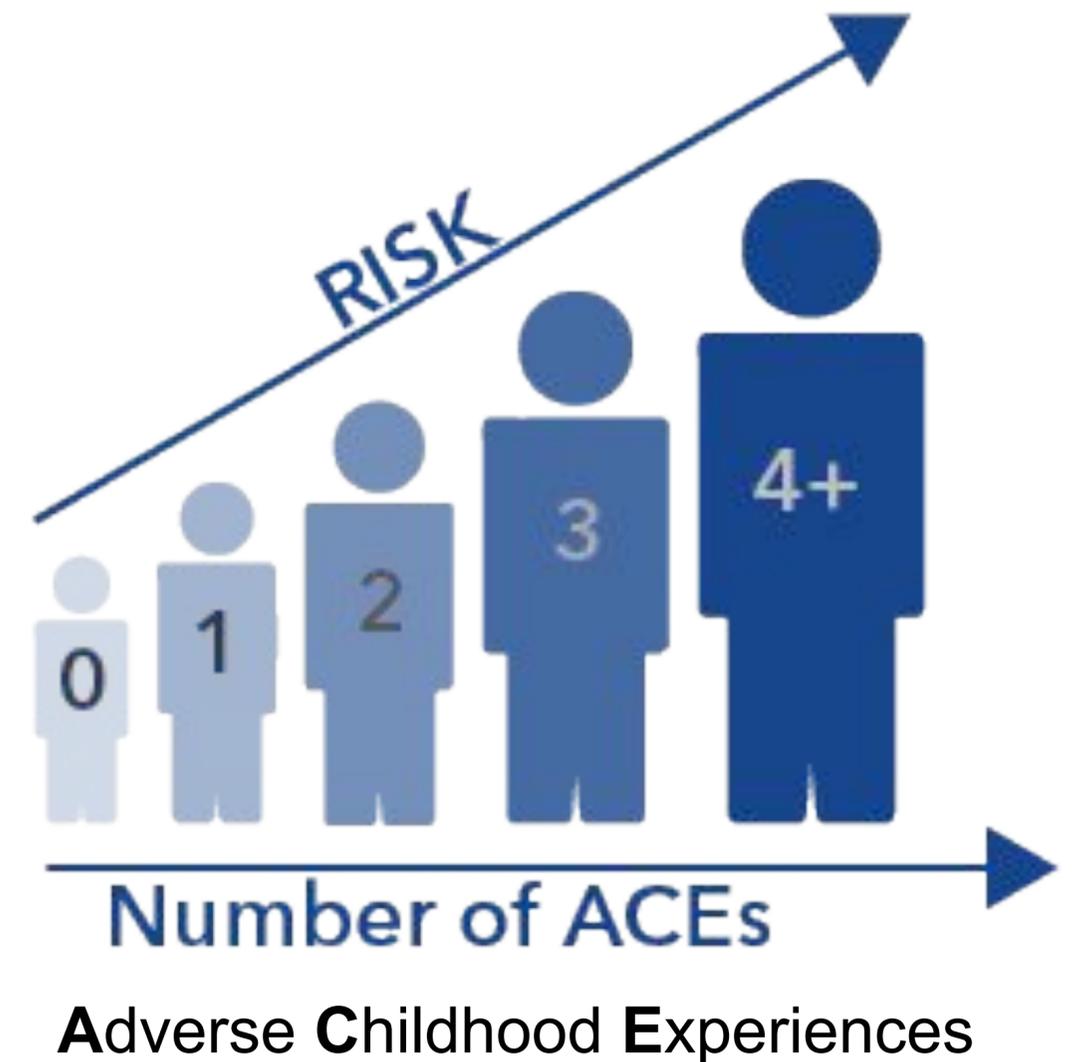


**1 in 28** children in the United States have a parent who is incarcerated.

# Risk Factors for Children

Risk Factors, are “characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes.

Children with an incarcerated parent are **6 times** more likely to become incarcerated themselves.

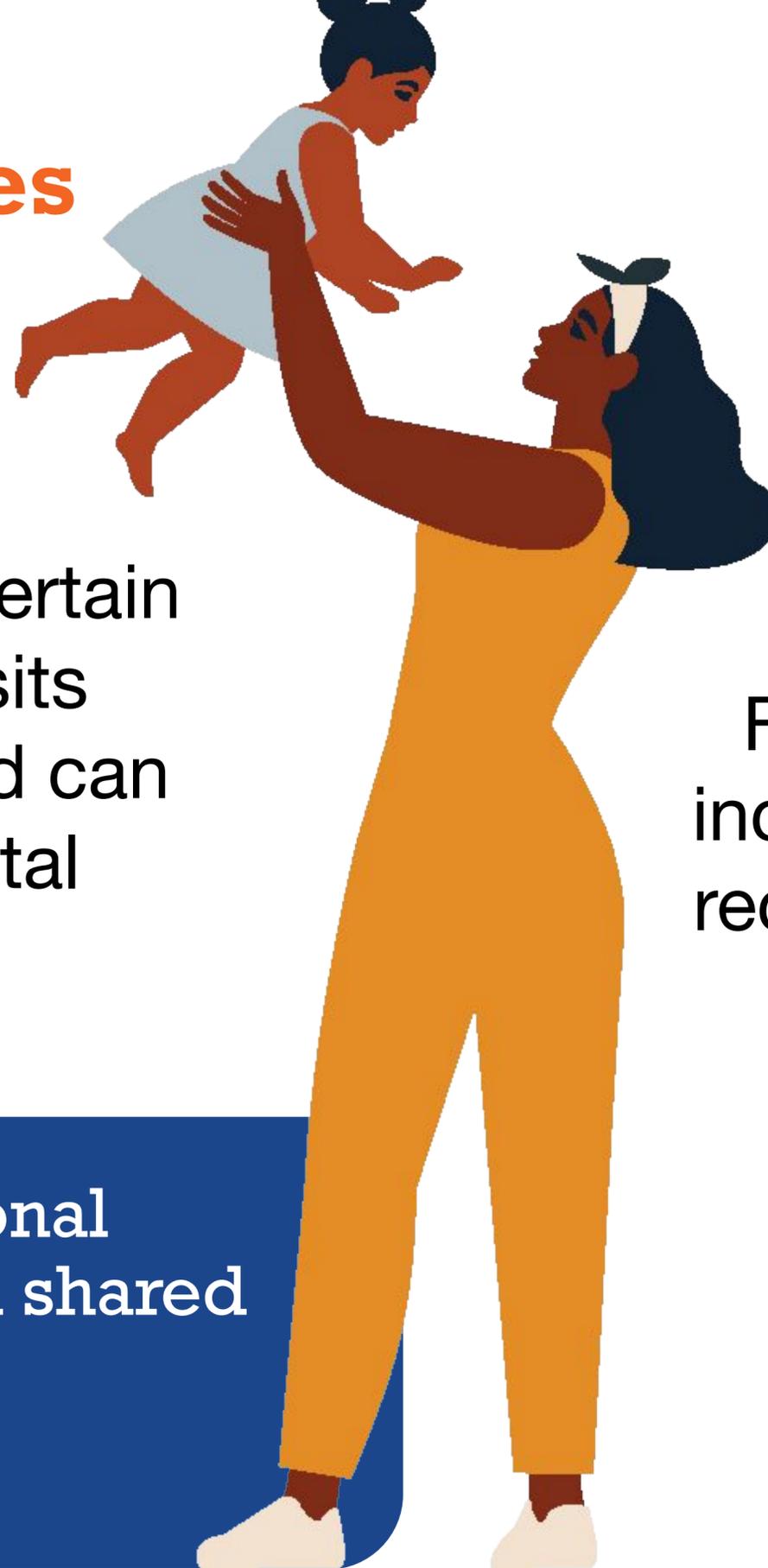


# Strengthening Families Through Visits

Studies show that under certain circumstances, contact visits between a parent and child can lessen the effects of parental incarceration on a child.

For parents, benefits include a lower rate of recidivism and a more successful re-entry after release.

Children's museums and correctional facilities' visiting programs have a shared goal: **"keep families intact"**.





**Children's Museum of Manhattan**

## CMOM's *Family Connections* partnership with NYC Department of Corrections

Suzy Mirvis, Associate Director School and Community Programs  
ACM InterActivity, April 2023

# Who are we?



- Location: Upper West Side, New York, NY
- Annual Visitation: 350,000 per year
- Founded in: 1973
- Size: 38,000 square ft
- Annual Budget: ~6 million
- Staffing #s: 27 FT, 39PT = 66 total

# Separation during incarceration

When children are too young to understand why they are separated from an incarcerated parent, **feelings of abandonment and rejection are often magnified** (Flynn 2014)

Children who **maintain contact with their parent during incarceration exhibit fewer disruptive and anxious behaviors** (Sack and Seidler 1978; Stanton 1980) and **overall improved outcomes** (Edin, Nelson, and Paranal 2004; Klein, Bartholomew, and Hibbert 2002; La Vigne et al. 2005).

**Maintaining contact lowers recidivism rates** and is linked to 10 other positive outcomes associated with successful reentry (Edin et al. 2004; Sampson and Laub 1993; Uggen, Manza, and Behrens 2004).



# The Early Days of Partnership

- Built upon partnerships with government agencies like...



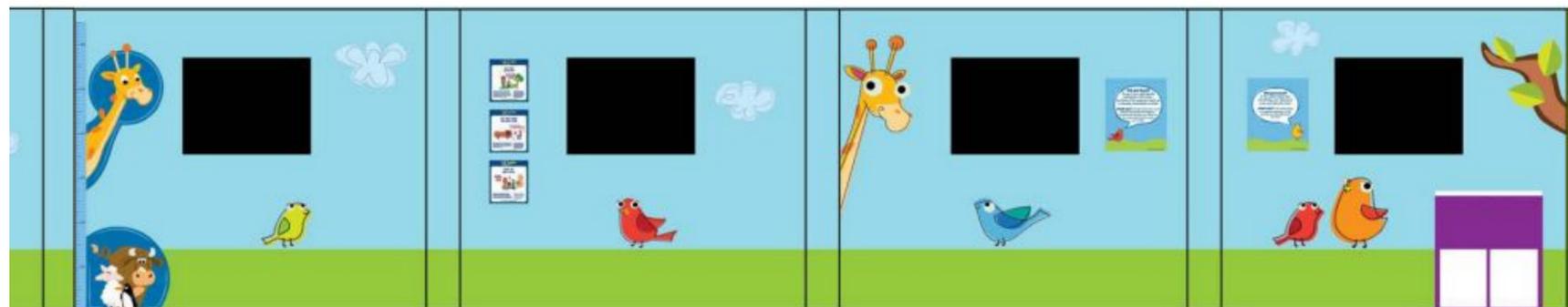
- To gain the trust and confidence of...



# Programming & Partnership

All plans developed in collaboration with the Department of Corrections

- Programming
  - We host 18 arts and play programs **at CMOM** that reunite families and focus on family connections and bonding.
- To improve the visitation experience **at Rikers**, we are installing Learning Hubs (mini exhibits/interactives) in Rikers Visitation Rooms
  - Decrease the stress of family visits
  - Based on CMOM exhibits designed to promote early learning, imaginative play, and family bonding.





# Designing for Family Bonding

- Art activities that families can take home

"I love the take home projects. They make this experience feel like more than a memory, it is something to look forward to in the end and at home."

- Daily Routines

"I loved that my son read a book to me. We used to do that together all the time before, it was amazing to have it again"

- Safe Space for Free Choice

"I'll never forget this feeling of seeing my kids play freely. Nobody felt locked down here. I felt so comfortable here."



# Program Assessment

All in collaboration with the DOC

1. Post-program debrief with the parents in custody
2. Post-program phone survey with custodial caregivers
3. DOC working on reporting the behavior data of the people in custody.

# What we found...

“They are more focused than ever on getting out. They are more motivated and want to do the right thing everyday.” - Officer Langer



93% of custodial caregivers said that they **felt more connected** as a family after their visit.

“After the visit, the boys seem more calm. They are back to themselves. My daughter misses her Dad more though now, and she’s been crying more. She gets on the phone with him frequently just to say “I love you I love you I love you.” - Caitlin

“My son is sad when saying goodbye to Dad now. He knows his dad now, he recognizes him from far away. His behavior with his dad is so different now, even just after that one visit.” - Marie

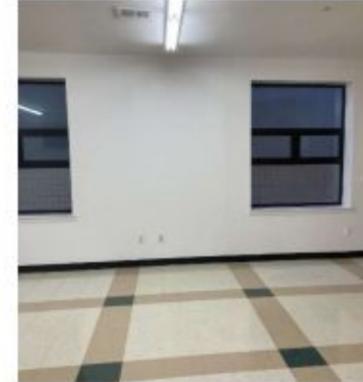
“Over the past few days after the visit, my son is a lot more relaxed and happier after seeing his mom. This is such a positive thing for the kids” - Frederick



# Next steps...

## Location Specific Learning Hubs

*Before...*



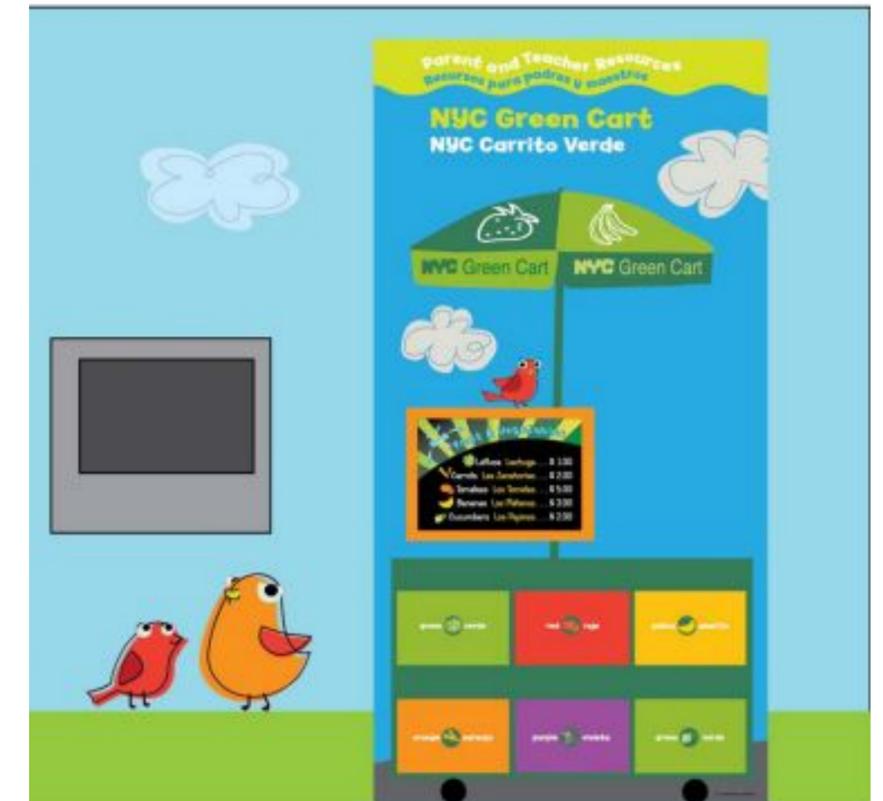
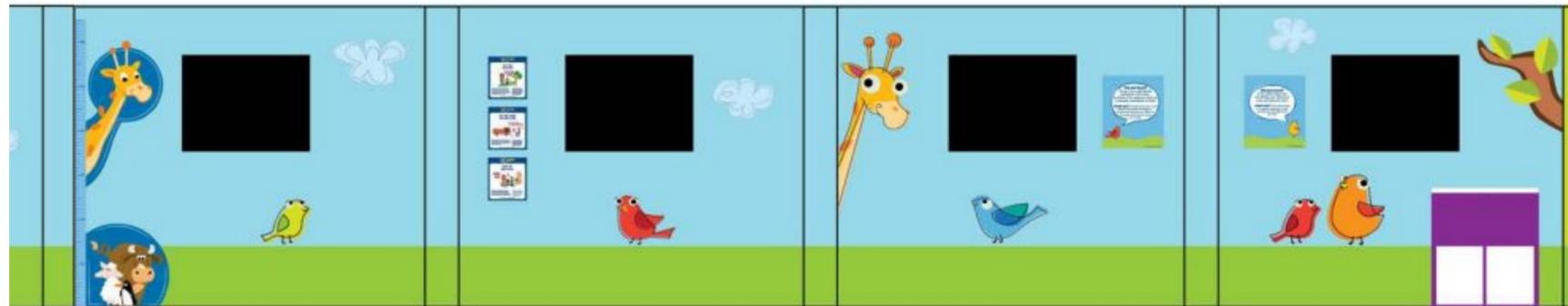
*...After*



\*NOTE: This are images from a family shelter, not Rikers Island. We are not permitted to share photos of visitation rooms at Rikers Island.

# Location Specific Learning Hubs

- Considerations...
  - Color schemes and characters
    - Warm and welcoming
  - Specific visitation room policies
    - Physical contact, free movement, number of people, etc
  - Materials, shapes, electrical requirements
    - Taking safety/security to a whole new level



**THANK  
YOU!**



the  
Kansas  
Children's  
**DIScovery**  
Center



Kansas Children's Discovery Center



# About Us

- Founded in 2011
- Located in Topeka, the capital city of Kansas, in historic Gage Park
- 95,000 annual visitors
- 15,000 square feet + 4.5 acres outdoors
- 1 in 3 admissions are free or reduced



# Play Free Prison Program

- The Discovery Center contacted Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF), the only women's prison in the state of Kansas, in early 2018 to create opportunities for women to bond with their children at the museum. Inspired by CMOM, we adopted many of their applicable practices.
- Play free Invites children and their incarcerated mothers to the museum for a full day of play, learning, and bonding.
- Play Free works with the Women's Activity Learning Center program at the prison. Women who participate reside in the minimum security part of TCF.
- All staff received training on incarceration and trauma-based interventions when the program was created.



# Play Free



“I genuinely felt humanized in this program,” wrote one mother, “It was a breath of fresh air. My children and I had so much fun and we appreciate having the privilege.”

# A Play Free Day: Welcome

- Play Free takes place on days the museum is closed to the public.
- Mothers arrive at the museum first.
- Dignity for the mothers is our guide.
- Custodial caregivers bring children from as far as 8 hours away to attend.
- Families have the opportunity to catch up and transition at the child's pace, then custodial caregivers leave.
- Moms and children start with a shared breakfast and open play.



# A Play Free Day: The Day

- The full facility, indoors and outdoors, is available to Play Free participants from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Child-led play is the priority and staff is careful not to over-plan the day.
- Participants usually have the opportunity to work together on bonding art experiences if they choose. (Tracing hugs, love boxes, heart prints etc)
- A photographer takes photos of each family.
- Families share lunch and typically a special dessert (ice cream sundaes, cookies they get to decorate, etc.)



# Play Free: In Her Words



# A Play Free Day: Wrap-Up



- Custodial caregivers return at 3 p.m. and have another chance to talk and transition.
- A copy of the family photo is printed for each mom and each child to take with them.
- Mothers give the children Discovery to Go kits for the trip home.
- Children leave before moms are transported back to TCF. Caregivers are given surveys to complete when they pick up the children.
- After the children leave, moms participate in yoga and breathing exercise.
- Moms then complete surveys about their experience at the museum (if time allows) or back at TCF.



# Play Free: Critical Pieces

- Play Free is a full day at the museum. The amount of time and developmentally-appropriate setting allows a wide range of child-led activities that facilitate bonding, including two shared meals.
- Play Free is just for moms and children. Custodial caregivers leave for the day, giving the moms a completely unique opportunity to parent.
- The photos are incredibly important to both moms and kids. We ensure each child gets their own photo, and obtained special permission for the women to take a photo back to TCF with them.
- Play Free does not have uniformed, armed guards on site.
- Play Free is directed by the participants themselves.



# Play Free Highlights



- 16 full day Play Free sessions at the museum
- When in-person visits were not allowed due to Covid-19, we mailed play kits to moms and kids to facilitate playing together during Zoom visits.
- Play Free has served more than 1,000 total women and children.
- The Lt. Governor of Kansas, Secretary of Corrections, and reporters from CNN along with multiple local media outlets have attended a Play Free session.

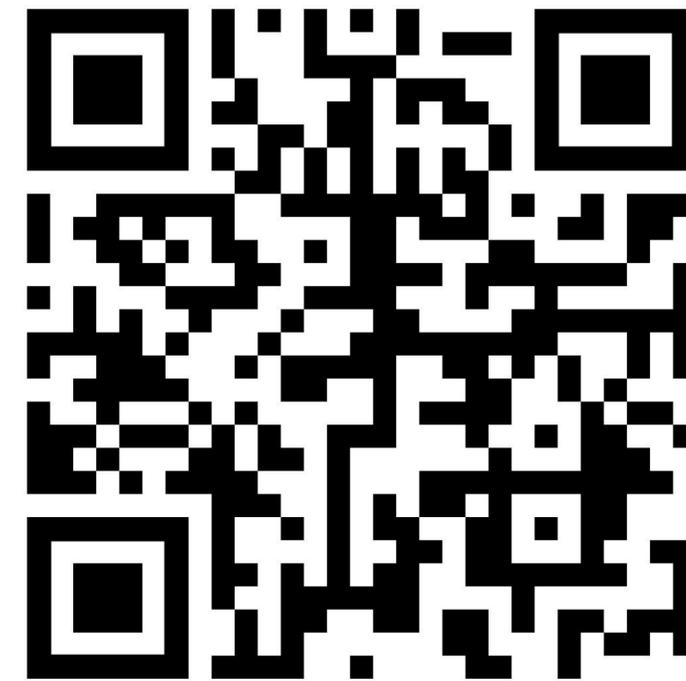
My family and I would like to thank the KCDC and all donors for helping to create such amazing memories for my children and me. We have visited the Discovery Center three times now, and my boy always asking to go back. Due to I miss my kids since I been with them,

# Play Free: Next Steps

- The program is continuously guided by participant feedback. Surveys have prompted us to make changes to meals, schedule, and activities.
- Juvenile Justice: New young parent program
- Men's Prisons: New program serving families in community-based settings
- Visiting room renovations in the men's prisons throughout the state
- Birthday learning kits and virtual visits for maximum custody parents modeled after successful Covid virtual visit programming.



# Play Free: Learn More



[kansasdiscovery.org/playfree](https://kansasdiscovery.org/playfree)

Visiting

# Washington State Department of Corrections

Partnership with  
Olympia's Hands on Children's Museum

Dawn Taylor  
Corrections Manager  
Washington State Department of Corrections



# Washington Department of Corrections

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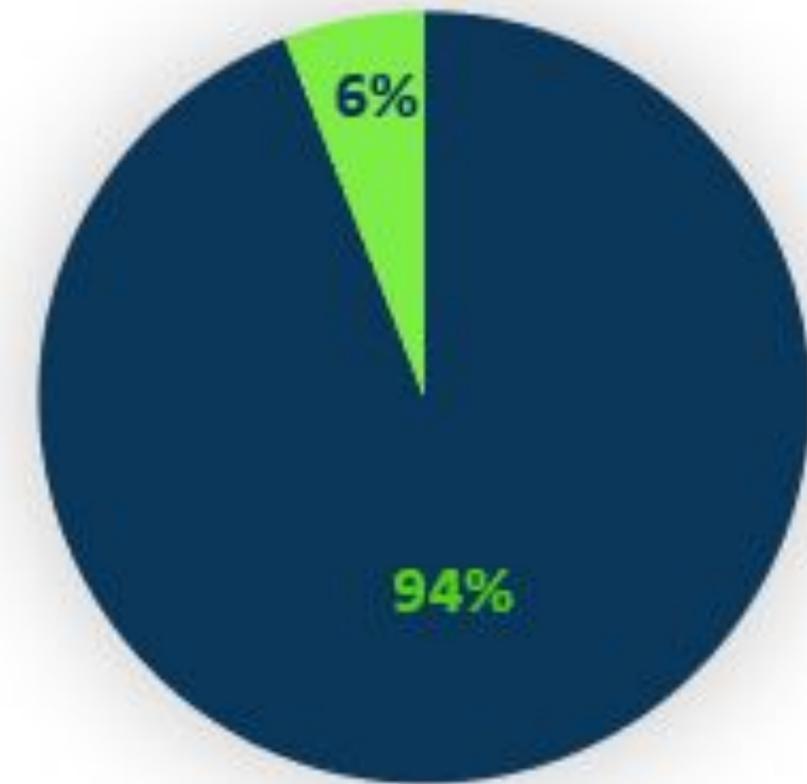
12 Facilities

6 Major Facilities

6 Minimum Security Camps  
(under 4 years)

Total population: 13,716

## Gender



■ Male ■ Female

Visiting

## Visitation - Annually

2018: 10,125 Individuals/35,352 visitors = 199,665 Visits  
 2019: 9,370 individuals/32,493 visitors = 189,346 visits  
 2020: 4,461 individuals/11,533 visitors = 31,526 visits  
 2021: 3,087 individuals/7,720 visitors = 14,355 visits  
 2022: 4,034 individuals/ 10,812 visitors = 37,034 visits



## Extended Family Visits

- \* One of 4 states in the country
- \* Legislation changing - no fee
- \* May visit 24 or 48 hours
- \* Trailer or small manufactured home

### Extended Family Visits (CY 2019)

	Total	Male	Female
Incarcerated Individual Participants	688	642	46
Minor Visitors	200	110	90
Visitors by Prison Population	1,231	1,131	100
<b>Total Visits (EFV)</b>	<b>3,805</b>		

**1,231 approved EFV visitors made 3,805 visits to 688 incarcerated individuals in 2019.**

# Supporting Meaningful Opportunities

- ❖ Family Friendly events
  - Adult Focused
  - Child Focused
- ❖ Relationship and Parenting Programs
- ❖ Lodging Assistance Program
- ❖ KUBI Camp
- ❖ Visitation and Trauma Informed Staff
- ❖ Extended Family Visitation



# Visit Room Play Area - Everything coming together....

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- Committed to continuous improvement and seeking opportunities to strengthen family relationships
- Visit room enhancements - What's that even look like?
- “Keeping Families Intact - Creating Spaces for Families Impacted by Incarceration” thesis by Adrienne Testa.
- Second Chance Grant through Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Extra funds re-allocated to support remodel of child's area in visit rooms.
- Pre-existing relationship with Hands on Children's Museum

# HOCM Partnership - Visit Room Remodel

## Partnership

Olympia Hands on Children's Museum and Washington State DOC

Adrienne Testa visited sites - Visit room design

DOC Team and HoCM Team working collaboratively on children's area of the visit room remodel at:

- › Clallam Bay Corrections Center (Closed Custody)
- › Stafford Creek Corrections Center (Medium Custody)
- › Washington Corrections Center for Women (Women's Prison)





# BENEFITS

## Barriers

Safety and Security

Contraband

Obstruction of camera

Funding

Resources

Disruption during remodel

Strengthen family relationships - reducing the likelihood of child becoming a statistic

Reduces intergenerational incarceration

Helps child succeed in school

Motivate and encourage the incarcerated parent

More likely to succeed upon release



# Play areas change lives-reduces recidivism

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Positive  
Input



Positive  
Outlook



Positive  
OUTPUT

Experiences

~ Zig Ziglar

**YOU BET!!!!!!**

# How to approach/engage a prison near you!

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Have a clear understanding of the impact on children with an incarcerated parent.

Get involved in family engagement activities.

Start small - build the relationship!

Have an open mind - understand that something that appears very simple and safe to you may be denied or restricted.

Be prepared for the naysayers - have your “WHY” responses ready!

Be committed.

# TOGETHER.....We make a difference!



Dawns Taylor, Corrections Manager  
Washington State Department of Corrections

(360) 580-3945

[dmtaylor@doc1.wa.gov](mailto:dmtaylor@doc1.wa.gov)

Thank you for your time!



# Hands On Children's Museum

Olympia WA

- 28,000 square feet indoors, half acre outdoors
- Olympia population 56,000 (2021); Thurston County 298,000 (2021)





# Hands On Children's Museum

Olympia WA

- Annual Visitors 315,000 (2019); 257,500 (2022);
- Approx. 30% served through Free & Reduced Programs





# An evolving relationship..

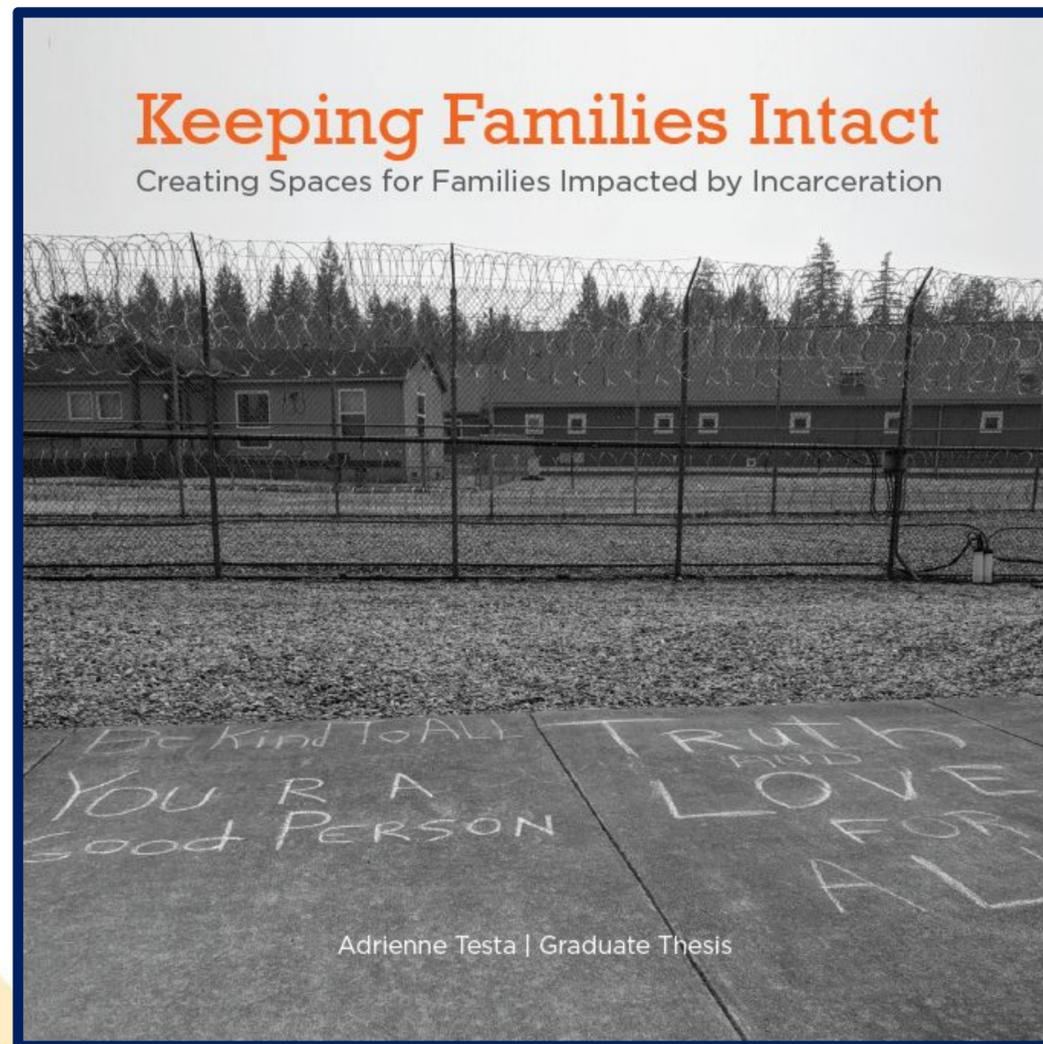
- 2004 (approx.): Re-entry Center (Work release) participants began helping to set up and tear down Sand in the City, an annual street fair sand carving contest
- 2012: Cabinets for the new museum!





# An evolving relationship...

- 2010 First visit to a Family Event (that we had a record of)
- 2012 & 2013: Donations to Hands On from fund drives organized by inmates
- 2016: First discussions of partnering on Visitor Room designs
- Adrienne's Thesis, published Spring 2019





# Family Events...

- 1,531 adults (incarcerated parents and guardians) and 1,340 children served since 2014
- Expanded to up to 7 events per year at two sites (men's prisons) before COVID





# Family Events...

- Event themes included Family Appreciation Day, Spring Fling, Math & Science Event, STEAM Fair, Summer BBQ, Fall/Winter Fest, Father/Child gift exchange (winter holiday event)
- First visit since COVID this Spring: April 22





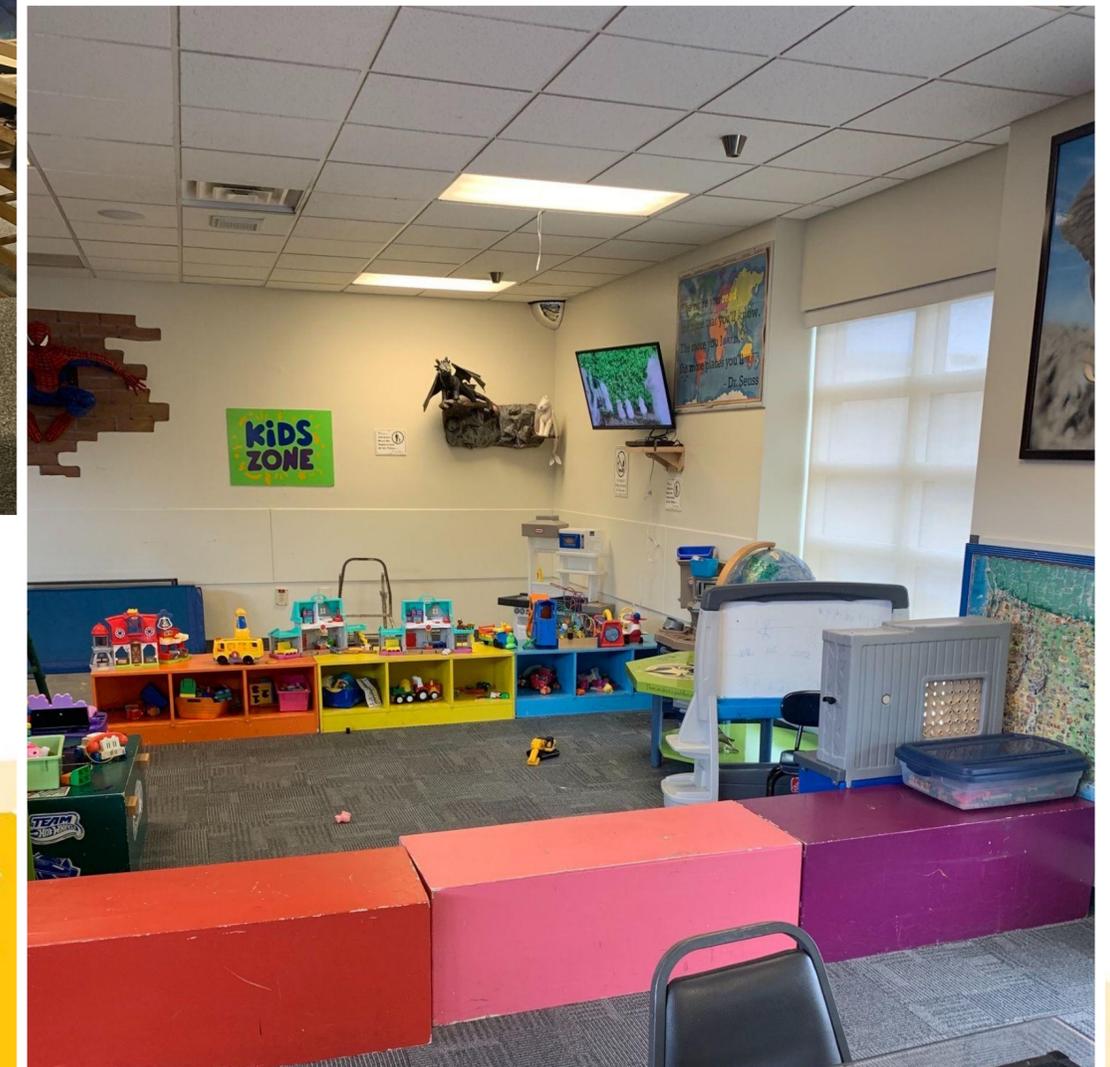
# Kits...

- We started making kits in Spring of 2020 in response to the pandemic. We have now produced more than 20,000 kits, distributed throughout the state of Washington
- New grant from the ArtsWA to provide kits to be used with incarcerated parents and visiting kids, and as take home project for the long drive home.





# Visiting Rooms..



# Visiting Room Experience – current

## Clallam Bay (CBCC)

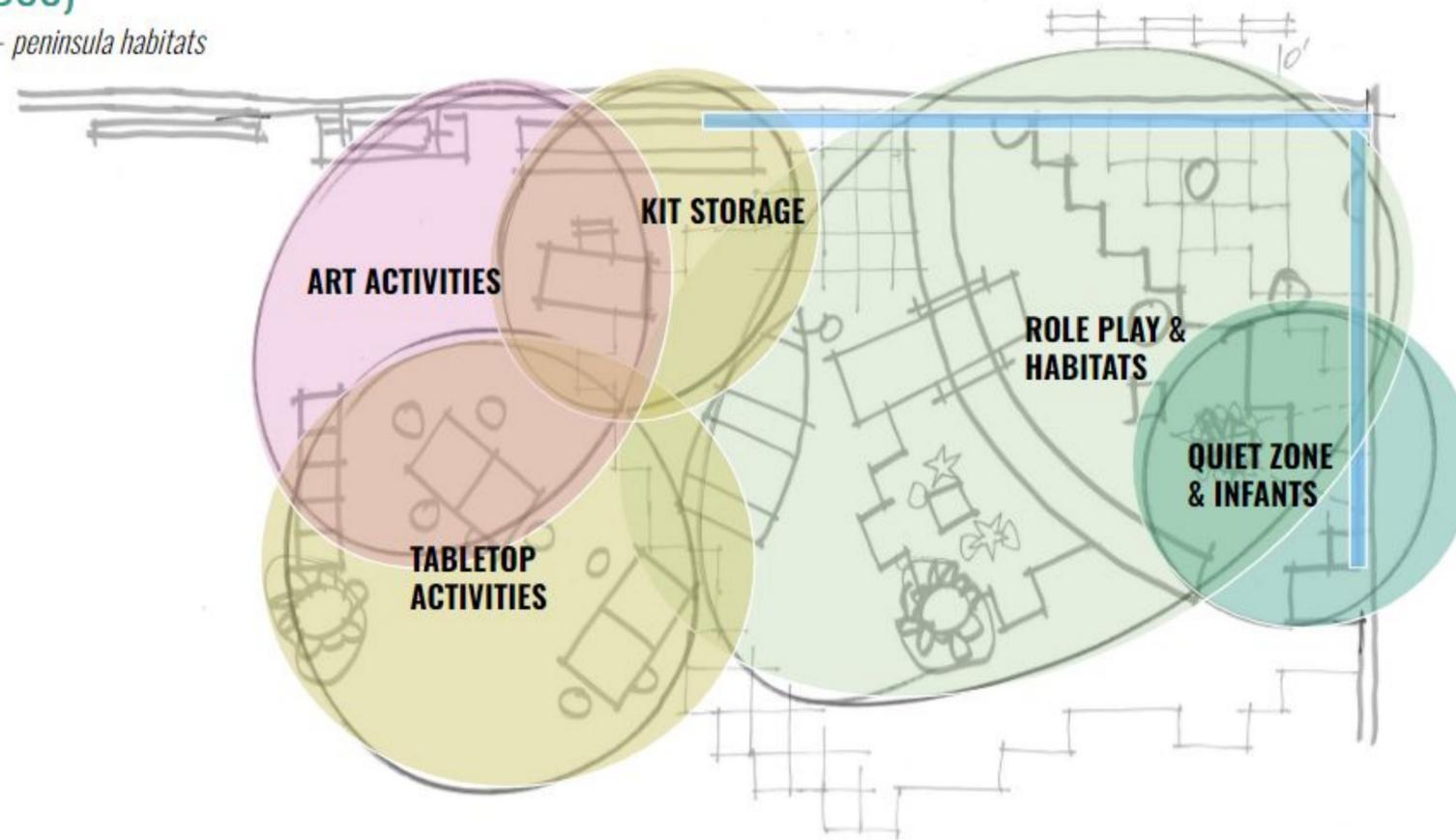
Site Photos



# Visiting Room Experience Goals

## Clallam Bay (CBCC)

The Forest to the Beach - *peninsula habitats*

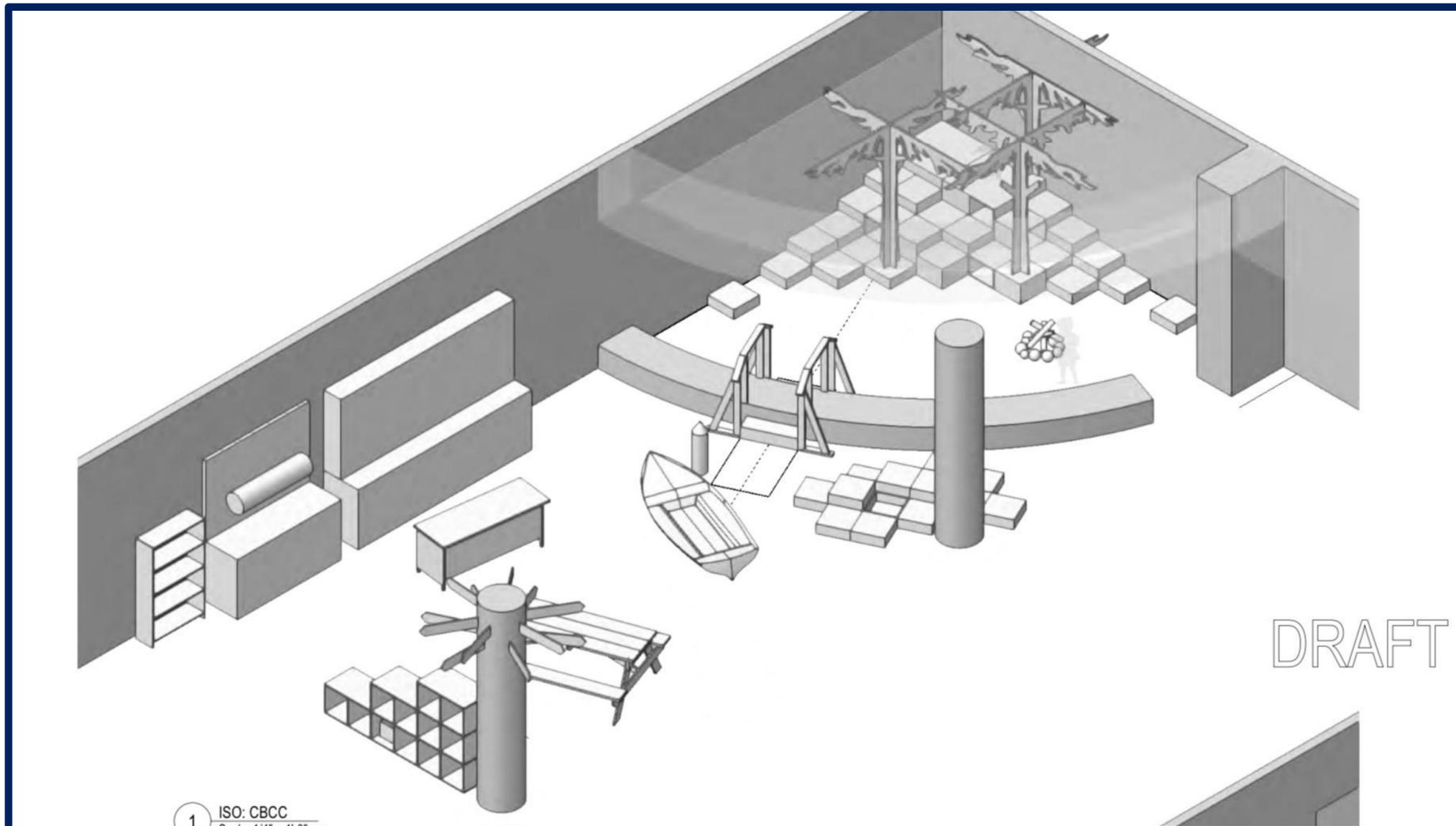


- Ease transitions for families
- Provide “parallel play” opportunities that can transition into “cooperative play.”
- Create hand holds for adults to engage in storytelling, and for creating good new memories.



# Visiting Room Experience Goals

- Connect to the experience kids have as they travel to the site.
- Accommodate a range of visitor ages
- Strengthen Families through Play



Questions?

