



The Vermont Legislative Research Shop

Correctional Education Programs in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine

Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine all provide basic educational services to individuals in custody within the corrections department, offer programs to allow inmates to pursue a diploma or GED and provide vocational education in the hopes of preparing inmates for job placement upon their release. The organization, focus and intensity of the basic education/vocational programs differ state to state, however, they all provide educational programming for students who have not received a diploma, who wish to further pursue their education or gain skills for future employment. While Vermont focuses on encouraging inmates to pursue completion of a high school degree, New Hampshire and Maine focus on vocational education but also have higher education opportunities. Most notably, the University of Maine offers an outreach program which tailors educational programs for inmates in the Department of Corrections.

Programs

Vermont

Vermont's correctional education program is very focused upon the goal of encouraging inmates to further their education and receive a general high school curriculum and diploma. The Community High School of Vermont (CHSVT) provides corrections education in Vermont. CHSVT is an independent and distinct educational entity, operated by the Department of Corrections (DOC), which aims to provide basic education to Vermonters under the care and custody of the DOC. Under statutory mandate (Title 28 VSA Section 120), all those under DOC custody who are under 21 years old and have not yet received a high school diploma, are required to attend CHSVT. Sixty percent of those attending CHSVT are over 22 years of age, while only forty percent are under 22.

CHSVT operates classrooms within each of the DOC's nine correctional facilities and seventeen Community Correctional Service Centers (CCSC's), and provides basic education programming. Corrections education in Vermont is directed towards providing inmates with the optimum amount and quality of education possible, and discourages inmates' pursuit of vocational education until they have received a basic education. In an effort to encourage inmates to get a high school diploma or its equivalent, the department of the DOC that controls vocational programming has agreed not to hire any inmates who have not yet received a diploma. CHSVT offers high school diplomas, adult diplomas, as well as GED's, but is aimed at issuing the most high school diplomas possible. High school diplomas may be issued by CHSVT, but attempts are made as much as possible for diplomas to be in the name of

the high school the inmate originally attended. Adult diplomas are issued by CHSVT, and differ from high school diplomas by the fact that they take into consideration life experience and previous learning.

The curriculum of CHSVT is determined largely by inmate interest and need. As an independent educational entity, CHSVT has established the criteria it uses to determine completion of the program. Because CHSVT seeks to issue high school diplomas in the names of the original high school attended,

the Lake Region Facility's Capital Branch College works in cooperation with the New Hampshire Community Technical College to provide college courses to the inmates (at their own expense).

The Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility opened in 2000 and has not fully developed its educational programs but the facility does offer GED preparation, library services and vocational training. The vocational training program certifies the inmates in CAD/CAM and culinary arts.

Maine

Maine offers the basic GED program along with an Adult Basic Education program (ABE). Individuals under the states care are also offered various vocational opportunities; such as culinary arts, wood harvesting, printing, wood working, welding, graphic arts, plumbing, electrical, computer refurbishing, garment making, and upholstery.

The State of Maine has a post secondary educational opportunity. There are two routes that an inmate may take in order to receive a higher education degree. The University of Maine offers an outreach program that tailors programs for inmates. A newer option is the NovaNET, which is a computer based educational program that the Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) received in July of 2001.

The State of Maine was able to receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education thru "Grants to states for workplace and community transition training for incarcerated youth offenders (youth offenders program)" and offers eligible inmates an opportunity to receive post-secondary education or vocational training to better prepare them for a successful transition back into the community (King 2002)."

The NovaNET system is an online-based educational tool that allows incarcerated individuals the ability to link up with educators. The program was developed specifically to cater to incarcerated adult learners. The MDOC believes that the traditional classroom setting is not optimal learning environment. In the MDOC's experience, incarcerated learners tend to learn better when they study at their own pace in an individualized program. The NovaNET offers the students a new kind of independent learning environment which places emphasis on learning from a program where the student must be actively engaged in the process of acquiring understanding, rather than the lecture format of the traditional classroom which tends to allow the student to become disengaged or passive (King 2002).

CHSVT rarely meets its full capacity and is consistently trying to encourage larger numbers of inmates to pursue their diploma or further their education. There are about 300 full time equivalent students enrolled in CHSVT at a given time, with the amount of time they spend in educational programming ranging from one to twenty hours a week. There are two or three teachers at each correctional facility, with usually about five to ten people in each class. CHSVT is designed to expand and contract given the number of inmates interested, willing or required to enroll. CHSVT continues to build more classrooms in order to meet the needs of larger numbers of inmates. Vermont corrections education receives funding based on

There is not a great deal of information regarding graduation rates in the New Hampshire Correctional Facilities.

From July 1986 to June 2001, the Adult Vocational Training Program at the Concord State Prison for Men has issued 8,592 competency-based certificates. During 2001, 405 competency certificates were issued to 352 inmates.

The State Prison for Women's Education Department issued 12 GED certificates in 2001.

As of May 2001, 414 inmates in the Lake Region Facility had graduated from the Transformations Program. Eight four percent of the inmates who worked with the Learning Lab in GED preparation passed the test.

The New Hampshire Department of Corrections Annual Report indicates that 6 inmates at the Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility passed their GED in 2001.

Maine

The State of Maine does not publish an annual report of correctional information and does not keep a correctional educational database so the number of graduates is not known (King 2002).

Sources

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