



## Incarcerated moms in Calif. could get early release

By Nannette Miranda

**SACRAMENTO, Calif. (KGO)** — Thousands of female inmates could be released from prison early to finish their sentences at home starting next week. More than 4,000 inmates who are mothers can apply, but only if they were convicted of non-violent crimes such as property and drug offenses.

Once a year, kids get to visit their incarcerated moms for Mother's Day. But under California's new Alternative Custody Program, kids could see their moms every day. Low-level, non-violent, non-sex offender female inmates with less than two years left on their sentence will be able to serve the remainder at home.

"Mothers can go back into their own home and care for their children while also obtaining rehabilitative services outside in their community of their last legal residence," said Dana Toyama with the California Corrections Department.

It's not totally a "get out of jail free" card. The women have to wear a GPS ankle bracelet, be enrolled in classes or rehab, and report to parole officers. They could also get job; they'll be thrown back to prison if they commit a new crime.

About half of the state's 9,500 female inmates are eligible. The move will help the state meet a court order to reduce its prison population and maybe reduce the likelihood that kids will end up in a life of crime.

Crime Victims United calls this move "early release" and is worried about the children, who the group says might be better off in foster care.

"We should be greatly outraged," said Harriet Salarno of Crime Victims United. "If they really have loved their children and were good mothers, they would have never gone to prison in the first place."

"It's not early release program," said Toyama. "It's alternative custody."

Suzanne Dorman has had a number of friends incarcerated. She supports home detention.

"It means so much to a mother to be at home with their children despite some of the bad choices they make," said Dorman. However, Dorman can't say definitively whether alternative custody would prevent some of her friends from re-offending. "That's kind of hard to say because it's ultimately the decision of the mom to make choices that are good."

"You don't go to state prison for minor offenses. These are serious and violent offenders," said Salarno. "And now they're going to come out with no rehabilitation?"

Since state policy cannot discriminate, Corrections might also look at extending the program to men who are deemed the primary caregivers for their children.

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