

A VISIT TO THE BIG HOUSE
by Oliver Butterworth
Reviewed by Jayne Smith, M.Ed.
Gwinnett County Schools

Oliver Butterworth was inspired to write this book when working with a family visitation program for a Connecticut prison. Butterworth relates gently but matter-of-factly the concerns, fears, and questions children of elementary school age often have before visiting a family member in prison. Mom, Rose, and Willie are going to visit the children's father in prison for the first time. It has been several weeks since the children have seen their father. From the uneasy anticipation of the visit, uncertainties of what will be seen, said, and heard, to the realistic family conversation with Dad, Butterworth portrays a family recognizing tough times ahead and the determination to make the best of it.

It has been my experience that children relate to the questions, concerns, and attitudes of the children and adults presented in the book. Its content is very relative to the child trying to understand and cope with this difficult issue. The descriptions of what a prison might look like and what prison procedures might be like for visitors are effective in developing discussion and insight of the fears and feelings of children and their parents. I have been grateful it is available for me and my young friends as a resource.