"You can't raise no man without a male figure around to look up to," said Kalynn Dorsey who is trying to do just that. She's living with her two sons in the shelter at Water Street Ministries. She's got a baby on the way. Her sons' father is in Delaware County Prison and for the last six months, it's been somewhat of a nightmare for the family - no money, no car, no job and a baby about to arrive any minute. Nationwide, Pew Charitable Trust's research shows 1 in every 28 children had a parent in jail or prison in 2010. Twenty years ago it was 1 in 125. More than half of incarcerated fathers were the primary breadwinners before they were in jail, pushing many of their families into abject poverty because of their incarceration, Pew research reported. "They're (Water Street) going to give me some time. I'm just trying to have the baby, heal up as fast as I can and get some work," she said. Dorsey's looking for any work to support her family - industrial, assembly, a temp agency - she's been filling out applications each day. But some things, money just can't buy. Like a dad "They just miss him," Dorsey said. "You don't have too much to write about in a school report about your family. That can be rough. They will just be happy when the time is over so they can get to know their dad again." Dorsey wishes there was a mentor for her sons and some activities at night for the kids and moms in her same situation. "There's a lot of need there for the caregiver on the outside," said Mary Glazier, a professor at Millersville University who has been involved for two years in the push for a county-wide advocate for the children of incarcerated parents. Glazier said sometimes school counselors only become aware that a parent is incarcerated and a child has a different caregiver when the child starts acting out in school.
“And research shows that the more a person who is incarcerated stays connected to his or her family, the more likely they are to get back on track when they come out,” said Glazier, who serves as the director of public scholarship and social change at Millersville. Students from the university have been polling prisoners in Lancaster County Prison about their families, specifically their children, in order to compile some data for ongoing research, Glazier said.