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Community-based Correctional Education

U.S. Department of Education

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Community-based Correctional Education

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
Division of Adult Education and Literacy

2011

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February 2011

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Abbreviations

ABE	adult basic education
ACCC	Allen County Community Corrections
AOC	Administrative Office of the Courts, State of Arizona Supreme Court
ASE	adult secondary education
CEO	Center for Employment Opportunities
CLLC	Computer Literacy Learning Centers
FORGE	Female Offender Reentry Group
GED	General Educational Development (tests)
LEARN	Literacy, Education, and Resource Network
MPRI	Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative
LSI-R	Level of Service Inventory-Revised
NRS	National Reporting System
P2C	Computer-Based Learning from Prison to Community

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INTRODUCTION: THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

Community-based correctional education—education services offered to individuals serving all or part of their criminal sentence under community supervision (e.g., parole or probation)¹—is receiving increased attention by states attempting to find more cost-efficient approaches to addressing rising correctional costs and a growing incarcerated population. In fiscal year 2008, more than 2.2 million adults were incarcerated in the United States² and an additional 5.1 million were under community supervision, costing states nearly \$46 billion (National Association of State Budget Officers 2008). In fact, spending on corrections has become the fastest growing general fund expenditure by states outside of Medicaid (Scott-Hayward 2009).³

Many states, therefore, are taking a closer look at their corrections budgets to determine what, if any, reductions can be made. According to an analysis of fiscal year 2010 state budgets, at least 26 states were planning to reduce their state corrections budgets (Scott-Hayward 2009). Some states are cutting costs by placing more offenders under community supervision as an alternative to incarceration, since average costs of \$3.42 per day for parolees and \$7.47 per day for probationers are considerably less than the \$79 per day cost for incarcerated prisoners (The Pew Center on the States 2009; Scott-Hayward 2009). Colorado, for example, planned to save state funds by granting early release to 15 percent of its state prisoners in 2009 and 2010, placing most of them under some form of community supervision (Solomon 2009).

Shifting to a community supervision approach may help states address their fiscal problems, but community supervision alone has not been effective in preventing parolees or probationers from recidivating and, therefore, may not lower the incarcerated population or save state funds in the long run (Aos et al. 2006; Solomon, Kachinowski, and Bhati 2005). Currently, one in 45 adults in the United States is on probation or parole (The Pew Center on the States 2008). Forty percent

¹ For a more detailed description of community supervision, including parole and probation, see “What is Community Supervision?” on p. 2 of this report.

² In this report, “United States” or “states,” unless otherwise specified, mean each of the 50 states of the United States.

³ The National Association of State Budget Officers defines state general fund expenditures as “discretionary expenditures of revenue derived from general resources, which have not been earmarked for specific items” (National Association of State Budget Officers 2008, p. 5). The definition of corrections expenditures, on the other hand, varies from state to state, but typically includes the costs of prison construction and operation, community supervision (i.e., parole and probation), and, in some states, the costs of juvenile justice programs (National Association of State Budget Officers 2008).

of probationers and more than 50 percent of parolees, however, will be re-incarcerated for either violating the conditions of their community supervision or committing new crimes (Glaze and Bonczar 2007; The Pew Center on the States 2008). Apart from cost considerations, therefore, states need strategies to ensure that these individuals successfully serve their community supervision sentence and do not jeopardize public safety.

Several factors influence the low number of parolees and probationers successfully completing their community supervision. Many parolees and probationers lack basic necessities, including food, transportation, financial resources, housing, health care, and support from family and friends (Visher and Lattimore 2008). Approximately 40 percent also lack high school credentials, and many have few or outdated workforce skills, a significant barrier to securing employment. To compound the

What Is Community Supervision?

Many offenders serve some or all of their sentences through community supervision, which can include home detention and electronic monitoring, residential treatment, and day reporting centers (The Pew Center on the States 2009). Approximately 70 percent of those released from prison are placed under community supervision, a 10 percent increase since the 1970s (U.S. Department of Justice 2008). Probation and parole, as defined below, are the two most common types of community supervision. U.S. Department of Justice data from 2007 indicate that nearly 4.3 million adults in the United States are on probation. There are far fewer parolees, approximately 824,000. Probationers are typically lower-level offenders, while parolees are more likely to have been convicted of a violent crime or a drug offense (Glaze and Bonczar 2008, as cited in The Pew Center on the States 2009).

Probation allows offenders to serve their sentences outside of prison. Probationers remain in the community as long as they exhibit good behavior and meet other requirements under the supervision of a probation officer. Judges order offenders to serve probation and generally set their community supervision requirements, which can include finding and maintaining employment and participating in community-based correctional education, substance abuse treatment, or other programs. If probationers violate the conditions of their community supervision, a judge may impose additional probation requirements or require incarceration (The Pew Center on the States 2009).

Parolees are offenders who have been incarcerated and then released to complete the remainder of their sentences in the community. Supervised by a parole officer, they are required to follow rules and meet supervision requirements similar to those for probationers. They also face similar sanctions if they violate parole conditions (The Pew Center on the States 2009).

There are two types of parole: discretionary release and mandatory release. Parolees under discretionary release are screened by a parole board before their release to determine their readiness for community supervision. Parole boards consider criminal history, conduct while in prison, and inmates' established connections to organizations in the community, such as those that assist with employment or housing arrangements, among other factors. Under mandatory release, parolees serve their original sentence, minus time awarded for good behavior in prison. After release, these parolees serve the rest of their sentences under community supervision. Supervision conditions are largely the same for both types of parolees (Solomon, Kachinowski, and Bhati 2005).

employment problem, employers are often reluctant to hire individuals with criminal records, and some professions (e.g., in the fields of health care, education, government, etc.) bar their hiring entirely (Visher, Debus, and Yahner 2008).

A key component of a successful community supervision plan for those with criminal records must include services that provide education and workforce training, and access to resources that provide assistance in finding and maintaining employment that has a living wage. Such services, however, often are not available to those with criminal records, either while incarcerated or upon release from prison. Although most state and federal prisons offer a range of correctional education programs, participation in these programs has not kept pace with the growing prison population. In 1991, for example, 57 percent of state prisoners reported participating in correctional education programs, compared to 52 percent in 1997. During the same time period the prison population grew from less than 800,000 to nearly 1.2 million (Western, Schiraldi, and Ziedenberg 2003). Participation in correctional education has diminished further since 1997 for all types of education programs, including vocational programs as well as those leading to a high school credential. It is unclear, however, if participation rates have dropped because of long waiting lists for education programs, inmates choosing not to participate, or states cutting services because of budget constraints (Crayton and Neusteter 2008).

Correctional education opportunities are difficult to obtain when individuals are under community supervision. Although there are few data on participation in community-based correctional education programs (Crayton et al. 2008), a four-state longitudinal study of prisoner reentry indicates that few of these individuals participate in adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), English literacy, or vocational programs upon release.⁴ The reasons for the lack of program participation by former prisoners include, but are not limited to: a lack of programs or awareness of program opportunities; low personal motivation; and competing demands that take precedence over pursuing education, such as earning income and fulfilling community supervision requirements (Visher, Debus, and Yahner 2008). It is, therefore, not surprising that participants in the prisoner reentry study reported education, job training, and employment as vital needs not generally met during incarceration or after release (Visher and Lattimore 2008).

⁴ Adult basic education provides instruction in basic skills for adults, age 16 and over, functioning at literacy levels below the secondary level. Adult secondary education provides instruction at the high school level for adults seeking to pass the General Educational Development (GED) test or obtain an adult high school credential. English literacy instruction is for adults lacking proficiency in English and seeking to improve their literacy and competence in English.

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OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Although it is known that many persons under community supervision need and eventually want correctional education programs, little is known about the providers and characteristics of these educational programs. This report provides an overview of initiatives at the national and state levels supporting new approaches to community supervision and the types of education services available to those under community supervision. It is intended for adult education and criminal justice practitioners and administrators interested in establishing a community-based correctional education program or strengthening an existing program, as well as federal and state policymakers.

The report outlines the characteristics of community-based correctional education programs, including their organizational structure, target population, curriculum, instruction, instructor preparation, and partnerships. It also describes the challenges of community-based correctional education, shares collected advice on how such services can be strengthened, and discusses implications for federal and state policy.

The report is based on information gathered from discussions with representatives of 15 community-based correctional education programs in 10

Fifteen Community-based Correctional Education Programs

- Adult Learning Center, Nashua, N.H.
- Adult Literacy Plus of Southwest Arizona Literacy, Education, and Resources Network (LEARN), Yuma, Ariz.*
- Albany Technical College, Albany, Ga.
- Allen County Community Corrections, Fort Wayne, Ind.*
- Center for Employment Opportunities, New York, N.Y.*
- Contra Costa County Office of Education, Pleasant Hill, Calif.*
- Coosa Valley Technical College, Rome, Ga.
- Five Keys Charter School, San Francisco, Calif.*
- Gordon Bernell Charter School, Albuquerque, N.M.*
- Kilgore College Adult Education, Longview, Texas
- Moultrie Technical College, Moultrie, Ga.
- Pima County Adult Probation-Education Services, LEARN Program, Tucson, Ariz.*
- Safer Foundation, Chicago, Ill.*
- Victoria College Adult Education, Victoria, Texas*
- Washington Township Adult Education, Metropolitan School District, Washington Township, Ind.

* More detailed information was collected from these nine, more established programs.

states—Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas—chosen according to recommendations from researchers and practitioners in the field.⁵ The programs are listed in the box on this page. In examining these community-based correctional education programs, this report provides insight regarding the following questions:

1. What are federal and state policymakers and national organizations doing to support community-based correctional education programs?
2. What are the various organizational structures of community-based correctional education programs?
3. What target populations do these programs serve?
4. What curriculum and instructional approaches do community-based correctional education programs use and how do they prepare their instructors?
5. Who are their community partners?
6. What challenges do these programs face and how are those challenges being addressed?
7. What additional support do community-based correctional education programs need?

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, information included in this report comes from interviews with local program and state staff whose names and affiliations are provided in the acknowledgements section of this report.

PRISONER REENTRY AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES

Federal and Nationwide Practices and Strategies

The rising costs of operating correctional institutions and high rates of recidivism have caught the attention of federal policymakers and national organizations. The *Second Chance Act of 2007*, for example, authorizes several initiatives designed to support incarcerated individuals' reentry into society. These initiatives include the federal adult reentry demonstration project grants for jurisdictions with large numbers of ex-offenders. Grants support implementation of evidence-based practices that help improve the criminal justice process from initial incarceration to successful community reintegration. These practices can include institution- and community-based correctional education services, substance abuse treatment, and assistance with housing, mental health services, and health care. Other allowable services include prerelease assessment and case management, mentorship, education, services to enhance family reunification, job training and readiness, and post-release case management and supervision. Grant recipients must have the goal of reducing recidivism within their community by 50 percent within five years (U.S. Department of Justice 2009).

Further, the U.S. Department of Justice is collaborating with several national foundations, including the Pew Center on the States, the Open Society Institute, and the Joyce Foundation, to provide technical assistance to a select group of states to help them create policies to lower recidivism rates and save taxpayer funds. Titled "Justice Reinvestment," this strategy encourages states to analyze their prison populations and their spending in the "high-stakes" communities to which offenders often return, assist policymakers in identifying options to generate savings and increase public safety, reinvest those savings in the high-stakes communities, and measure and evaluate the impact of reinvestments.⁶

National public policy organizations, such as the Council of State Governments and the National Governors Association, also have launched initiatives to help states develop, coordinate, and promote state and local strategies for addressing the challenges of prisoner reentry. The Council of State Governments, for example, recently established the National Reentry Resource Center to provide training, technical assistance, tools, and resources to support the *Second Chance Act of 2007* prisoner reentry grantees.⁷

⁶ For more information on the Justice Reinvestment project, visit <http://justicereinvestment.org>, for additional details regarding the projects, facts and trends, federal legislation, etc.

⁷ For more information on the National Reentry Resource Center, visit <http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org>.

State Practices and Strategies

State responses to prison overcrowding, rising corrections expenditures, and high rates of recidivism vary. Some states continue to take the brick-and-mortar approach by building more prisons despite their budget constraints (German et al. 2008). With the support of the federal and national initiatives noted in the previous section and other initiatives, however, a growing number of states are working to identify effective strategies and practices, including community-based correctional education, to improve the reentry process for their incarcerated population (The Pew Center on the States 2009). These efforts range from receiving technical assistance from the federal government or national organizations to establishing a centralized, high-profile coordinating body to oversee local and statewide reentry efforts. Sixty-eight *Second Chance Act of 2007* awards were made in September of 2009 totaling just over \$28 million (National Reentry Resource Center 2010), and 14 states are part of the Justice Reinvestment project (The Council of State Governments Justice Center 2010).⁸ Michigan and New Jersey are examples of states with a centralized, high-profile coordinating body to oversee local and statewide reentry efforts. Michigan developed the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI), a holistic, three-phase approach to corrections management. Phase I, the institutional phase, starts at the beginning of incarceration and ends at the point of a parole decision. Phase II, the transition-to-community phase, occurs following a parole decision until actual release. Phase III, the community-and-discharge phase, begins when the prisoner is released from prison and continues until discharge from community parole supervision. Led by the Office of the Governor and the Michigan Department of Corrections, the MPRI approach begins with assessing and classifying prisoners based on their risks, needs, and strengths, and then assigning them to the appropriate programs, including correctional education, while incarcerated. Approximately two months before release, a reentry plan is developed to address such common reentry issues as housing, employment, education and training, substance abuse, physical and mental health care, family reunification, and other reentry challenges combined with a parole supervision plan. Phase IV of MPRI focuses on the individual's transition back into society and implementation of the complete reentry plan.

Although partnerships are important throughout the three MPRI phases, collaboration among partners is particularly important during the final phase. This is when former prisoners become engaged with a transition team made up of local service-provider agencies. The supervising parole agent serves as the case manager. It is the responsibility of the former prisoner and members of the transition team to

⁸ For more information on states participating in the Justice Reinvestment project, visit <http://justicereinvestment.org/states>.

carry out the reentry plan. When discharged from parole, if the former prisoner requires continued support, the case management responsibility shifts from the supervising parole agent to another member of the transition team who is familiar with the case and has responsibility for addressing the former prisoner's continuing needs. This support may include requiring the former prisoner to participate in programs such as community-based correctional education. An education referral, however, is determined by individual needs and currently is not a state mandate for everyone under community supervision in Michigan.⁹

New Jersey also has developed a comprehensive approach to reentry, the Safe Streets and Neighborhoods initiative, within the state's anticrime initiative. The reentry effort is one of three main areas of focus—prevention, law enforcement, and reentry—each with its own statewide director. The reentry director is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the state reentry plan are implemented, including reentry initiatives sponsored by various state government agencies. As noted by Joseph Fanaroff, deputy attorney general of New Jersey, “Ultimately, it is [the reentry director's] responsibility to make sure all initiative components are operating and consistent with the governor's vision to use reentry as a conduit for improving the lives of ex-offenders, lowering the recidivism rate, and making the community safer.”

The components of New Jersey's reentry initiative differ from those of Michigan, and typically are supported by public and private partnerships and a diverse funding base, including significant funds from a state foundation, the Nicholson Foundation. Two components focus specifically on female offenders. Computer-Based Learning from Prison to Community, a computer-based education program available in prison and via distance learning after release, is designed to increase the skill levels and employability of incarcerated women (see Computer-Based Learning from Prison to Community on p. 10 for more details). The Female Offender Reentry Group Effort (FORGE) provides gender-specific reentry services for female offenders. These include case management and a full range of reentry services, such as employment, housing, health care, education, and social services. According to an evaluation completed by the Economic Development Research Group at the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, FORGE participants have lower recidivism rates than those not enrolled in the program (The Nicholson Foundation, n.d.).¹⁰

⁹ For additional information about MPRI, visit <http://www.michpri.com>.

¹⁰ For more information on New Jersey programs supported by the Nicholson Foundation, visit <http://www.thenicholsonfoundation-newjersey.org/programs/cr>.

Computer-based Learning from Prison to Community Program, New Jersey

P2C is a voluntary, innovative correctional education program for female offenders that begins in prison and follows them into the community. While incarcerated, the women take courses via a special prison-dedicated, computer-based learning system. When released to halfway houses, they begin employment (through work-release programs) and are connected with the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the one-stop system, designed to provide a wide range of employment and training assistance to job seekers. In the last stage, they can continue their education through online courses at home and receive assistance through the one-stop system (McKay and Murphree 2008).

According to an evaluation report on the P2C project, “P2C seeks to bridge the digital divide for incarcerated women in New Jersey. Its goal is to prepare these women for ‘real jobs in the real world.’ It does this by providing on-site access to computers equipped with the latest software and a program of study that is systematic and comprehensive in teaching relevant and up-to-date skills. It is also unique in its promise of computer ownership for successful program participants upon their release from prison” (McKay and Murphree 2008, p. 3).

P2C offers instruction in academic, life, and workforce-readiness skills. Courses include basic and applied math, fundamentals of math, English and basic writing skills, and all major Microsoft Office Applications (Access, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook). The program uses a blended model—combining “high-tech” with “high-touch” learning—to prevent a feeling of isolation among participants. While students develop their skills through the computer-based programs, they work with instructors in the computer lab on related activities, such as drafting resumes, presentations, and holding mock interviews. When students complete the program, they receive a certificate serving as proof of their training (McKay and Murphree 2008). For more information about P2C, visit <http://www.business-access.net/about/Raising%20the%20Bars%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

Other components of New Jersey’s reentry initiative include Opportunity Reconnect, which serves as a one-stop reentry center staffed by case managers and offers access to programs and services (many on-site at the one-stop center), such as education, training, employment and housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, health care and mental health services, and mentoring. Case managers work with parole and probation officers to ensure that offenders’ reentry plans are being followed. Another component is Project Next Step, which encourages offenders to advance their careers by providing postsecondary education to those who are incarcerated or living in halfway houses. Participants have access not only to college courses, but also to job training, other educational programs, case management, treatment services, and academic and personal counseling. Many of these reentry components target specific regions of New Jersey, but, with encouragement and assistance from the reentry director, some have been or currently are being expanded and replicated in other regions of the state (The Nicholson Foundation, n.d.).

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Just as state approaches to reentry and community supervision vary, so do community-based correctional education programs within states and across the country providing services to those under community supervision. This section describes the various organizational structures of community-based correctional education programs, the populations they serve, and the education programs and other services they offer.

Organizational Structure

The organization of community-based correctional education programs, particularly their governance structure, funding base, and reporting requirements, varies depending on provider type. The most common provider types are public school systems (e.g., Washington Township Adult Education in Indiana); community colleges (e.g., Victoria College Adult Education in Texas and Moultrie Technical College in Georgia); criminal justice agencies (e.g., Allen County Community Corrections in Indiana and Pima County Adult Probation Education Services in Arizona); and nonprofits (e.g., Center for Employment Opportunities in New York and the Safer Foundation in Illinois).

Several charter schools also offer correctional education services to adults under community supervision, including the Gordon Bernell Charter School in New Mexico and the Five Keys Charter School in California. Both operate as fully accredited, comprehensive adult high schools with charters through their local school districts. They also offer students high school diplomas. In addition, Five Keys offers General Educational Development (GED) preparation and workforce development services. As part of their charters, Gordon Bernell and Five Keys are overseen by a governance council or board composed of key stakeholders from their communities. The board of Five Keys, for example, is composed of seven members, representing the sheriff's department, educators, and community agencies. Two nonvoting members, the school's executive director and legal counsel, also sit on the board. The board oversees the operation and fiscal affairs of the school, and the hiring and evaluation of the school's executive director, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school.

As charter schools, Gordon Bernell and Five Keys have relatively stable funding bases. Gordon Bernell, for example, receives public high school funds, roughly \$2 million annually, based on its projected number of students (250 in the 2008–09 school year). Most other provider types rely on a mix of state and federal adult education funding, state corrections appropriations, and private funds. Several

nonprofit providers, such as the Safer Foundation and the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), have been particularly effective in attracting foundation and other private funds, as well as city, state, and federal funds, to offer comprehensive employment and education services. In 2008, CEO had an operating budget of approximately \$14 million derived primarily from state and local government contracts and private contributions.

Like Gordon Bernell and Five Keys charter schools, CEO and the Safer Foundation are overseen by boards. Composed of representatives from corrections, education, social services, and business, their boards are primarily responsible for setting policy for the organizations and monitoring operations. Allen County Community Corrections (ACCC), authorized by Indiana state statute to help offenders make the transition from incarceration to society through education and treatment services, is also accountable to an advisory board (see Allen County Community Corrections on p. 13 for a more detailed description of ACCC's history and education services). The state statute describes the duties of the advisory board and its composition, which includes the local sheriff, area judges, a defense attorney, a victim of a crime or victim advocate, an ex-offender, a probation officer, and representatives from various social service agencies.

ACCC, CEO, the Safer Foundation, and the charter schools are responsible not only to their boards, but also must meet the reporting and performance requirements of their funders. For example, the two charter schools, which receive state public school funds, must ensure that their students meet state high school graduation requirements and must provide their outcome data to their state education departments. All other types of providers, which by and large do not have boards overseeing their work, also must meet their funders' reporting requirements. Most of these programs receive corrections appropriations and/or state and federal adult education funds. Those receiving federal adult education funds must report data on measures set by the National Reporting System (NRS) for Adult Education Programs.¹¹ Some programs have indicated challenges providing these data because students do not stay in their programs long enough to meet the NRS 12-hour instruction and posttesting requirements. These students instead are busy meeting

¹¹ The NRS is an accountability system developed by the U.S. Department of Education for state-administered, federally funded adult education programs. States must report data for a set of core and secondary measures. The core measures, which apply to all adult education students receiving 12 or more hours of service, are educational gain, entered employment, retained employment, receipt of secondary school diploma or GED certificate, and placement in postsecondary education or training. The secondary measures include additional outcome measures related to employment, family, and community. To document student educational gain, local adult education programs are required to pre- and posttest within a specified time frame using a federally approved, standardized assessment.

other competing, higher-priority sentencing requirements, including employment, drug treatment, and anger management, that can prevent them from fulfilling the instructional-hours requirement or persisting long enough to be post-tested.

Allen County Community Corrections, Indiana

In 1999, the Indiana General Assembly passed a statute allowing each county to develop its own community supervision transition program for inmates released from incarceration to serve the remainder of their sentence in the community. The statute allowed county superior court judges in each county to determine the level of community supervision. Judge John Surbeck of the Allen County Superior Court partnered with the executive director of Allen County Community Corrections (ACCC) and officials from the City of Fort Wayne and the U.S. Department of Justice to create the Allen County Reentry Court Project, a voluntary 12-month program for individuals under community supervision.

The project's mission is to lower the recidivism rate for offenders returning to Allen County, gradually reducing an offender's level of community supervision with the simultaneous goal of maintaining public safety. Those under community supervision must agree to participate in the program, as do friends or family with whom they intend to live. After learning about the program and the conditions of electronic monitoring and supervision, all of these individuals must sign an agreement accepting the conditions of the Reentry Court.

After the agreement has been signed, the intake process begins, including several assessments to determine offenders' needs, such as mental health services, and potential risks to the community. Based on the assessments, a reentry team (comprised of ACCC staff) makes recommendations to the judge about the content of an individual's reintegration plan as well as sanctions or rewards appropriate for each participant. The reintegration plan may include education, workforce training, and treatment services, which are provided by ACCC and its partners. ACCC, for example, provides ABE, ASE, and English literacy instruction. It also has developed a 30-hour job academy to help individuals find and maintain employment and offers treatment services, including mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment. ACCC also partners with local university and educational programs for GED testing and other educational services.

The Reentry Court is funded by a per-diem payment from the Indiana Department of Correction and offender reimbursements of cash or community service work. The Department of Correction agreed to pay counties accepting inmates under the community supervision transition program \$15 per day for each prisoner entering the program of community supervision. The per diem covers a portion of the cost of supervision. While an offender is charged a daily fee to participate in the program, it is waived for the first 60 days they participate in the Reentry Court Project. Afterward, the participant pays \$7 per day for the remaining time on electronic monitoring. A community service crew run by ACCC allows individuals to work off the first 30 days of fees at a rate of \$5.50 per hour, if participants elect to do so.

Target Population

Student Composition

Programs interviewed for this report also differ in their target populations. Some programs serve only those under community supervision. CEO and the Safer Foundation serve probationers and parolees; the Safer Foundation also serves those with criminal records who have completed their sentences and individuals who are still incarcerated. Other programs target only specific groups under community supervision; ACCC, for example, only serves probationers. Other programs serve a mix of those under community supervision and the general population, including Five Keys Charter School, Gordon Bernell Charter School, Adult Literacy Plus of Southwest Arizona, Pima County Adult Probation Education Services in Arizona, and the Adult Learning Center in New Hampshire. For some of these programs, serving individuals under community supervision is their primary objective. For others, their student population is primarily composed of individuals from the general population, with only a few under community supervision.

Most programs do not need to recruit students actively; instead, students generally are referred by their parole or probation officers or learn about the program by word of mouth. In some cases, based on the student's skill level, other responsibilities, and location, the community-based correctional education programs refer students to other adult education providers. These referrals generally occur because the program believes that another provider may: (1) be more convenient, both in terms of scheduling and location; (2) offer childcare or other supports that the student needs; or (3) be a better match for the student's skill level.

Student Educational Skill Levels

Students come to these programs to improve their basic skills, earn a high school or GED diploma, and develop their workforce skills. Not all programs specifically target those with low education levels. At least two programs, CEO and the Safer Foundation, specialize in workforce preparation and training, regardless of an individuals' previous educational attainment.

To determine the skill level of their students, most of the community-based correctional education programs use some form of assessment on intake. These include the more common adult education assessments (Test of Adult Basic Education or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems), the Level of Service Inventory–Revised (LSI-R) assessment designed for offenders, or program-specific assessments. For example, when an individual enters the community corrections programs, ACCC uses the LSI-R assessment, which identifies the last level of education achieved by an offender as well any existing learning or mental disabilities. Offenders without a high school credential are referred to ACCC's ABE

and ASE programs. Those who score below the fourth- grade level typically are referred to another local adult education program that specializes in serving adults with very low literacy levels. These particular students require significant time to make the educational gains needed to earn a high school credential. Offenders with needs (e.g., substance abuse treatment) in addition to or other than education, as identified by the LSI-R, also are served by ACCC or its partners.

Students in all community-based correctional education programs, however, generally have lower literacy and workforce skills than their counterparts in the general population. Although there are few data available on the education levels of those under community supervision, data are available on incarcerated individuals, 95 percent of whom eventually will be released. According to the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy's findings, released in May of 2007, 35 percent of inmates near release did not have a high school credential, compared to 18 percent of the general population. Fewer inmates had completed college courses or obtained a college-level degree or certificate than had completed high school (Amodeo, Jin, and King 2009). Moreover, fewer inmates thereafter were participating in work experience and vocational education while incarcerated than in prior years (Solomon, Kachinowski, and Bhati, 2004). About 75 percent of inmates have no computer experience, compared to only 25 percent of the general population (Amodeo, Jim, and King, 2009).

This lack of education and work experience puts those released from incarceration and under community supervision at a significant disadvantage compared to the general population. Not only do they face a labor market that increasingly requires postsecondary education degrees or certificates (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007), but incarceration also has been shown to undermine the ability to find and maintain a living-wage job (Bushway 1998).

Curriculum, Instructional Approaches, and Instructor Preparation

Curriculum

Given the education and workforce needs of their target populations, community-based correctional education programs typically offer ABE, ASE, English literacy, and workforce preparation and vocational courses to equip offenders with the academic and occupational skills needed to find and maintain employment. As mentioned earlier, of the entities included in this report, Gordon Bernell and Five Keys charter schools offer a high school curriculum leading to a high school diploma. Most other programs offer traditional adult education, including ABE, ASE, and English literacy.

Several programs, such as CEO and the Safer Foundation discussed in this report, also offer vocational or employment training programs. CEO, for example, offers a comprehensive employment training program that includes pre-employment job-readiness training, career counseling, paid transitional employment, job development, unsubsidized employment placement, and post-placement support. CEO recently established an education academy that provides clients that test at an eighth-grade math level with additional education services once they are employed for three months. Offered at night, the academy has three parts:

- **Academic Preparation:** A 10-week, 50-hour academic bridge program that prepares students for the trade certificate program (see next bullet).
- **Trade Certificate Program:** A 115-hour training course offered in partnership with a local community college. Students successfully completing this program receive a college-level vocational certificate in their focus area (e.g., electricity, plumbing, or refrigeration mechanics).
- **Job Placement:** After students complete the academic preparation and trade certificate programs, CEO helps place them in related jobs that provide a living wage and opportunity for career advancement.

CEO, like many of the other programs interviewed for this report, also provides—or refers students to—other services to meet their diverse needs. The Victoria College’s Adult Education in Texas, for example, gives students access to the college’s student transition and retention team to help them move on to postsecondary education. Contra Costa County Office of Education in California offers a substance abuse program that includes instruction on the process of recovery, stress and anger management, healthy personal relationships, and relapse prevention. Similarly, ACCC takes a holistic approach to the services it provides to individuals under community supervision, offering mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and cognitive therapy, in addition to education services.

Instructional Approaches

The programs reviewed for this report take varied approaches to the education and workforce training courses they offer. Most courses are classroom-based. Although the Safer Foundation also uses a classroom-based approach for ABE and ASE instruction, it uses a unique instructional model—the peer-learning model—in all educational courses. Developed by the Safer Foundation, peer learning involves students working in groups of three to five people supervised by a staff facilitator. The Safer Foundation staff report that this approach cuts down on disruptive behavior and makes positive use of clients’ tendency to be easily swayed by peers in the classroom.

As noted by Joyce Bowen, associate vice president of educational services at the Safer Foundation, “Many of our clients have not had success in traditional school settings. Our approach addresses this issue. Our teachers, for example, are called ‘facilitators,’ because they facilitate learning. We do not rely on textbooks, and learning takes place in real-life situations. Assignments are often created on the spot, although goals and lesson plans also are developed.” She also reported that the Safer Foundation’s approach to instruction promotes self-esteem because each member of the group can make an important contribution to the learning process.

Other programs combine classroom-based and distance learning. Victoria College Adult Education, for example, offers both traditional, classroom-based adult education and distance learning. Students can choose either the classroom-based or distance-learning approach, or the approaches can be combined according to a student’s needs and circumstances. The LEARN (Literacy Education And Resource Network) centers in Arizona, including Pima County Adult Probation LEARN and Adult Literacy Plus of Southwest Arizona LEARN, offer a teacher-assisted computer-based learning program using a variety of software. The program includes ABE, ASE, GED testing, and computer literacy, although each of the 32 LEARN centers in the state determines the programming best suited to students’ needs (For more information on LEARN, see Project LEARN, Arizona on p. 18).

Similarly, Contra Costa County Office of Education’s Computer Literacy Learning Centers (CLLC) offers ABE, ASE, workforce readiness, short-term vocational preparation, and life skills training in parole offices through a teacher-directed, self-paced computer-based format combined with small- and large-group instruction. CLLC’s goal is to raise students’ skill levels at least two levels on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems test, which has been shown to lower their recidivism rates compared to nonparticipants (Zhang, Roberts, and Callanan 2006).

Project LEARN, Arizona

Project LEARN (Literacy, Education, and Resource Network) is a statewide literacy initiative established by the Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in 1987 with a first site in Tucson. Recognizing the high correlation between crime and illiteracy, the AOC sought to increase educational opportunities for youth and adults at risk of delinquency or criminal behavior. Project LEARN supports “implementation of alternative education programs in a rehabilitative effort to reduce the likelihood of continued delinquent or criminal behavior” (State of Arizona Supreme Court, n.d., p. 1). There are currently 32 LEARN Centers throughout the state, some serving juveniles and others adults (State of Arizona Supreme Court, n.d.).

The LEARN program for adults is a nontraditional adult education program providing computer-assisted instruction and independent study in literacy, ABE, and ASE. Students have individual study plans, which are updated after each assessment of their skills. They can choose class hours that fit their schedules, depending on when the local LEARN center is open (State of Arizona Supreme Court, n.d.).

Project LEARN is funded with a variety of state and federal grant funds, local funds generated through partnerships, and in-kind contributions of equipment and services (State of Arizona Supreme Court, n.d.). The AOC provides equipment for sites, such as computers. Programs, including Pima County Adult Probation-Education Services LEARN and Adult Literacy Plus of Southwest Arizona LEARN, are responsible for instructors and facilities. Each site has a signed agreement with the AOC outlining the terms of the partnership (State of Arizona Supreme Court 2007). Participating programs are offered by a variety of provider types, ranging from probation departments to community-based organizations. Pima County LEARN, for example, was the fourth LEARN center established, but was the first probation department in the nation to offer adult education services in-house.

In the 1990s, Pima County LEARN conducted a five-year recidivism study for probationers served by LEARN centers. Probationers who had successfully completed both the adult LEARN program and community supervision were tracked and their outcomes compared to a group of similar probationers not ordered by the court to attend the program. While there was a slight increase in arrests and convictions during the fourth year of follow-up, program graduates had consistently lower arrests and conviction rates than the control group (State of Arizona Supreme Court 2007).

Instructor Preparation

Most programs reported similar requirements for their instructors, including a bachelor’s degree, interest and willingness to work with this specific population, and previous related experience. Most programs also offer some professional development in adult education, but very few offer training specifically targeted to working with individuals under community supervision. A few programs offer some corrections training for their instructors, such as sending them to Correctional Education Association conferences and in-service security training or custody awareness orientation. Contra Costa County Office of Education, for example,

requires its CLLC staff to participate in a three-week training that covers the needs of the population and motivational interviewing, among other topics. Instructors also observe classrooms, with a coordinator present to answer questions, and are expected to participate in up to 30 hours of additional training each year, including quarterly full-day trainings and yearly multiday trainings, on topics determined by an annual needs survey.

At least one program has designed an instructor training approach specific to its client population. The Safer Foundation developed the Safer Institute to provide professional development and training to its staff and promote employee professional growth and development, keep staff abreast of the latest developments in the field of workforce development and reentry, and enhance the quality and consistency of client services to improve both clients' experiences with the Safer Foundation and their outcomes. The institute focuses on staff development to meet the needs of all of its employees, not just those in educational services. Core staff training includes project management, motivational interviewing, Franklin Covey's Four Disciplines of Execution, and workforce strategies training. Staff receive credit for their participation in training, which can facilitate promotions and salary increases. Education staff also participate in training at the state-funded Adult Learning Resource Center and in regional adult education conferences as well as in policy, security, and self-defense training provided by the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Like the Safer Foundation, several programs also use training available through their correctional agency partners. The Gordon Bernell Charter School, for example, requires new staff to participate in mandatory 40-hour training at the local jail, which is the same security training that corrections officers take. The staff also participate in refresher training each summer. This is helpful because, by the end of the year, staff often begin to disregard the security concerns which their students have the potential to create.

Security training and other professional development related to serving offenders are typically provided for staff in programs located in correctional facilities. ACCC, for example, provides its entire staff with in-service training on security issues, self-defense, and motivational interviewing. In addition, instructors are required to participate in a three-month training program before they can co-facilitate a class.

Partnerships

The community-based correctional education programs interviewed for this report rely on a diverse group of partners to help support their students. Most commonly, they partner with representatives of the criminal justice system, including parole and probation officers, residential facilities, and courts. Out of the representatives of the

15 programs interviewed for this report, for example, at least three programs—the two LEARN centers and ACCC—have strong relationships with their court systems (see Allen County Community Corrections on p. 13 and Project LEARN on p. 18 for a description of their partnerships with the courts).

All the programs also partner in some way with parole and/or probation officers. Some have developed formal relationships with these officials, while others collaborate more informally. Most programs share data, particularly attendance data, with their students' parole and probation officers. In many cases, attendance is a requirement of an individual's community supervision plan and, therefore, parole and probation officers need the attendance data to ensure their clients are meeting the terms of their community supervision. In addition to sharing attendance data, Five Keys Charter School, for example, also receives support from probation officers and the sheriff's department when there is a discipline issue or another problem with a student. Also, the sheriff's department founded Five Keys, operates the school's main post-release sites, and serves on the school's board.

In addition to collaborating with their criminal justice systems, some programs also work closely with libraries, state and local social service agencies, businesses, workforce investment agencies, and nonprofit agencies. Victoria College Adult Education in Texas, for example, refers its students to such local organizations, agencies, and programs as the one-stop career centers, Head Start, Women's Crisis Center, Mid-Coast Family Services Counseling Center, Even Start, the Salvation Army, and the local food bank. CEO and the Safer Foundation have developed strong relationships with area businesses. Through these partnerships, CEO, for example, has found employment for its clients in over 500 area businesses and organizations. CEO also has received curriculum development support from an area literacy organization.

CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Challenges

The programs described herein are strongly focused on helping offenders gain the skills they need to be productive members of society. For some, it's the sole mission of the program. For others, individuals under community supervisions are just one segment of their student population requiring additional support to improve their education and workforce skills.

Working with individuals under community supervision, however, is not without its challenges. Moving from incarceration to the community is not a smooth process for most, and getting an education is often a lower priority for these individuals as well as for their parole and probation officers. Many offenders struggle with substance abuse, lack of motivation, and financial issues that can encompass unemployment, as well as adequate housing, transportation, and medical care. Community-based correctional education programs must be ready to address these factors in order to enable offenders to reintegrate successfully into their communities and avoid recidivating.

Students' lack of motivation and competing demands seem to be the most common and pressing challenges these programs face. For most students and their parole or probation officers, the ultimate goal is for the student to find employment. Participation in education classes, in some cases, can be voluntary. For example, according to the Contra Costa County Office of Education, students often enter their education programs for a limited time until they get a job. Because they do not complete the education program, however, they are generally not well prepared for employment, and many ultimately return to Contra Costa for additional services. In an attempt to address this, Contra Costa provides instruction incentives for students, using supplemental grant money. Instructional incentives are tangible incentives, such as day planners, calculators, dictionaries, and pens. Students receive incentives for the number of hours of participation, taking tests, and achieving their educational goals.

Some programs, like Five Keys, benefit from a court mandate requiring offenders without a high school diploma to attend school every day. Although students generally do not like to be required to attend school, the mandate at least gets them in the front door, and then it is up to the instructor to motivate them to learn. Other programs, like ACCC, are housed within a correctional agency and, according to education facilitator Shari Bochard-Pentecost, that type of environment typically gives the "education services more teeth and gives the students more reason to comply."

Requiring offenders to participate in education programs as part of their community supervision plans also can pose challenges. Often, they are required to earn a GED within a set period of time. This may be an unrealistic requirement, particularly, for those with low-literacy skills, who typically need longer to make such educational gains. As a result, the student is predisposed to failure unless the program is able to convince the judge or officer overseeing the community supervision plan that the individual needs more time to meet the educational requirement.

Another common challenge facing those running community-based correctional education programs interviewed for this report is the lack of coordination and information sharing with the correctional institution that housed the individual prior to being released into community supervision. Although most correctional institutions offer education services, these services are typically not aligned with the services offered in the community. Similarly, the correctional education data collected by correctional institutions generally do not align with the data used by community-based correctional education programs. This disconnect within the correctional system only adds to an already difficult transition process for offenders.

Suggested Solutions

Providers interested in offering community-based correctional education can learn from the experiences of these programs and the advice they offer. Many program representatives, for example, stressed the importance of data. Although all programs collect some data, more data are needed, particularly on student outcomes. Such data can help gain the support of policymakers and the public and attract new partners.

As noted by Greta Roskom, director of the Gordon Bernell Charter School, “We see the big picture here, in terms of the kind of support gotten from the county, legislators, all the way up to the governor—the whole project is considered a public safety initiative. The mission of the school is to not only change the lives of individuals, but also reduce recidivism and increase employment.” She further states, “It is not necessarily an easy sell that \$2 million is being spent on offenders when we are already spending so much on them. You really need to be able to show them the results. That is why I preach to my staff: ‘Document and collect data.’ We need to demonstrate to policymakers as well as taxpayers that this is a good investment.”

Like many other program directors, Roskom also believes that developing partnerships with “everyone who is within your sphere of influence” is critically important. Probation and parole officers are crucial partners for any program working with those under community supervision. The program directors recommend open and frequent communication with these officers to ensure that offenders’ community supervision plans are being implemented. Other key partners

are those who can provide needed services not available through the program, such as social services and drug treatment centers, as well as businesses interested in employing the students once they have completed the education or workforce training program.

In addition to data and partnerships, the program representatives interviewed for this report emphasized the importance of hiring good instructors. They all noted that it is not credentials or training that makes the difference between a good instructor and a bad one; the difference, rather, is the degree to which the instructor does or does not project a caring attitude reflecting a belief that everyone deserves a second chance. Teachers who project a caring and nonjudgmental attitude can energize students initially lacking motivation.

Interviewees also pointed out that providers interested in offering community-based correctional education services also should make use of reentry resources being developed by federal and nationwide organizations (as described on p. 7–10) rather than working to create them anew.

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POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Although states, nationwide organizations, and the federal government are supporting reentry efforts across the country, more work is needed by policymakers at all levels of government. The various components of reentry initiatives, including community-based correctional education, need to be further studied and evaluated. Answers to the following questions on data identification and collection as well as more programmatic issues would help inform community-based correctional education policy:

- What are the education and employment outcomes of these programs? That is, how can they demonstrate success or identify areas needing improvement? Are these programs effective in increasing educational levels, providing students with the skills needed for employment, and reducing recidivism?
- What instructional approaches (e.g., classroom-based, distance learning, etc.) are most effective with individuals under community supervision?
- What curricula (e.g., academic, vocational, workforce-readiness skills) are more likely to help students find and maintain employment?
- How widespread are community-based correctional education programs across the country?
- How can community-based correctional education programs link more effectively to education programs offered in correctional facilities and postsecondary education institutions, so there is greater continuity?

For research and evaluation projects to be successful, however, community-based correctional education programs need more support in collecting and analyzing their own data. They also need assistance with linking to the data collected by correctional institutions before offenders are released, as well as to follow-up data once individuals have completed their sentence and exited the community-based correctional education program.

Programs also need additional guidance on professional development for their instructors and staff. Currently, most community-based correctional education programs do not provide specific training related to serving individuals under community supervision. Given the many challenges these individuals face and their diverse needs, some targeted training programs would likely benefit both staff and students of community-based correctional education programs.

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CONCLUSION

The information currently available on education services offered in correctional facilities indicates that it can be an effective method for preparing individuals for their eventual release into and from community supervision. Yet, little is known about the effects of those same services offered in the community to those on parole or probation. Research does show, however, that community supervision is not effective on its own; rather, it should be combined with treatment services and other support. Research also shows that those with a criminal record generally have lower literacy and workforce skills than their counterparts in the general population. Given these facts, combining community supervision with community-based correctional education and other support, depending on the needs of the individual, may be a viable and more cost-efficient alternative to incarceration that will improve public safety and decrease recidivism rates.

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