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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, inmates curriculum may need to meet the particular graduation requirements of their local high school. CHSVT graduation requirements, however, include the demonstration of functional literacy in nine subject areas, each with a different number of credits needed for successful completion. Educational plans for the achievement of graduation requirements are prepared for each student, and credit is issued upon completion of course hours, approved independent studies or individual assessments of previous life/academic experience.

(The information regarding correctional education in Vermont comes from The Community High School of Vermont's website at www.chsvt.k12.vt.us and an interview with the Superintendent of Educational Services, Robert E. Lucenti.)

New Hampshire

New Hampshire does not have one set educational program that is executed in all of the correctional facilities. Instead, each facility implements educational and vocational programs in accordance with their own criteria. There are four facilities in New Hampshire; the Concord State Prison for Men, the State Prison for Women, the Lake Region Facility and the Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility.

According to the New Hampshire State Department of Corrections Annual Report in 2001, the Concord State Prison for Men educates its inmates through an Adult Vocational Training Program, an Adult Education Center, and the Prison Industries Program. The Adult Vocational Training Program issues competency-based certificates in business management, auto body repair technologies, auto mechanics, small engine repair, food service management, information processing and building trades. The Adult Education Center gives the inmates the opportunity to be certified for a high school diploma issued by the Granite State Correctional School District. The Prison Industries Program gives inmates the chance to be trained and work for one of the "Prison Industries." The industries include, Plate Shop, Sign Shop, Print Shop, Wood Shop, Information Technology Department, Farm, Tailor Shop, Electric Shop, Furniture Shop, and Berlin Shop.

The Women's Prison offers education programs through the Education Department and a Vocational Training Program. The Education Department provides instruction in GED preparation, English as a second language, post secondary education, life skills, enrichment courses, career development, and basic and advanced reading skills. Through the Education Department a library and law library are available to the inmates. The Vocational Training Program offers an office occupation program which prepares the inmates for entry-level office employment.

The Lake Region Facility offers numerous education opportunities through the Transformations Program, the Technology Education Program, Building Trades Program, the Learning Lab and the Capital Branch College. The Transformations Program is a 14 to 16 week training program that focuses on employment, living skills, counseling and career planning. The inmates can earn up to 30 credits that are transferable to the State Technical College. The Technology Education Program offers courses entitled Communication Technology, Material Processes Technology, Energy, Power and Transportation Technology, and Technology Practicum. The Building Trades Program teaches the inmates woodworking and construction. The Learning Lab works with the inmates on GED preparation. Finally,

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.

(New Hampshire's information came from the New Hampshire Department of Corrections website at www.state.nh.us and the New Hampshire Department of Corrections Annual Report of 2001 which can be found at www.state.nh.us/doc/annual2001.pdf.)

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).

Maine also has a system that uses inmates to create products. Prison industries allow the inmates the opportunity to learn work ethics and job skills. Five adult correctional facilities have prison industries programs. They produce license plates, wood furniture, garments, and harvest wood.

(The information regarding Maine came from the State of Maine's website, www.state.me.us/corrections/ and an email correspondence with Correctional Planning Analyst for the Maine Department of Corrections, Ellis King.)

Capacity

Vermont

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 the number of full time students enrolled in CHSVT (Lucenti, 2002).

New Hampshire

Information regarding capacity varies according to how well defined the programs are within the individual facilities. The individual facilities are responsible for compiling information about the programs they offer and therefore, the information is not comprehensive.

The New Hampshire State Department of Corrections Annual Report in 2001 states that, the educational/vocational programs in the Concord State Prison for Men employed 34 teachers/instructors and 79-shop supervisors/tradesmen. In 2001, the Adult Vocational Training Program enrolled 422 of the 1,336 prisoners. The New Hampshire Department of Corrections does not have information regarding the enrollment or capacity of the Adult Education Center. The Prison Industries trains and/or employees more than 300 inmates per year.

In 2001, the State Prison for Women's Education Department 45 students studied math, 28 took social studies courses, 16 enrolled in science classes, 5 were taught English as a second language, 27 took courses in English, 20 participated in the life skills courses. According to the New Hampshire Department of Corrections Annual Report, "nearly all" of the 105 inmates in the Women's Prison participated in the Vocational Training Program.

There is limited information on the capacity of the programs offered at the Lake Region Facility. The Learning Lab has 4 employees who work with inmates on GED preparation. More than 100 inmates per year take courses at their own expense through the Capital Branch College program.

The Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility does not have any information regarding capacity because it only recently opened in 2000.

Maine

The State of Maine does not keep any data on program capacity. The programs meet the basic needs of inmates, however they are very short staffed. Some of the vocational programs have waiting lists while others have to recruit people to take the classes (King 2002).

Graduation Rates

Vermont

In 2001, CHSVT issued sixty-nine high school diplomas, and 62 GED's (Lucenti 2002). There is little further information available about the graduates of CHSVT.

New Hampshire

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. Eighty-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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