From Incarceration to Reentry

A Look at Trends, Gaps, and Opportunities in Correctional Education and Training

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Context and Introduction

With record levels of men and women incarcerated—totalling 2.2 million—the United States places more people in prison at a higher rate than any other developed nation.[1] That total also represents 20 percent of the world's prison population, which is disproportionately high considering that the U.S. makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population.[2] For low-income communities, the disparities are even more alarming. In 2014, the median annual income for people prior to incarceration was less than $20,000.[3] Furthermore, Blacks and Latinos, who are disproportionately impacted by poverty, also have the highest rates of imprisonment and account for more than half of all prisoners.[4] However, the context surrounding this crisis tells a much larger story, which is partly rooted in educational inequities. More than two-thirds of state prison inmates do not have a high school diploma.[5]

The roots of these disparities are complex. Pipelines to prison have historically been concentrated in low-income communities of color. From an early age, many youth in these spatially segregated communities experience economic and environmental injustices, underfunded and under-resourced schools, harsh school discipline policies, and exposure to crime and violence in ways that create diminished opportunities for economic and educational mobility.[6] These realities are a deeper reflection of historic and present injustices ingrained in larger systems of governance. The criminal justice system often reinforces these embedded structures of inequality. Over-criminalization, implicit bias, harsh sentencing policies, and judicial and prosecutorial discretion disproportionately affect Black and Latino communities, having directly shaped the system of mass incarceration we know today.[7] Together, these disparities create conditions of enhanced susceptibility to criminal justice system involvement for people of color that can be characterized as targeted and concentrated more than anything else.

Although mass incarceration does not solely affect communities of color, they experience inequitable impacts from its pervasively harsh outcomes. Similarly, people of color suffer disproportionately from the collateral consequences imposed on individuals with a criminal record who return to society after serving their time in prison.[8] Collateral and systemic barriers, such as disenfranchisement, legalized discrimination in housing and public benefits access, and biases in hiring, along with impediments to educational opportunities, make it especially difficult for returning citizens to gain employment, stability, and an overall fair chance upon reentry.[9] These diminished economic opportunities contribute to the cycle of recidivism, resulting in three-quarters of returning citizens re-offending within five years.[10]

Taking this entire context into account, this report examines correctional education, as it is a critical aspect of the complex mass incarceration system that can make a real difference in reversing this vicious cycle. While correctional education and training is by no means a panacea for the grave injustices of this system, it can play an important role in improving the educational and employment trajectories of the returning citizens who face greatly restricted opportunities to participate in our economic mainstream.While the quality and accessibility of correctional education and training opportunities vary largely across states, as does the consistency of accessible and well-articulated education and training opportunities for returning citizens upon release, there is room for significant innovation and improvement. Doing so will require reforms across multiple systems to address these disparities. With that in mind, we focus on the state of correctional education funding streams, program offerings, and the continuum of education and training opportunities upon release.

Why correctional education

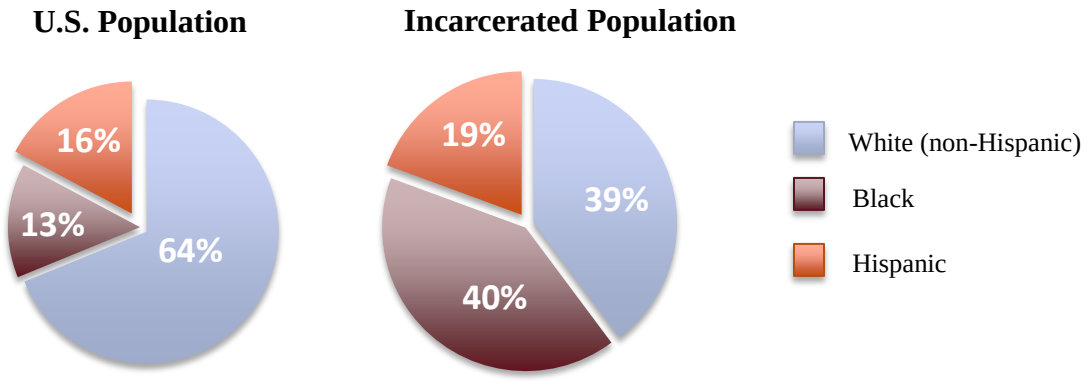
The Bureau of Justice Statistics at the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that at least 95 percent of all state prisoners will be released at some point.[11] After the rapid increase in the number of people sentenced to prison over the past 30 years, today more than 650,000 formerly incarcerated individuals rejoin society every year, the vast majority of whom were state prisoners.[12] However, studies have shown that about two-thirds of returning citizens are rearrested within three years of release, and three-quarters of them are rearrested within five years.[13] These high rates of recidivism are a major factor in the cycle of mass incarceration, and reducing recidivism can be an immediate benefit of improved corrections education and reentry supports.

Substantial research has shown that access to education and training services while incarcerated can significantly reduce recidivism. A recent meta-analysis of correctional education programs found that inmates who participate in such programs on average had 43 percent lower odds of being convicted of a crime and returning to prison. This finding stood even when taking into account “selection bias, whereby inmates who elect to participate in educational programs may differ in unmeasured ways from those who elect not to participate in those programs.”[14] Investing in robust correctional education and training opportunities can therefore be a key part of a comprehensive strategy to end the cycle of incarceration. Because training cannot create job opportunities on its own, improvements to correctional education should be combined with efforts to smooth the path to reentry through job creation initiatives, improve connections among the services individuals receive while incarcerated, strengthen opportunities for continued education and employment once they rejoin society, and reduce collateral and systemic barriers. Such a comprehensive approach can help lead to economic self-sufficiency and improved life outcomes for individuals and families.

Incarcerated individuals often have low skills and low levels of educational attainment

When compared to the general population, the incarcerated population is disproportionately comprised of people of color and adults with low levels of educational attainment. Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics suggest that over two-thirds of state prison inmates do not have a high school diploma, with the average state prisoner completing only 10.4 years of schooling.[15] For Black and Latino men and women, who make up the majority of male and female prison populations, the numbers are especially troubling.[16]

Figure 1. Racial Disparity among Incarcerated Individuals Compared to overall U.S. Population



Source: Leah Sakala, "Breaking Down Mass Incarceration in the 2010 Census: State-by-State Incarceration Rates by Race/Ethnicity," Prison Policy Initiative. http://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/rates.html

Studies have shown that young Black men without a high school diploma or equivalent have a one-in-three chance of spending time in prison.[17] While these data detail a larger systemic failure, they also confirm that incarcerated individuals are even more in need of educational services—such as high school equivalency courses, adult basic education, career and technical education, and postsecondary education—that can improve their economic prospects when they reenter society.

	Percent without high school diploma	Percent of incarcerated individuals without a high school diploma
All Men, 18-24	25%	72%
White (non-Hispanic) men, 18-24	20%	58%
Black Men, 18-24	29%	72%
Hispanic Men, 18-24	43%	83%
All Women, 18-24	19%	66%
White (non-Hispanic) women, 18-24	15%	83%
Black Women, 18-24	23%	52%
Hispanic Women, 18-24	35%	66%

Table 1. Incarceration and Educational Attainment Disparities, 18 to 24 Year Olds

Source: United States Department of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities, 2004 http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR04572.v2 and,
United States Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Educational Attainment, 18 to 24, 2004

In addition to needing educational services, incarcerated individuals also face significant barriers to obtaining meaningful employment before and after release. Low-income and low-skilled individuals are more likely to become incarcerated, and having a criminal record significantly hinders one's ability to find a job that leads to economic self-sufficiency. One study found that, before they were incarcerated, inmates made 41 percent less money than non-incarcerated people of similar ages.[18] In a further example of these disparities, returning citizens earn 10 to 40 percent less after release than similar workers without a history of incarceration, and they are offered jobs or interviews at much lower rates than are people with identical qualifications.[19] However, education and skills training offered during incarceration that leads to a degree or other credential can improve post-release outcomes by increasing employment opportunities.[20] These credentials can increase returning citizens' potential to earn a living wage and decrease their chances of recidivism.

Correctional education and training offers positive economic benefits

The RAND Corporation's widely cited meta-analysis of correctional education found that through reducing recidivism, correctional education was cost effective for states. Compared to the direct costs of incarceration, correctional education offers an estimated 400 percent return on investment for taxpayers over three years.[21] Increasing education and employment opportunities for incarcerated individuals has positive workforce implications as well. As of 2015, workers with at least some postsecondary education make up 65 percent of the workforce. [22] In order to tap the talents of all people, the United States must improve the rate in which underserved populations, particularly Black and Latino adults, earn industry-recognized credentials. As the United States has the highest incarceration rate of any Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country—and a disproportionately high rate of incarceration among Black and Latino men— reforming the justice system *and* helping people in prison obtain such credentials can help close our nation's racial and ethnic gaps in degree attainment.[23]

All of society benefits from investments in correctional education and reentry

Beyond the economic impacts of incarceration, an even greater human toll is at stake. For the 2.2 million people incarcerated, the costs are deeper than lost wages and public dollars spent. The impact of incarceration on the general wellbeing of inmates is detrimental, and those effects extend to the families and communities left behind by incarcerated individuals.[24] While investments in correctional education can yield significant economic and social benefits due to reduced recidivism, we must also consider the significant benefits of investing in the *actual people* incarcerated. For many prisoners, correctional education may be the first opportunity they have to learn and build their skills, and this is a valuable investment that recognizes the inherent worth of the individual and the innate assets of people our society too often discounts once they become involved in the criminal justice system.

Types of correctional education and training programs

The diverse range of educational attainment levels among incarcerated individuals, as well as their varying cognitive abilities and English language skills, requires a wide array of state correctional education programs. Many states have responded by offering a number of services that can include the following:

Adult Education	**Adult basic education:** Foundational skill building, mathematics, reading, and writing below the 9th grade skill level. **Adult secondary education:** Mathematics, reading, writing, and other education at or above a 9th grade skill level, including High School Equivalency test preparation. **English as a second language (ESL) courses**.
Adult Postsecondary Education	College level instruction that may provide college credit.
Career and Technical Education	Education and skills training within a defined program of study that may lead to an industry recognized credential or certification. Can be offered with college credit or as a non-credit course.
Special Education	Courses and services offered to individuals with learning disabilities or other special needs

Table 2. Types of Correctional Education

The most common types of services offered are adult basic education and career and technical education. A RAND survey of state correctional education programs reported that 44 out of 46 states surveyed offered adult basic education, high school equivalency test preparation, and career and technical education. In addition, 87 percent of states surveyed offered special education programs, and 72 percent offered ESL courses.

Furthermore, many states recognize the educational needs of incarcerated individuals by mandating correctional education for inmates without a high school diploma or equivalent, or for adults below a certain grade level. Of the states responding to the survey, 46 percent reported that correctional education was not mandatory.[25]

Trends in correctional education over the years have seen a general rise in career and technical education services that lead to a degree or an industry-recognized credential. This shift can be an important factor in determining positive post-release outcomes, given that individuals released from prison with an industry-recognized credential, state or local government-issued occupational license, or educational certificate are more likely to find employment and also more likely to earn a higher salary than those who did not earn a "non-degree" credential.[26]

Postsecondary partnerships with state corrections departments can also expand access to college level courses for inmates. Prisons have collaborated independently with community colleges, state universities and private colleges, although partnerships are sometimes coordinated centrally at the state level.[27, 28] The 2015 federal Second Chance Pell pilot program, which is testing the impact of offering Pell Grant aid to support college coursework for 12,000 inmates in more than 100 prisons across the country, has increased attention to postsecondary opportunities in prison.

John Jay College of Criminal Justice Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP)

Beginning in 2011, the John Jay Prisoner Reentry Institute has been administering the Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP). This partnership between the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision and City University of New York (CUNY) provides inmates with access to accredited college education, mentorship, and community support to increase their chances of graduation and employment upon release. Through P2CP, CUNY professors teach accredited college courses to inmates at the Otisville Correctional Facility. Furthermore, students who maintain passing grades are guaranteed admission in a CUNY institution upon release. Applicants must have their high school diploma or equivalent, be eligible for release within five years, and pass City of New York reading and writing assessments. Prior to the 2015 academic year, P2CP had served 75 students, with 21 having been released and fewer than 10 percent returning to prison.

Technology has been both an opportunity for innovation, but it has also presented challenges. Security and resource concerns sometimes inhibit correctional education programs from adapting to the evolving technological landscape. For example, starting in 2014, the new GED® test has been offered only online, forcing correctional facilities to either find ways to provide computer and internet access to students, or explore other options for high school equivalency testing. Other credential and licensing tests often are exclusively online, presenting similar barriers.[29] While all these offerings meet distinct and diverse needs, availability and accessibility depends heavily on resource availability. Funding levels, particularly at the state level, have significant implications for correctional education services.

Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Corrections mandates educational programming for all individuals without a high school diploma or equivalent. Furthermore, inmates must complete a high school diploma or equivalent course to receive employment within Minnesota Department of Corrections facilities. Upon entering, offenders take the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and, based on their high school or equivalent diploma status and TABE scores, are directed into secondary or postsecondary educational programs. A study of returning citizens released between January 2007 and December 2008 reported that of those who did not have a high school diploma or equivalent, a third received a secondary degree while in prison. About 6 percent of those offenders successfully earned a postsecondary degree, and those returning citizens who obtained a secondary degree in prison increased their chances of finding employment within two years of release by 59 percent.

Funding for correctional education and training

States generally use a blend of state and federal dollars for correctional education. Although overall corrections expenditures have increased with the prison population, funding for correctional education has not always kept pace. At the state level, general funds are appropriated to state departments of corrections, labor, or education that contribute towards inmate education and training. States may also leverage private funds, "inmate welfare" funds, or prison industry profits to offer correctional education. States also opt to use several different federal grants for correctional education and training.[30] As a result, there is a large degree of variation in the sources and levels of statewide correctional education funding.[31]

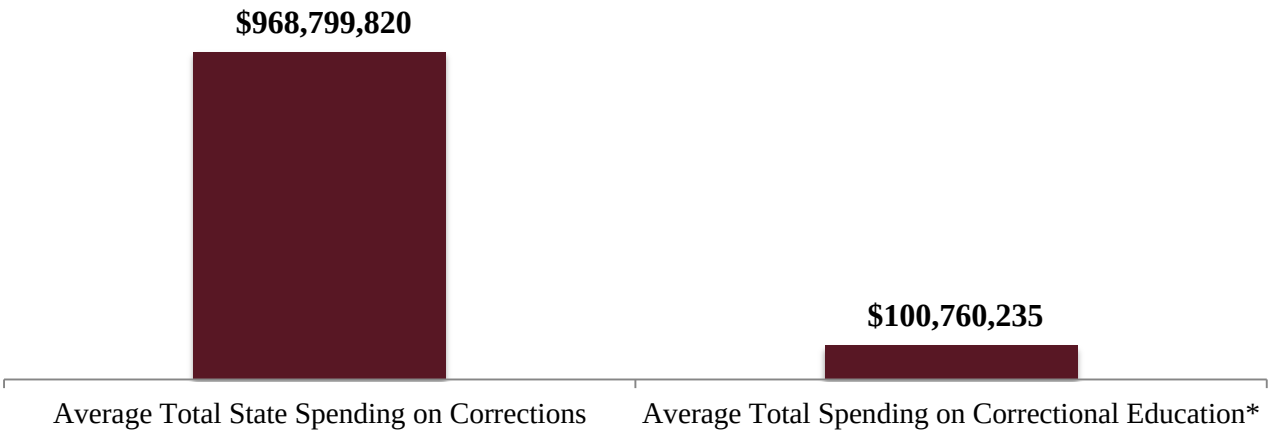
Funding at the state level

In the majority of states, correctional education authority resides with the state's department of corrections or public safety.[32] However, the size and type of state investment varies considerably, with funding for correctional education typically placed in state departments of corrections, education, labor, or some combination of the three. In Maryland, for example, correctional education is under the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation as part of the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, while in Minnesota, the Department of Corrections funds much of the education and training programming, although the state's Department of Education additionally supports adult basic education for inmates.[33, 34]

It is difficult to track and evaluate total statewide expenditures for correctional education, as states use different funding streams and methods for correctional education programs. State data on funding for this purpose are frequently not transparent to the public, as some state budgets do not distinguish inmate program spending within general prison operating costs, and others lump non-educational program expenses—such as medical and behavioral services—together with educational program expenses. Furthermore, when agencies other than the department of corrections deliver inmate education and training, some states do not include these "outside agency" sources in their description of state correctional education funding.[35]

Although exact state data are unavailable, RAND's correctional education survey found the average state budget for correctional education to be $100,760,235 in FY12, based on 34 state responses. This varied by the size of the state's prison population, with the average of small states (1-24,999 prisoners) budgeting $6,567,571, medium size states (25,000-49,999 prisoners) budgeting $15,550,286, and large states (50,000 prisoners and up) budgeting an average of $529,846,167.[36] These figures may include federal and/or other department funds. In comparison to overall state spending on corrections, states spent an average of nearly $970 million on corrections in FY12.[37] This number reflects all 50 states and may not include federal funds or other state department funds outside of corrections.

Figure 2. Total State Spending on Corrections vs Spending on Correctional Education



*This calculation comes from RAND's 2013 correctional education survey to correctional education directors in all 50 states. Out of the 50, only 34 states reported their correctional education budget and therefore this may not be an accurate representation of all correctional education spending.

State allocation methods

State legislatures generally determine the overall funding for departments of correction, though states use varying methods and sources for correctional education funds. Several legislatures allocate funds to state agencies explicitly for correctional education through an appropriations bill line item, while in other states, agencies may be responsible for allocating funds for correctional education after they have been appropriated in more general categories. States may allocate line item funds specifically for correctional education to one state agency, while also receiving additional funds from another.

The lack of comprehensive funding data about correctional education makes it difficult for states to identify best practices that are worth replicating.[38] However, when state budgets display a dedicated correctional education line item, it may indicate that policymakers are supportive of education and training opportunities for incarcerated individuals, which can help lead to continued funding in each annual budget. States with a specific line item for correctional education include California, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. The visibility of a correctional education line item may enable better communication among stakeholders and more accountability. Yet, with funding for correctional education being determined by state legislatures, as in many other state programs, funding fluctuates due to economic circumstances or changes in state policy priorities, placing programs at risk of being cut altogether.[39]

On the other hand, policymakers may have greater flexibility in implementing correctional education in states with no line item. States may be able to devote a larger percentage of their corrections budget to education and training programs and may have more options to continue funding in the face of widespread budget cuts. This of course depends on the willingness of corrections officials to prioritize correctional education.

In funding postsecondary education in prisons, some states leverage multiple state funding streams, including line items for postsecondary programs, full time equivalency (FTE) funding, state financial aid, or a combination of these sources.[40]

Trends in state investments

From the early 1980s to 2010, the rise in the prison population directly contributed to the increase in spending, largely due to the need for capital infrastructure and costs of additional state employees and administrative needs. However, after the most recent recession, corrections expenditures began to decline in FY10, following the trend in most other areas of state government.[41] This decline has had broad impacts on correctional education.

Although not uniform among all states, those that participated in the RAND survey reported an average 6 percent decrease in correctional education budgets from 2009 to 2012. The survey also found states were impacted differently according to the size of their prison population; states with large prison populations reported a decrease of 10 percent on average, while states with medium-sized and small prison populations experienced an average decrease in their correctional education budgets of 20 percent and 2 percent, respectively.[42]

The overall drop in correctional education budgets caused an average decrease in the capacity of academic education programs through reduced course offerings from 2009 to 2012. However, career and technical education programs actually increased by an average of 1 percent during the recession.[43] During this period of austerity, states began to reexamine their correctional education services to ensure they were cost-effective and offered positive outcomes for individuals.

Colorado

In Colorado, the Correctional Education Program Act of 1990 established an educational division within the Department of Corrections to address the high rates of illiteracy within prisons. In 2010, the state passed House Bill 10-1112 amending the act to include vocational skills training and ensuring "that state funding is provided to educational and vocational programs that meet performance objectives, provide market-relevant training, and are proven to increase the likelihood that persons who are released from a correctional facility will successfully reintegrate into society." The legislation also requires the Department of Corrections to release an annual overview of educational programs, which includes programs offered, participation, employment rates, and the budget and expenditures for educational programs. The most recent report provided data for Fiscal Year (FY) FY13, showing the Department of Corrections spent just over $15 million on correctional education from the state's General Fund and received about $410,000 in federal education grants. To put this total into perspective, Colorado appropriated about $751 million to corrections overall in FY13. Furthermore, out of about 20,300 Colorado inmates, 9,325 were enrolled in an education program in FY13. Of those enrolled, only 3,024 earned a certificate or GED®. The report also notes that 59 percent of recently returned citizens on parole had full- or part-time employment in FY13.

Indiana

The Indiana legislature cut funding for state education grants for incarcerated individuals through a provision in the 2011 budget. Grants previously allowed prisoners to obtain degrees and credits from two- and four-year Indiana institutions. Prior to prisoners becoming ineligible for funding, Indiana had the largest participation in postsecondary prison education in the nation, with 10 to 15 percent of the prison population accessing college programming every day. In addition, nearly 7,000 degrees were awarded to prisoners in the eight years before funding was cut. After funding was eliminated, only 40 degrees were awarded in the following three years. The Indiana Department of Corrections has responded by turning its focus to more vocational and certification program offerings to help fill the gap of providing training relevant to post-release employment opportunities.

Funding at the federal level

Three federal departments distribute funding for correctional education and training in some form: the U.S Department of Education (ED), the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). ED, which administers the most potential funding, primarily uses formula grants to states for larger programs, from which states can determine (within limits) what percentage to allocate for correctional education and training; ED also administers a large postsecondary pilot program and a small discretionary grant program. DOL and DOJ administer smaller discretionary grant programs directly targeted at correctional education, training, and reentry services. Much like calculating state funding, determining the total amount of federal funding is very difficult, because states choose the percentage of formula grant funding directed at correctional education and training, and choices vary greatly across the states.

Department of Education

ED funds various types of correctional education and training: postsecondary education; adult education below the postsecondary level, including high school equivalency preparation; career and technical education (CTE); and reentry education, which can take a number of forms.

Second Chance Pell Pilot Program

Until 1994, incarcerated individuals were eligible to receive Pell Grants—need-based grants to low-income students for undergraduate postsecondary education. In 1994, during an era of "tough on crime" policies, Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which, among many other provisions, eliminated Pell Grant eligibility for individuals in state and federal prisons, leading to decreased enrollment by them in postsecondary education. [44, 45] In 2013 alone, an estimated 1.6 million incarcerated individuals were unable to be considered for higher education financed through Pell Grants, despite the significant benefits associated with earning postsecondary credentials.[46, 47]

As announced by President Barack Obama in 2015, the Second Chance Pell pilot is a demonstration program collaborating with 69 selected colleges that will restore Pell Grant eligibility for an estimated 12,000 students in more than 100 correctional institutions.[48] The program waives the prohibition on Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals using ED's "experimental sites" authority under the Higher Education Act (HEA). Selected institutions, announced in 2016, include a combination of two- and four-year schools with offerings at the certificate-, associate's degree-, and bachelor's degree-level.[49] Most will provide on-site educational programs, while others will use online methods, or a combination of on-site and online teaching.[50] The budget for the program is 30 million.[51]

In addition to this demonstration project, members of Congress have proposed legislation that would completely overturn the ban on Pell Grants for individuals who are incarcerated. The Restoring Education And Learning (REAL) Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by U.S. Reps. Donna Edwards (D-MD), Danny Davis (D-IL), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Bobby Scott (D-VA), and Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) in May 2015. A Senate version of the REAL Act was subsequently introduced in May 2016 by U.S. Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Markey J. Edward (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D-NY), Al Franken (D-MN), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD).

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)

One of the largest sources of federal funding for adult basic education below the postsecondary level, AEFLA is title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). AEFLA programs help low-skilled adults obtain the basic skills they need to be productive workers and citizens. The major areas are adult basic education, adult secondary education (including high school equivalency exam preparation) and English language learning. These programs stress basic skills such as reading, writing, math, English language, and problem-solving. The Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) at ED administers formula funds to states for adult education programs. States, in turn, distribute funds to local eligible entities to provide adult education.

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

FY16 grants to states:

$582 million

Percentage states can allocate to correctional education:

No more than 20 percent (up to $116 million nationwide)

Unfortunately, at $595 million annually, AEFLA is a relatively small and decreasing funding source. Since 2001, funding for adult education has fallen by over 25 percent, when adjusted for inflation. On a brighter note, in reauthorizing WIOA in 2014, Congress emphasized the importance of correctional education by increasing the cap on funding that states *may* use for correctional education from 10 percent of grants to states (under the previous law) to up to 20 percent of grants to states, but the reach of this funding varies across the states. Furthermore, new WIOA final regulations expand allowable offerings from only four programs (basic education, special education, English literacy, and secondary school credit) to eight more innovative offerings: (1) adult education and literacy activities; (2) special education, as determined by the eligible agency; (3) secondary school credit; (4) integrated education and training; (5) career pathways; (6) concurrent enrollment; (7) peer tutoring; and (8) transition to reentry initiatives and other

post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism (which must support the educational needs of the individual). [52-58] These services must be given to students who are likely to return to society within five years of participation in the program.[59]

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

Like AEFLA, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act ("Perkins CTE") program is administered by OCTAE. The Perkins CTE Act provides formula grants to states to support career and technical education at the state and local levels, and states choose how to distribute the funds between secondary and postsecondary education. Basic grants to states were funded at $1.1 billion in FY16. Between FY00 and FY16, Perkins funding has fluctuated slightly, from a low of $1.0 billion to a high of $1.2 billion in FY04.[61]

While Perkins CTE has double the overall funding level of AELFA, a much smaller percentage of the state grants are allowed to be used for correctional education. Prior to 1998, states were required to use at least 1 percent of their Perkins grants for CTE in correctional institutions. However, in 1998, amendments to the Perkins CTE Act flipped that policy on its head; states now can spend *no more than* 1 percent of their grants for correctional education, changing the funding floor into a ceiling.[62] A recently passed House Perkins reauthorization bill would raise that ceiling to 2 percent.

Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act

FY16 grants to states:

$1.1 billion

Percentage states can allocate to correctional education:

No more than 1 percent (or $11 million nationwide)

Improved Reentry Education Program

In an effort to improve the continuum of opportunities and services between prison and community-based education and training programs, the Improved Reentry Education (IRE) Program funds community colleges, state corrections agencies, and education service providers to build upon and implement high-quality, appropriately designed, integrated educational and related services in institutional and community settings. [63] The grants are intended to identify such programs and show how they can contribute to the success of returning citizens.

Through a joint effort between DOJ's Office of Justice Programs and ED's OCTAE, IRE built on a previous grant program, Promoting Reentry Success through Continuity of Educational Opportunities (PRSCEO). It was funded through a one-time DOJ grant opportunity and was intended to address the high unemployment of reentering citizens and discontinuity of services between prison and community-based education and training programs. [64] In 2013, ED awarded three discretionary grants totaling $924,036 to adult education providers in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Kansas for innovative correctional education programs, to build on ED's Reentry Education Model. In 2015, nine sites received IRE grants to continue this type of work, with an average award of $300,000 each. [65, 66]

Department of Labor

Reentry Employment Opportunities Program

The U.S. Department of Labor provides a small amount of funding for grants to train returning citizens. Through the Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program (formerly known as RExO), DOL offers grants to test the effectiveness of successful community models and practices that have not been tested for adaptability into the public workforce system. Funding levels increased from $80 million in FY14 to $82 million in FY15, and to $95 million in FY16.[67] The program is administered by DOL's Employment and Training Administration (ETA).

The REO program administers multiple grants, including some that focus on youth and others on adults. While this report focuses primarily on adults, it is important to note that young adults are a population with particular need. The "Training to Work" grant for adults returning from incarceration awarded a total of $21.2 million to 16 organizations to serve returning citizens in areas with very high poverty and crime levels, including Promise Zones—high-need areas designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). [68, 69] These grants provide returning citizens in work release programs an opportunity to "participate in a career pathway program that defines and maps out a sequence of education, training and workforce skills training resulting in skilled workers that meet the needs of local employers."[70] The programs also provide wrap-around services like case management and mentoring.

The Linking to Employment Activities Pre-Release (LEAP) grant, which is in its second round, aims to better connect services offered inside correctional facilities with the local workforce development system. In 2016, $5.5 million was awarded to 11 organizations to house specialized American Job Centers (also known as "one-stop centers") inside prisons, where individuals can receive employment and training services while still incarcerated. In addition, this strengthens alignment between programs inside facilities and the traditional workforce development system, which lessens the typical discontinuity of opportunities for returning citizens. In 2015, DOL awarded $10 million in LEAP grants to 20 organizations in 14 states.[71]

Department of Justice

Second Chance Act

The Second Chance Act (SCA) of 2007 was enacted to help returning citizens break cycles of crime and start new lives, while also reducing recidivism and improving public safety. [72] Since its first appropriation in FY09, DOJ has provided more than $475 million in grants and technical assistance to help returning citizens safely and successfully reintegrate into the community.[73] SCA programs provide funding for grantees that develop and implement comprehensive and collaborative reentry strategies. Second Chance Act funding is spread across seven programs, only one of which is relevant to education and training for adults: the Technology-Based Career Training Program. [74] In 2015, this program awarded nearly $3 million to four grantees for technology training projects, including Michigan's Computer Service Technician Training.[75] Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) have introduced the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2015, but no further legislative action has been taken.

Connecting correctional education and training to reentry

The ultimate success of correctional education should be measured by the post-release outcomes for returning citizens. Models of service for correctional education serve several goals, but are not consistently connected to education and training goals beyond prison walls.[76] Ideally, correctional education should align its curricula to a continuum of education and training that will build skills and marketability for education, employment, and economic success upon release. In practice, this does not always occur. While correctional education and training has been shown to be cost effective, reducing recidivism and helping returning citizens obtain employment requires significant coordination of systems and investments to ensure effective continuity of education and training opportunities beyond incarceration.[77,78]

Current correctional education models for connecting to reentry programs

The previously discussed trends in correctional education provide a glimpse into the goals of correctional education systems. The complexity of education levels, budgetary priorities, and resource challenges combine to influence the types of correctional education offered.[79] This context can also inform the success, impact, and continuity of these opportunities upon reentry. In general, research shows a lack of continuity between educational programs delivered to students during incarceration and post-release education and training opportunities.[80,81]

Adult basic and secondary education and reentry

In the majority of states, inmates in state prisons are required to enroll in some form of correctional education.[82] Given the low educational attainment and literacy levels of prisoners on average, and the success of correctional education in reducing recidivism, such programs offer benefits to both inmates and state corrections budgets. Adult basic education programs provide the literacy and numeracy foundations needed for basic competencies, and adult secondary education provides the training and proficiency necessary to attain a high school diploma or equivalency. These baseline credentials and mandatory requirements help inmates build hard and soft skills and proficiencies, but delivering them has its challenges.

As mentioned, technology has presented both an opportunity and challenge for correctional education. Despite the promise of using information technology to deliver more innovative and up-to-date instruction, the challenges of infrastructure, resources, and security often limit states' capabilities to take advantage of these opportunities. In turn, the lack of current technology and curricular offerings may further remove prisoners from the types of education and training opportunities most relevant to post-release opportunities.[83] Recent changes to technology and computer-based administration requirements for some high school equivalency exams cause such a dilemma in adult secondary education. However, some states have made efforts to retool approaches to meet new technology demands.[84]

In states like Ohio that have begun using more modern technology, controlled access to online content offers inmates educational resources at all levels, in addition to one-stop center resources and legal research. The recent introduction of tablet computers in Ohio's correctional system has helped further expand access to modern education offerings and has enabled students to improve their digital literacy

skills, which are a foundational competency needed for education and employment opportunities upon reentry.[85, 86] California has also been expanding the use of technology in its state prisons and offers courses and instruction that respond to the state labor market.[87] In Washington, the nationally recognized Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model is utilized in the state's College in Prison program, providing basic education that is contextualized and simultaneously offered with job training to build competencies and position students for employment and continued training upon reentry.[88]

Career and technical education and reentry

Increasingly, correctional education has shifted towards vocational concentrations that emphasize specific job skills and placement. Vocational training can improve post-release employability prospects when it is tailored to in-demand occupations for which returning citizens can compete upon reentry, although in some cases the underlying motivation for this shift is not focused on upgrading inmates' skills (e.g., where prison labor mainly benefits the prison-industrial complex).[89] Findings from RAND's meta-analysis of correctional education programs found that these programs correlated with a 28 percent increase in post-release employment compared to inmates without the same access.[90] When specifically targeted for labor market success, the skills, industry-recognized credentials, occupational licenses, or education certifications acquired in these programs can present opportunities for improved employment prospects after incarceration.[91]

Ohio

Integrating Technology and Training to Meet Educational Skill Needs

Ohio has been a leader in technological innovation in correctional education. In 2005, the state passed legislation authorizing internet use for educational purposes in state corrections facilities. Since then, the state has continued to push efforts to stay up-to-date on its technology infrastructure, while being intentional about aligning technology and curriculum with reentry pathways.

However, misalignment of these opportunities can present challenges for reentry success, and barriers to employment and training opportunities can still persist. In addition to the general collateral consequences that returning citizens face, geography can also play a role in the discontinuity of opportunity from incarceration to reentry. Due to prison transfers and other causes, offenders are not always incarcerated in or near the jurisdiction that they call home and to which they are likely to return upon release.[92] Likewise, training offered in prisons may not always be relevant for the state labor market. In these cases, returning citizens have limited opportunities to apply their new skills upon release, adding another layer of difficulty to the barriers they will already face.

States Aligning Vocational Training with the Labor Market

Indiana

Shifts towards more vocational and certification programs have increased the focus of correctional training programs on post-release employment, with an emphasis on meeting state workforce needs. Through a partnership with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, the Hoosier Initiative for Re-Entry (HIRE) program works with the Indiana Department of Corrections (INDOC) to screen inmates prior to release, provide a tailored curriculum that focuses on skills specific to success in the workplace, and offer continued training support upon reentry. INDOC regularly uses the resources of the HIRE partnership to identify and assess employment trends in the state against correctional education offerings to inform curricular improvements.

California

California's Department of Corrections offers CTE training in six career sectors with 19 programs overall. Each of the 19 programs is "aligned with a positive employment outlook within the State of California, providing industry recognized certification" and "an employment pathway to a livable wage." The department's CTE programs "utilize a stackable curriculum allowing each inmate/student to gain employment skills and enter a career pathway for the industry." There are no eligibility requirements and any inmate may request to participate. However, the department also reports that technology-related issues were challenging the program. The program reported that it could not provide certification for 26 percent of CTE programs in November 2015 because the certification exams had to be completed online.

Postsecondary education and reentry

The 1994 ban on Pell Grant access for incarcerated individuals, which stripped away the key federal funding source for college-level course tuition, led to severe restrictions in postsecondary options for prisoners. Today, about one-third of state prisons offer postsecondary education.[93] Those programs are supported through state or private partnerships between campuses and correctional facilities, and funded by state, private, or inmate contributions.[94] The limited opportunity for inmates to qualify for Pell Grants through ED's experimental pilot program has brought renewed attention to the benefits of postsecondary education for prisoners. Research has demonstrated both success in reducing recidivism, and improved outcomes for students, families, and communities more broadly.[95] However, ex-offenders experience challenges in continuing these postsecondary learning opportunities once they re-enter society. Returning citizens seeking to continue their postsecondary education can be blocked by absent or inconsistent articulation agreements between courses taken while incarcerated and transfer courses accepted by

institutions. In some states, courses offered to students at correctional facilities rather than by distance instruction are not awarded academic credit in an equivalent way to the credit articulation for non-incarcerated students in the same programs.[96] In other cases, inmate transfers and releases to different areas within a state can mean courses may not transfer to local institutions upon release. A 2009 report by ED found these issues largely contingent on the strength of the partnerships between correctional facilities and community colleges.[97]

In more formalized partnerships, transition and transferability of postsecondary training can be more seamless.[98] In states where partnerships between colleges and prisons are more institutionally driven, access and quality are based on the partnership. Some of these programs are successful models of best practice, including the Bard Prison Initiative in Hudson, New York and Goucher College's Prison Education Partnership in Baltimore, Maryland. However, work remains to formalize and scale these types of opportunities across states—particularly where partnerships are more decentralized—to offer consistent opportunities to all.[99] Strong statewide articulation agreements are one key way to ensure quality and expand opportunity and access.[100]

Even when articulation issues do not block access to higher education, criminal background policies in admissions and eligibility restrictions on state financial aid can inhibit access for returning citizens. A 2010 survey of postsecondary institutions found that two-thirds asked applicants about criminal histories, which restricted admission and deterred some returning citizens from applying in the first place.[101] In addition, the cost of attendance, an issue that affects all college goers, can be even more daunting for incarcerated individuals. On top of the myriad challenges already faced by nontraditional adult students, eligibility for returning citizens can be limited even further by the collateral consequences of living with a criminal record.[102]

Strategies to enhance continuity

Although some states and institutions have implemented promising practices to support the continuity of education and training opportunities between incarceration and reentry, in many cases returning citizens still face a discontinuous and inconsistent system.[103] The federal government has taken the initiative to reduce barriers by providing guidance and incentives to states to improve their reentry support efforts.[104] Federal grants to states and localities have created incentives to innovate and expand opportunities in education and training. From the states that have shown leadership in this field, several consistent themes emerge as models of best practice for ensuring greater continuity of opportunity from correctional education to post-release education and employment opportunities.

Strategy	State example
Career Pathways Career pathways, a comprehensive approach linking education, training, and support services designed to support the career and educational development of students, is a model framework for reentry education.[105] The Reentry Education Framework, a model using career pathway principles designed by ED, identifies five elements of successful reentry education models for providers: strong program infrastructure, strategic partnerships across systems, strong, well-resourced education services, embedded transition processes, and sustainability.	**Pennsylvania** In 2015, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections was awarded a $1 million grant from ED to better align correctional education offerings with pathways to successful reentry. With a focus on young adults between 18 and 25, a population with a 73 percent recidivism rate, this grant will support the department's career pathways approach to reentry. The department is working to comprehensively target its correctional education programming to meet skill levels and workforce needs through partnerships with state agencies, local workforce development boards, higher education institutions, employers and labor management organizations, and criminal justice representatives.[106]
Integrated Education and Training Integrated Education and Training (IET) is a core strategy element of career pathways defined as a model of practice in the most recent Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations. The model brings together adult education, workforce preparation, and workforce training simultaneously and strategically to meet a single set of learning outcomes that represent foundational, employability, and occupational skills.[107] Federal WIOA Title II dollars can support state correctional education programs using this strategy, and some states have interwoven IET into their correctional education and training curriculum.	**Washington** Coordinated by the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, the College in Prisons program partners with 12 community and technical colleges throughout the state to deliver a range of adult basic education and vocational training programs to students in state prisons. Recognizing the need for both types of training, several programs are delivered in an IET style through the I-BEST model, which incorporates elements of adult basic and vocational education, and is contextualized for real-world applicability.[108]
Partnerships Partnerships between correctional facilities and postsecondary institutions/education service providers are highlighted as a key component of ED's Reentry Education Framework.[109] High functioning partnerships between prisons and institutions/service providers help align education and training on both sides of the relationships to help ensure a continuum of education and training opportunities from incarceration to reentry.	**California** In 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed California Senate Bill 1391 into law, creating an interagency agreement between the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community College System. The agreement expands access to courses leading to degrees and certificates that result in enhanced workforce skills or articulation to four-year institutions. The state will also fully fund colleges for on-site instruction at the same funding levels as on-campus, full-time students.[110] Prior to SB1391, prison-college partnerships were more decentralized, and consequently, not equally accessible.[111] The pilot partnerships will help scale and systemize access across the state.

Table 3. Strategies and State Examples of Enhanced Continuity

Ensuring comprehensive support upon reentry

Approaches to reentry education vary across states and localities, with some more comprehensive than others. The emphasis on states is important because of the sovereignty and influence states have in major areas that affect the livelihood of returning citizens. State prisons also house the vast majority of the 2.2 million people incarcerated in America.[112] Nonetheless, federal policies around student aid, public benefits, and housing can also have a significant impact by influencing, incentivizing, or modeling reforms for states. Consequently, the complexity of these interactions and states' variance in policies and implementation can ultimately affect education and training opportunities upon reentry.[113] As a result, correctional education that does not articulate to post-release outcomes loses its effectiveness.

At the federal level, the Federal Interagency Reentry Council has modeled efforts to work across agency silos to reduce federal barriers to successful reentry, promote the reduction of state barriers, and positively scale and optimize the impact of systems that affect the opportunities of returning citizens.[114] At the state level, where reforms have the potential for the greatest reach, federal impact is achieved primarily by offering grant funding. In the education and training space, DOL, DOJ, and ED have been key players in these efforts to strengthen the continuum of education and training from incarceration to post-release. In addition, federal initiatives to promote fair hiring, restore access to Pell Grants, improve housing stability, remove draconian legal and court fees, improve access to healthcare and public benefits, and support general wellbeing and family security are all essential and necessary for ensuring stabilization upon reentry.[115]

At the state level, comprehensive reentry support looks different across state lines, and so can the barriers. Nonetheless, collateral consequences brought on by state policies pose similar threats to wellbeing and economic security and mobility. The American Bar Association's National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction identifies well over 40,000 barriers to employment, education, housing, loan borrowing, and licensing, among many other categories.[116] In the category of occupational licensing alone, over 46,000 state and federal laws restrict employment, occupational licenses, and business licenses for people with criminal records.[117] Consequently, the path to recidivism is almost inevitable while human tolls and economic costs continue to rise exponentially.[118] The Council of State Governments' Justice Center has been a national resource to states for addressing this cycle, but significant work remains.

Looking ahead

The 650,000 Americans released from prison each year must overcome many nearly insurmountable obstacles as they rejoin society. Obtaining economically sufficient employment can often be extremely difficult for returning citizens, and opportunities to pursue educational opportunities can be just as limited. The unfair and inequitable treatment of ex-offenders has destabilizing implications for family and economic security, and disproportionately limits opportunities for low-income communities and communities of color. In elementary and secondary education, societal injustices lead to schools that act as pipelines to prison, and consequently, result in low levels of educational attainment among incarcerated individuals. A recent ED brief reported that, due to increased incarceration rates, "over the past three decades, state and local government expenditures on prisons and jails have increased about three times as fast as spending on elementary and secondary education."[119] These well-documented inequalities are inherent in our policies, governance structures, and systems of power, leading to distorted depictions of

low-income communities and communities of color as being delinquent, rather than as assets and contributing members of society.

The current mass incarceration crisis is a product of this unfortunate truth. Recognizing the human and economic toll of this crisis, state and national attention is shifting toward curtailing the dramatic growth in the prison population, and investments have been made to reduce the incarceration rate and the rate at which ex-offenders return to prison. A DOJ report notes: "With no job, no money, and no place to live, returnees often find themselves facing the same pressures and temptations that landed them in prison in the first place. Assisting ex-prisoners in finding and keeping employment, identifying transitional housing, and receiving mentoring are three key elements of successful re-entry into our communities."[120] To benefit fully from these crucial job placement and supportive services upon reentry, inmates must start gaining relevant skills and industry-recognized credentials while incarcerated. The road to successful reentry must begin during incarceration and continue after individuals return to society. Several states have responded to the demonstrated correlation between correctional education and reduced recidivism rates by investing in innovative education and training strategies that can improve the post-release outcomes of returning citizens. Nevertheless, to fully realize comprehensive reform, a commitment to dismantling systems of inequality belongs on every social, economic, and criminal justice agenda.

Federal and state policymakers should consider actions to improve correctional education and enable returning citizens to better connect the skills they gain while incarcerated to further learning and employment opportunities once they reenter society. A major step forward would be lifting the ban on Pell Grants to restore financial aid for postsecondary education during incarceration. Additional support could come through augmenting the limited federal funding streams currently used for correctional education; however, this would require higher levels of overall funding for adult education and career and technical education, without which states could only increase the percentage of AEFLA and CTE formula funding they devote to correctional education by reducing funding for other worthy populations. In addition, overall state funding for correctional education should become more transparent, so that policymakers and advocates can measure and monitor different approaches and innovation in the states; to promote such transparency states could report comprehensively on all statewide resources used for correctional education through state plans submitted with applications for federal grants. In addition, the federal government could provide states information and incentives to improve current educational practices inside prisons to include more innovative offerings and partnerships using Integrated Education and Training and Career Pathways.

Although investments in robust correctional education and training programs will not fully solve mass incarceration, improvements to this system can form one part of a broader commitment to building opportunities rather than eliminating second chances. Federal and state policymakers must work to ensure our nation's most underserved have the ability to participate fully in our economy and society, and our systems must be accountable for making sure that happens. Both education and employment opportunities are required to reach this goal. For those in correctional settings, the vulnerability is greater and the need is more urgent than arguably anywhere else in society.

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