

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:00:01] And if a person is being held accountable for a crime, do we need to punish their entire family? Hi, everybody. Welcome back to the inSocialWork podcast. I'm Peter Sobota and it's good as always to have you on. While parental incarceration gets most of the attention, it's really only a part of a series of losses, separations, trauma and other stressful circumstances experienced by children and families whose parent is involved in the criminal justice system. Think for a minute what it's like to watch your parent being arrested, and that's just a start. On today's podcast, viewer Lindsey discusses her work with the population through the Osborne Association and Family Works Buffalo. She describes what these organizations do, but she's really going to focus on why they do it. Mrs. Lindsay will explain what happens to families with incarcerated members and what they need to move forward and thrive despite the circumstances. She will conclude her conversation by offering alternatives to the current approach and comment on the role that social work might be able to play. Dior Lindsay LMSW is program director for Children and Youth Services at the Osborne Association in Buffalo, New York. We are happy to say she is an alumna of UB School of Social Work. Hi, Dior welcome to Social Work Feeder. So thanks again for doing this. It's great to have you on. And before I ask you about your work and your agency and the people who you serve, if it's okay, I want to talk a little bit about you. Yeah. So if you could. I'm really curious. How did you come to the social work profession, number one? And also, I'm really curious how you came to working with incarcerated people, their children and their families.

Dior Lindsey [00:02:22] Absolutely. Yeah. Let's go back to all the way when I was a kid, when my brother was 14. He was hit by a drunk driver. And. He was in a coma for six months. And, you know, he ended up with a TBI. You know, they told him, you know, you'll never walk again, all this, all that. So he was eligible for different services, and that's how I ended up meeting social workers.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:02:55] Mm hmm.

Dior Lindsey [00:02:57] But as time went on and, you know, thinking about different services that he was eligible for and ineligible for. You know, it kind of just gave me this passion to want to be involved, to try to do. Something that I saw wasn't being done or couldn't be done or, you know, kind of just wanting to get in it, you know, because it they can make a difference. So. It was actually in my last year of undergrad. I was in my violence in the family's course at Canisius, and our professor brought in a social worker and I was like. That's what I want to do. I had no idea it had a name. Interesting. And so then that's when I applied for the UAB School of Social Work and got in. And then the rest is history.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:04:00] The rest is history, Yes. I want to ask you how you came to the work you do now, but we know each other a little bit. We we met a number of years ago, but I have a recollection. Maybe I'm wrong. Correct me if I am, but were you interested in chemical dependency work there for a while, or do I have that completely wrong?

Dior Lindsey [00:04:22] No, you have that right.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:04:25] Okay, good. Yeah.

Dior Lindsey [00:04:27] Interestingly enough, you were one of my professors.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:04:30] I remember that.

Dior Lindsey [00:04:34] And so I graduated from UAB in 2016 with my MSW and right out of school immediately I started doing in-patient substance use work. So I went straight to doing clinical work after, you know, learning about motivational interviewing. But of course, other, you know, interventions as well. And I loved it. Definitely doing that work. Mm hmm. But the opportunity came where? You know, I was doing a couple of workshops out in the community through the Buffalo Association of Black Social Workers, and I was approached. By folks that we're interested in opening up an office of the Osborne Association in Buffalo. So I interviewed or got the position and lo and behold, I am the program coordinator for Osborne's Valley Works Buffalo program, and we open up services in 2019.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:05:33] Yes. Congratulations and thanks for the short story. And, you know, every time I ask somebody that are all of our path for social work or the work that we're doing, always have this kind of fateful or unplanned, it seems, journey there. So thank you for telling that.

Dior Lindsey [00:05:53] Yeah, sure.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:05:54] Let me just ask and maybe this is for myself. So here are the moving parts. As I see there's the Osborne Association. Mm hmm. And then there's the community health care of Buffalo. And then there's family works, Buffalo, and somehow all of these things are distinct but related. Could you walk us through that just so walk me through it. Maybe everybody knows for me, but. You walk us through that, like maybe even start with with Osborne and how that you know who they are, what they do.

Dior Lindsey [00:06:32] Yeah. So. Interestingly enough, I became interested in doing work with kids and families when I was introduced to it through my field placement. My first year field placement course, I was like, you know, I don't know. I kind of want to explore my different options, but nothing with kids and families. And then all I end up doing. All of us to work with the. My late field educator who passed away. Patricia Truesdale. She was doing work with infant five year olds, doing mental health work through Head Start, and that's when I really got exposed to ACES and understanding ACES adverse childhood experiences. And, you know, once again, through all this community work and and just getting more knowledge through my education about trauma and its effects on children and families. You know. Ended up at the Osborne Association. So Osborne. Works with children and families affected by parental incarceration. A loved ones incarceration. And anything from arrest to reentry. So it's been around for almost 100 years.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:07:53] Wow.

Dior Lindsey [00:07:54] Yeah, It's a well-established organization. That's New York City based. Right. So a lot of folks, you know, western New York haven't really heard of it as much as we continue to grow, you know that that continues to increase. But Osborne's been around for a significant period of time doing prison based work and also reentry. So from arrest to reentry, whether or not that's through our Policy Center, O.S. JAG doing elder reentry were children of incarcerated parents were. Whether or not the substance, youth services, prison parenting courses. I mean, Osborne does a lot.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:08:37] Yeah. Comprehensive.

Dior Lindsey [00:08:38] Yeah, very comprehensive. When you think about responding to the criminal legal system and different issues that you could face being in it or being, you know, a family member of someone that's in it. And in that sense, you're in it yourself. Mm hmm. So. You know, Osborne's about like, I want to save 400 to 500 employees in five different offices, four in New York City, Bronx, Brooklyn, Harlem, a number, and then the one in Buffalo that I oversee. So we're pretty small, but we're mighty.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:09:13] Yeah. And the buffalo, the kind of connection somehow is through community. Health care of Buffalo. How does that fit?

Dior Lindsey [00:09:23] Yeah, the community health center of Buffalo. Yeah. So, you know, considering the piece about ACS and public health. To not see the incarceration in public health have a very particular intersection in which we can respond, you know, as an agency or, you know, different initiatives within, you know, different organizations or what have you. The community health center was very, very supportive of recognizing that. Especially for folks that are getting out of correctional facilities or just recognizing that health is so important for everyone or everybody. They opened up their doors to us and we have a space there. So that is where we do our video visiting. That's where. Our office is located on the fourth floor where we do our restorative healing circles. I mean, the community health center, and I'll just put in a plug for them too, because I feel like a lot of people don't necessarily know about, like in terms of like how much we do because they have a physical therapist, they have an onsite lab, their primary care, they have pediatric care, they do they have a dental office, they have a dental suite. They do a lot of difference. There's an onsite pharmacy. There's a lot of stuff in this one center. So it's kind of like a 11 stop shop for health. That's how we ended up there, because thinking about support for children of incarcerated parents, parental incarceration, if I'm not mistaken, is the fourth most common adverse childhood experience. So being able to respond to that in a public health ways.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:11:13] And what a what a great fit to I mean to. Kind of service connections right there, too. And you work for Family Works Buffalo.

Dior Lindsey [00:11:24] Yeah. So that is the title of our program and the name of the Buffalo office.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:11:30] Gotcha. All right, so now we're. Now we got it.

Dior Lindsey [00:11:33] Yeah.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:11:34] And you've already mentioned a little bit, I think. Right. Of the services that you provide. That's what you're alluding to just a few minutes ago, what you do at your place. And I'd be interested and what your take on this would be is that in social work and you know, at around the youth school was social work and really kind of a claim to fame to our profession is this kind of micro, measurable macro focus. You know we just don't focus on one person. And your work seems at least it seems to me, to encompass all three of those. Yeah. And in probably just everything that you do. Is it fair to say that.

Dior Lindsey [00:12:18] Absolutely. Yeah, we do. You know, whether or not that's through, you know, our our youth programing or our video visiting services, whether or not that's there are. Our trainings. You know, I definitely feel that it falls in between all three of the the categories of of intervention.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:12:43] Let's talk about the people and the families and the kids that you work with. And, you know, I am going to defer to you by far as the expertise here. But in the limited experience that I have with your target populations, it does seem that when an individual. Is punished, if you will, for a crime. We seem to be comfortable with punishing. Their whole family.

Dior Lindsey [00:13:20] Yeah. Yeah. It happens a lot. It happens in the work that I see. Absolutely. Know our video visiting program. Has been around for over a decade. I mean, it really skyrocketed in terms of use, you know, during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:13:42] Yeah.

Dior Lindsey [00:13:43] And, you know, we were the only resource for families want a shut down happened and in-person visits weren't happening at correctional facilities. So I'm freaking out not knowing what was going on with their loved ones and. You know, because like I said, our office opened up in 2019. In September, actually. So, you know, as we really started to get the ball rolling, the shutdown happened. So isolation on top of already being significantly isolated within a correctional facility was a lot for families to deal with, especially when contact can be challenging. So, yeah. And that's just speaking of how COVID significantly affected the families, but. You know, from what I've seen, you know, like even going into a facility can be challenging. And. You know, depending on what type of visit you get, whether or not there might be a trailer visit where you're able to be with your family in a different kind of setting versus, you know, whether or not you're in a jail, correctional facility and you're not really able to like, touch your family or hug your kids in a way, you know, kids only understand like my parents not with me. Right. And I can't touch them and I don't know why. So we're able to understand it as adults and put ourselves in the shoes of kids to be able to understand that perspective a little bit more of how difficult and challenging it can be for kids to be in that kind of situation and having a parent that's incarcerated. So like, the process of going in a facility itself can be very, very challenging or difficult for kids to cope with. The process after they're coming with me or like, even, like, after, you know. So say, for instance, you know, a parent goes in with a six year old, they come out with a 16 year old, completely different developmental stages and different responses and parenting and socialization know for the for the entire family. Incarceration can have many different effects on families, which is why, you know, definitely the families last up to for so many different ways. Yeah.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:16:26] And the reason I said it the way I did is because it says I think a lot about us as a society, because the conversation is often focused on the person who's incarcerated. Like somehow people who are incarcerated are not family members, parents or members of families themselves. Right. And we we know a little bit about families. We know that, you know, their families are places of intense emotional attachment. We don't always it's not always happy, but it's certainly there. People are attached tremendous loyalty, shared histories over time. And when you remove one person. I think everybody trembles. Everybody shakes. A little bit.

Dior Lindsey [00:17:17] Yeah, Especially if that person was the breadwinner you're talking about if they get financial instability for a family.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:17:24] When it comes to having a parent or guardian or a caregiver who is incarcerated. What happens to kids? Yeah. I mean, I think about I mean, before you get going, you know where my main when I mean kids often see their parent. Arrested.

Dior Lindsey [00:17:48] Yeah. Yeah. I'm actually glad that you brought that up, so. We just finished. Are safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents Project with the Buffalo Police Department.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:18:03] Hmm.

Dior Lindsey [00:18:05] That was a, I want to say, about two year long project in which we were working on safeguarding kids ways in which we can safeguard kids to try to decrease the trauma that they can experience. Present or not for a parent's arrest. So yeah. Statewide, there are a couple of different police agencies that have already been trained, so I'll kind of get to that. But. So Albany Police Department was trained first and then NYPD. Had to be trained on safeguarding kids after a law that was put in place. And then at that same time, Buffalo police was gearing up to do their training, which we facilitated in partnership with the UAB Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care. So it's definitely a wonderful project. Over 75% of the Buffalo Police Department was trained on how to safeguard kids. But I had those conversations. And. You know, some different ways in which they can be more responsive.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:19:17] And time for interrupting. Can I put you on the spot a little bit here?

Dior Lindsey [00:19:21] Sure.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:19:23] If you feel comfortable talking about it. I'm curious how when you give, for example, law enforcement folks that kind of training and feedback and, you know, you kind of give them a little bit, you probably don't call it trauma informed, but maybe you do. But when you give them that knowledge. Are they responsive? Do you think that they get it?

Dior Lindsey [00:19:47] Well, I think you need to get on from a really good job of being able to. You know, put it in really easy terms and explanations where anybody of any level can be really responsive to and understand the. But one important thing. That was a part of the project is that. We had a coach will have. He's still one of our co trainers because we're still training police officers. Now, we just finished Cheektowaga a couple of weeks ago. So. We have a police trainer with us to kind of be able to bridge that gap, to kind of understand like, well, if you're coming from this perspective, you could do X, Y, Z, A, B, and C from somebody that has actually done it. So I think that definitely increases ways in which folks that are doing this work day to day can digest it a little bit better. So I mean, BPT has been a wonderful partner in regards to kind of being able to bridge that gap. And in terms of what can we put in that essential and useful and also based off of the model policy. So actually they also put in a policy to. And it's based off of the International Association of Chiefs of Police model policy on Safeguarding kit. So. Any department that decides to do it. The model policy is just the essential framework in which you can use it to apply to whatever place decides to use it. And yeah, it's been a it's a wonderful project. You know, one of the pieces of the training is like if you're an officer and you arrest somebody during the day, during regular school hours, did you ask whether or not they

were a parent and then that kid could be coming home to a completely empty house of not having a caregiver. So then they're put into a very precarious situation. So like asking about children at multiple point is one of the things that we.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:22:08] Acknowledging they exist.

Dior Lindsey [00:22:09] Yeah, yeah, yeah. That people can be parents.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:22:14] Mm.

Dior Lindsey [00:22:15] But also just recognizing. That it can be really difficult. Like all of them, you know, we're able to really take in the information. And some of them were just saying, like, this is what I do every day. This is nothing new. But yeah, I mean, it can be very traumatic for kids to be able to witness that.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:22:40] Well, I mean, that was my first thought. I mean, and thank you for tolerating that little segway. But I mean, children have different levels of innate resiliency and develop resiliency. I mean, I understand that, but I can't imagine that maybe what you that what you don't see with with some of the children who you meet are. Behavioral problems. I've got to think I didn't do the research, unfortunately, before I asked this question. But I also wonder, does it contribute to health problems? And any thoughts? I don't know. I'm kind of just riffing there. But what are your thoughts?

Dior Lindsey [00:23:26] No, no, you're you're spot on. You know, it all ties to the ACE study, Right? And when you think about the A study in recognizing parental incarceration is a we think about. Ways in which any kid that has been exposed for childhood experiences might respond. So we have a national resource center at Rutgers University. And. And analyst. ESTRIN You know, one of her quotes that we always talk about because she also does work for children of incarcerated parents. He says, shouldn't incarcerate parents or like some children. Like all children and like no children. So we no bonding to kids, you know, that have experienced trauma. You know, it's kind of like the same basic stuff you see for any kids. They have experienced trauma, average childhood experiences. Right. So, you know, behavioral problems or. Challenges with sleeping, you know, like whatever the case may be for them, for for folks that are familiar with that, we're going to say. But. In terms of they're like some children or like no children at all. Right. Comparatively. Children of incarcerated parents have to deal with a lot of stigma, especially if the case, for instance, is highly publicized as if criminality is contagious. So kids can lose out on their their social network if. The kids are being kept away from from their peers because of what happened. So stigma is huge for children of incarcerated parents. And that. Yeah, for sure. I mean, like short term or long term impacts, you know, they're very, very ingrained in the study work.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:25:31] Yeah. It also makes me think how important it would be for schools. Actually, I just call it schools and school districts. The whole, the whole thing need to be sensitive to the needs of of not only kids who have experienced trauma, but certainly this form of trauma.

Dior Lindsey [00:25:51] And I'm trying. Yeah, well, I'm trying to get to school.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:25:57] Well, I need even to think about it. A young, you know, a young person who is maybe behaving in ways that schools don't like. You know, and and that kid gets labeled as problematic rather than this is their best attempt to cope with

what's happening to them and and is actually. Is is something that helps them. Wild drives personnel of schools crazy and mislabel their behavior to do work with schools. Do you? I mean, you kind of laughed and said, you're trying. Does part of your program include working with schools and even health care providers?

Dior Lindsey [00:26:40] Yeah, so we've done since we opened, we've done a lot of different trainings with different agencies and actually have a training schedule for the fall with some clinical staff within the Buffalo Public Schools, which is really exciting.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:26:58] Mm hmm.

Dior Lindsey [00:26:59] But yeah, I mean, we've trained the the eighth Judicial District. We've trained some say yes, we've trained some mental health providers in different. You know, behavioral health agencies. So we we love trainings. They're super. Effective ways of being able to get the point across about being responsive without continuing to. Maintain the stigma that they're already struggling with, I guess, or the effects of the stigma.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:27:34] Yeah.

Dior Lindsey [00:27:35] I once did a training for another local nonprofit and one of the staff came up to me and she said, I didn't realize that I was contributing to the stigma. Mhm. With the child that I was working with because I kept saying that their dad was a criminal. Mm hmm. And so when you, you know, you put yourself in the shoes of the kids and you hear like, oh, they keep calling my dad a criminal, they're a criminal. They're criminals that make me have criminal. Like, what does that mean for me? How do I respond? You know, like thinking my kids. You know what? What they know is what they know and whatever else, you know, they kind of make up. So it can be. But really, really challenging, for instance. So we have a policy center. And like I was saying, we have the New York to the fore tradition of first appearance as a part of Osborne and. Our director. For that initiative. She always likes to share the story during. Her trainings as well, because we both do trainings. But she was working in the New York City education system and. There was this kid that kept getting hurt on the playground day by day. There was this school psychologist that she was working with. So the school psychologist explains, like this kid keeps getting hurt on the playground, like none of the school staff know what's going on. They get the school psychologist involved. So the school psychologist calls home and says, Hey, they just got me involved. I was just told this kid just keeps getting hurt on the playground. What's going on? So come to find out. The kid keeps getting hurt on the playground. For one particular reason. So what the family told the school psychologist was well. Mom's locked up. But we didn't tell the kid mom was locked up because, you know, they didn't know how to have that age appropriate conversation. So what they told the kid was Mom's sick, she's at the hospital, is going to be gone for a while, and we don't know how long. So everybody eventually figures out that the kid keeps getting hurt for a chance to go to the hospital.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:29:57] So best way to get out of the hospital, how.

Dior Lindsey [00:30:00] To get it to go see mom. Right. So thinking as adults, right, it doesn't make sense. But as a kid, they just know that they just wanted to see Mom.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:30:07] Yeah.

Dior Lindsey [00:30:09] You know, that's kind of the some of the stuff that. You know, we encounter or try to try to work through. When it comes to being effective using age appropriate truth rather than well-intended deception. That's some of the nice work that we really try to focus on. We think about incarceration. Actually, Osborne helped to. To create the Muppet on Sesame Street with an incarcerated parent. So I highly recommend folks check that out.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:30:42] So could I just switch gears a tiny bit?

Dior Lindsey [00:30:45] Yeah, sure.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:30:46] Because I'm also we've been talking about kids and children. But what? What are the unique needs of moms and dads or partners?

Dior Lindsey [00:30:58] Yeah.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:31:00] When either of their loved one is incarcerated. I mean, these are adults.

Dior Lindsey [00:31:08] Yeah. Actually, Osborne has a a parenting course called Family Work. Mm hmm. That one is a prison based. Parenting program for dads. And they also have family ties, which is a. Prison based parenting course for moms. Specifically, I'll be in correctional facility. So they fly all the kids out for a full day visit so that all the kids can see their mom graduate.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:31:45] Wow.

Dior Lindsey [00:31:46] Yeah. So, you know, I think like one of the most effective ways that Osborn does does this work for adults is through that education. And that that I'm just like speaking in regards to correctional facilities or correctional facility based. Parenting stuff. But I mean, with with the adults can be challenging. We we have a lot of literature and helpful information for caregivers. Mm hmm. We we also refer to different kinship navigation services. In New York City, there's a fatherhood initiative, which is for, you know, fathers or father figures. You know, to be able to effectively respond to the situation that they're in, whether or not that's through, you know. A loved one's current incarceration or. Reentry, because that's a whole thing in itself. Now you've got somebody that's home and you got to respond to that because, I mean.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:33:00] Even the story that you just told a few minutes ago fits perfectly with this conversation. Interest.

Dior Lindsey [00:33:06] Yes. We have a partnership with Voice Buffalo, and it's really started through our safeguarding work. And. They lead restorative healing circles for children and families affected by aloneness, incarceration, parental incarceration and loved ones arrest. It really started out with arrests and then it kind of just blossomed into this other thing where if you've been affected by a loved one's arrest or you're eligible for. That that service. So. So we have I mean, it's a it's a it's a family group. But it we really we just mostly have adults on a regular basis. They come in and they share and they talk about the ways in which a loved one's arrest and incarceration has affected them. But yes, so as one has been doing couples work. Correctional based. It's not a group, but it's a curriculum is what I'm trying to say.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:34:16] Maybe psycho educational a bit.

Dior Lindsey [00:34:19] Yeah, but I don't know if it's like a formalized program. I haven't heard anything about it recently, so.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:34:27] Well, you know, this may I'm certainly interrupting, but I mean, this makes perfect sense to me because, you know, a family doesn't stop being a family because one of their members are incarcerated.

Dior Lindsey [00:34:38] Absolutely.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:34:39] And you you know, you've been very good at helping us understand what happens to families. But we also kind of know, you know, to maybe to be guilty of maybe over generalizing is we know what helps families do well over time. Right. There's been a lot of research about that. We know that families do well over time, communicate effectively. You know, they express their emotions. We are with each other. They they have resilient belief systems. You know, they are they have a spiritual belief that allows them or religious that allows them to kind of make meaning of of awful things that happened. And we know that how families are organized and how they're structured and what their access to all of those things, you would think and you've been talking about that, how you try to foster that while people are being affected by the incarceration in many ways, setting them up for success, I mean, makes perfect sense, even more so now. If you allow me to draw to pull the lens out even a little bit further, because I you know, we've actually, you know, we've kind of touched on micro and clearly. Manzo without without question but I think it's. I'm not sure it's even realistic to have this conversation without acknowledging. The cold, hard reality that we that we know that people who are poor or who are racial minorities are disproportionately overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

Dior Lindsey [00:36:23] Yeah.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:36:24] That's unfair enough. It's not like we need any more. But given that when. I just wonder what you see. I mean, you've already talked about trauma. But I've got to think there's an element of racial trauma here that gets activated.

Dior Lindsey [00:36:48] Yeah.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:36:50] And also intergenerational. And children and family. So I'm just going to put that right there. And if you're willing or want to comment on that. Go ahead.

Dior Lindsey [00:37:06] Yeah. Yeah. So. You know, Osborne, like I said, is really big. On doing the work and being responsive to. You know, whatever could exist in the criminal legal system. So, like, even our mission, you know, says that. We challenge systems rooted in racism, in retribution. So when we think about, you know, the fact that historically, you know, overpolicing in communities of color and just different compounding factors on top of all that redlining and this all this all of these different things that history tells us that particularly affects folks of color, that we. Many folks of color to be incarcerated. You know, I definitely see that day to day. Most of the kids in our youth groups are kids of color. Most of the folks that do video visiting with us are folks of color. So, you know, to to not call it out in terms of the. Significant effect. I would be remiss or anybody else would be to to to not recognize that that. A component because it definitely, definitely is so. Being able to

effectively offer support in in that area in terms of being effectively responsive with the services that we offer. I definitely think that having a very particular focus in terms of providing more support for communities of color is essential. Yeah, that's definitely what I see. And. Yeah, this is unfortunate.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:39:12] It's just layers and layers and layers of trauma and oppression that gets expressed in these in these formal systems. And we seem to be very fond, you know, that we respond by, you know, removing people from our midst and the midst of their family and and also separate them from the people who care about them the most. And somehow we think that's helpful. Yeah. In the end. So it doesn't seem like it's in anyone's best interest, quite frankly.

Dior Lindsey [00:39:49] And.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:39:50] Not even the broader society is. But.

Dior Lindsey [00:39:54] Yeah, There's that.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:39:56] Yeah. I'm sorry. Your. Your. Go ahead. I spoke over there. Go ahead.

Dior Lindsey [00:40:01] No, I was just saying there's so much to that, because, you know, when you. When you talk about. Being removed as if that's the answer in a punitive sense. And that's kind of what we were talking about earlier, about like the families that are incarcerated to our closest female maximum facility from Buffalo is six and a half hours away. So imagine, like the time, the energy, the finances that goes into even just trying to see a loved one in person is exhausting. In, actually.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:40:40] And you got to have the resources to do that. I mean, even if you could, I mean, it's it's insane.

Dior Lindsey [00:40:46] Calls are expensive. Because you got to pay. Right. And then there are apps that you can use that's also payment based. So like. You got to have money to be able to even stay in touch with loved ones and then to also give them money so they're able to, you know, manage to be a significant burden. And like, even. There was a law that was put in place the proximity bill. So the proximity is a thing now where if you have a. Young child's. And you're incarcerated. It's now a law that you have to be placed at the correctional facility that's close to the child within your security. The closest Mac's the closest medium. But there's only three women's facilities in the state, so it doesn't really do much for for moms.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:41:46] But yeah, I was going to say it sounds well-intended, but accessibility, I know, is where the devil is in the details, right? It makes everybody feel good that we've done something. And when really there are many, many areas still so dire. I'm wondering if I could give you the magic wand here. I know that. Osborn And in your agency also talk, you know, you're interested in the big picture and legislation and policy. I think most. I don't know. I could be getting in trouble here, but most thoughtful people would admit that what we do now is probably not terribly helpful in the end in terms of how we respond as a society to people who we deem, you know, criminal and choose to incarcerate. What? If you have the magic wand in your hand there. What would you change? What are the alternatives to the way we do things now in the big picture? Because right now, in many ways, you responding to the flaws in the system that we have.

I'm curious if you could wave a magic wand over anything. In the bigger picture, what would you change?

Dior Lindsey [00:43:05] Yeah. I mean, I would just go with services. More services, more preventative services, more responsive services, you know, being more proactive rather than reactive. I mean, like even Osborne has like core advocacy services where, like they can like, go into court to try to, like, decrease, you know, any time that somebody can get, you know, or, you know, just making sure that they have all of their needs met. You know, whether or not that might be, you know, substance abuse related or whatever the case may be, just being able to offer, you know, more support. And even that is more so responsive, you know, as much as we could possibly get in that. But magic wand kind of sends. More services. I mean, that's kind of why I love social work. Because I think it's a way in which we can see different ways of being a change agent, whether or not from a micro perspective, MSO perspective or a macro perspective and making policy changes or whatever the case may be. Yeah, I'm just advocating for more. I'm not advocating for burnout. I'm advocating for more folks to be able to kind of join in, to be more responsive in whatever. The case may be whether or not that's through housing or food or. I mean, the list can go on in terms of me. Well, the more responsive, for sure.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:44:58] It's great to listen to you say these things. And I you know, I hope, you know, a number of folks who listen to our podcast are our students who are in programs, you know, A.W. and doctoral programs. And. My you know, when when you and I met years ago, I recall you as being a fairly you know, your interest seemed to be in the clinical realms. And here a number of years later, you are seeing the big picture in a way that, you know, I don't think we could ever teach anybody about. I think you you've just you've just got it in your comments about social work and you you kind of almost got ahead of me there. Here. So.

Dior Lindsey [00:45:40] Oh, sorry.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:45:41] No, no, that's no, it's fine, because it's something I wanted to ask you about or ask you to say a little bit more about. Especially we're getting a little on time here. Given the work that you do and the population that you serve, what do you think is the unique role that social work as a profession and and social workers who possess a certain kind of skill set? What what role can social work play?

Dior Lindsey [00:46:13] I think social work plays a huge role or can play a huge role. And I'm just using Osborne as a model, of course, but it doesn't. This also applies to Erie County. Services through the assigned counsel program. A lot of the folks are social workers that are doing a lot of this work. And I mean, I'm trying to find a way to word this, but. You know, I definitely think and I don't regret my route at all in terms of developing my clinical skills because.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:46:51] They're always handy.

Dior Lindsey [00:46:52] They're always handed, no matter where you are, you're always going to use them. You're always going to need them. And I mean, even though I'm doing this work, I still use them all the time. I think social workers have a very unique in particular perspective in terms of response in ways that a lot of other professional backgrounds don't necessarily have or encompass. I think it's a very well-rounded. Perspective that allows you to think about multiple factors in terms of ways in which to respond. So I'm a I'm a

huge social work advocate. Like folks tell me all the time, like, you're such a social worker. And I'm like, thank you.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:47:44] That's right. That's the right answer.

Dior Lindsey [00:47:46] Sure. Yes, I am. I mean, when you think about like social work and housing in in courts in the in the criminal legal system and just many different facets, I think it prepares you. For a lot of the stuff that you encounter in a very particular way. And like, even when I was, you know, a newbie, like I kept hearing like social workers or change agents and I'm like, okay. Like, what do I like? What do I do with that? And like, now I'm in my career and I'm like, Oh, yeah, yeah. Because there are so many different ways in which we can create change that exists outside of the clinical space that a lot of us are accustomed to being in, which I'm all for it. Yeah, I mean, I loved it, but. I knew. I knew deep down in my heart that the community work in and doing this work. Somewhat somehow was kind of what was in my heart. So, yeah.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:48:59] Very quickly an administrative level where I think, you know, is as distasteful as that can be sometimes. That's where that's the room where it happens and that's where decisions get made. So yeah, I couldn't agree more. You know, we're running out of time, so I wondered if there's something that you would like to say or a last word you'd like to get in before we wave goodbye to each other?

Dior Lindsey [00:49:27] Yeah. We offer video visiting in 11 different New York state correctional facilities and hope to continue to expand. But we are in Green Grove when Governor Bear Hill. Albion Clinton. Bedford Taconic. Wyoming, Collins and Adirondack.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:49:53] Whoa. So for listeners, by the way, who aren't familiar with New York State. New York State is actually quite large, almost 500 miles end to end. And and those places are all over that state. Yeah. Sorry. Go ahead.

Dior Lindsey [00:50:08] Yeah. And our visits are completely free, so they're at no cost to anyone. And, you know, we just talked about how cost can be significant for both. But our services are free. And we have plenty of toys and books and games. So that kind of helps to to really enrich in the visiting experience. Obviously, it's not meant to replace anything in-person, but it is a nice opportunity for folks. And we also have youth groups. Kids that have that shared experience with one another of having a parent or an immediate family member that's currently incarcerated or recently released. We offer that support to the kids we meet once a week. They have fun. Whether or not that's doing custom sneakers or taking a trip or I mean, we just took the kids to Detroit like a couple months ago. Like that was like a huge thing. Whether or not they're doing candle make, they're always doing something. I have a really awesome family services specialist that schedules all this really cool stuff for them. And in the fall, we're starting our group for older kids. So New York City has would do this stuff for, I want to say, like maybe two decades now. Maybe. So we're just bringing this stuff locally, which is super exciting. So we'll be able to do stuff for kids 12 to 15. And then the fall will be starting for kids 15 to 19. Our services are for those that, you know, feel that this is for them. I've had kids only do one visit. And that was just to, you know, say, Dad, I graduated like I did something that you wanted me to do that you didn't do. Here's my graduation side. Sometimes that's some of the pushback and the stigma, you know, that we get of, Oh, we don't need that. I'm like, great. With statistically one out of two adults have somebody, you know, related to them that has been incarcerated. So it's like. To be able to be effectively responsive to that is such a need. And it's like if it

doesn't, you know, if you don't need it, great. But you could tell somebody that, you know, that if they do that, we're here.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:52:48] Dear. Thank you so much. Not only for being willing to do this and to catch up, but taken the time. To talk about yourself and your work. Really grateful. Thank you.

Dior Lindsey [00:53:04] Thanks, Peter. Thanks for having me. Thanks, everybody, for listening.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:53:08] Thanks again to the for the In Social Work podcast family is Steve Sturman, our media and production director, our graduate production assistant and guest coordinator, Nick Desmet. Say hi, Nick.

Dior Lindsey [00:53:21] Everyone.

Prof. Peter Sobota [00:53:23] And I'm Peter Simona. Thanks again for joining us. And as always, feel free to tell us what you think and comment on specific episodes on our social media and site. We're going to take joy off to work on some upcoming episodes, and we'll see you again in August with a new one. See you next time, everybody.