Breastfeeding in the Incarcerated Mother:

An Historical Overview and a Case Study
A look at facts and figures:

• In 1980, about 25,000 women were in either prison or jail.

• The **female** prison population in the United States increased 21.6% from 2000 to 2009.

• In 2010, 205,000 women were in either prison or jail.
Incarceration rates and race
2000 vs. 2009

Black women: 30.7%

Latino women: 23.3%

White women: 47.1%
65% of incarcerated women report having minor children at home.

More than 2% of children in the U.S. have a parent in prison.

~25% of those children are younger than 5.
In the U.S., pregnant inmates make up 8% - 10% of the jail/prison population at any given time.

1 in 25 women in state prisons and 1 in 33 in federal prisons are pregnant when admitted.
According to a 2006 report by the Department of Justice, only 44% percent of pregnant women received a medical examination upon arrival.
Illustration: Stokely Baksh
In 21 states, there are laws preventing women from being shackled during labor and delivery.

In California, a “no shackling” law was passed in 2012.

Massachusetts passed a “no shackling” law in May 2014.
The majority of children born to incarcerated mothers are immediately separated from their mothers and placed in foster care or with relatives.
A look at the history –

all the way back to 1901....
Bedford Hills is one of several New York prison facilities, but the only one exclusively for women and has run a nursery program since 1901.
Ten Reasons Why a Mother Should Nurse Her Baby

1. One death out of every five which occur at all ages is that of a baby under 1 year of age, and the greatest number of these deaths are in bottle-fed babies.

2. In the City of New York during 1913, 3037 babies under one year of age died from bowel trouble, and nine out of every ten of these babies were bottle-fed.

3. Out of the 13,781 babies under one year of age who died from all causes in New York City during 1913, one-third died before they were one month old. A large proportion of these babies would have lived if they had been nursed by their mothers.

4. Mother’s milk is the only safe food for a baby during the first six months of its life. If the weather is warm the baby should not be weaned until it is at least nine months old.

5. Cow’s milk or prepared food can never equal breast milk as the proper food for the baby.

6. Breast-fed babies rarely have bowel trouble. Bottle-fed babies rarely escape having it, particularly during warm weather.

7. Babies fed on breast milk show the best development; the teeth will appear at the proper time; the muscles and bones will be stronger, and walking will not be delayed.

8. A breast-fed baby is not so likely to have bronchitis or croup, and if attacked by any disease has a much better chance of living than a bottle-fed baby.

9. Pneumonia in babies is fatal more often in bottle-fed babies than in breast-fed babies.

10. Your baby will have the best chance of living that you can give it if it is breast-fed.

Surely these facts are worth considering before deciding not to nurse your baby.

Issued by order of The Board of Health.

S. S. GOLDWATER, M.D., Commissioner.

EUGENE W. SCHEFFER, Secretary.
What do the prison nursery programs provide?
Does it work?

Jacqueline McDougall and Max, who was born while his mom was at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women in N.Y. She kept Max with her for 18 months until she was released.
One mother’s story

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz_HvU5KUFA
Options:

• prison nurseries or community-based residential parenting programs.

• Dad or family member is caregiver.

• Babies go into foster care.
Breastfeeding and jail or prison time in the news
Danielle Ferreira’s Story

November 2007
Valerie Nabors’ Story
Another story: Mother sentenced to Taos County Adult Detention Center.
Britney Weber’s Story

March 2014
One mom’s breastfeeding story from a “work release program” or Day Resource Center
Tulare County
October - April 2012

Ms. K’s story
**Background:**

Small in ethnically diverse rural farming town California.

Mother enrolled on WIC with her second pregnancy

Arrested while pregnant (3rd trimester) for a violent crime – no previous history of issues with law

Delivered in January 2012 at local hospital

Mother spent 3 days in hospital and returned to jail (she had breastfed baby during this time)

Family refused visitation
Lactation Consultant Referral

Friday call from the jail – request for a pump so that Ms. K would not become engorged. Jail medical staff not knowledgeable about pumping.

Mother pumped 5x/day over the weekend. Breastmilk was saved for the baby in an ice chest with cold packs (no refrigerator).

Family came to pick up the milk daily

Protocols from the County Medical Officer
Lactation Visit on Monday

Was mom comfortable? Concerns?

She wanted to keep pumping – family could continue to come daily to the jail.

Staff was supportive.

Request for an electric pump from WIC
Lactation Consultant Follow-Up

Phone calls to Jail Medical Staff and emails

Pump issues – took new attachments

Infant seen at WIC to enroll – supported continued use of breastmilk – exclusively fed

6 week visit – mom was thinking about weaning
Lactation Support Closure

Ms. K. exclusively pumped for 3 months

18 months later – Ms. K was tried for the crime, jury found not guilty and was released.
County jail now has breastfeeding support guidelines in place.
When a pregnant inmate enters the prison, there are two people, of them broke the law and is serving their time.

The other one is innocent. The innocent one deserves the best start in life.

~ former Sheriff.
References

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Thank you,

Tina Lavy, MS, IBCLC
Unidentified WIC Program in California