



The Importance of Comprehensive Educational Services for Youth in Adult Correctional Facilities

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As of School Year (SY) 2005-2006, youth educated in adult correctional facilities represent nearly 22% of the total Title I, Part D funded students. Nearly every State reported spending Part D dollars to educate youth in such facilities yet the comprehensiveness of the educational services provided varies greatly around the country. There are inherent difficulties with educating youth populations within adult facilities in terms of security, resource allocation and logistics. However, comprehensive educational services for all inmates in adult facilities, including youthful offenders is possible and beneficial. As the research presented here demonstrates, educating youth and adults in correctional facilities may, following release, directly decrease the likelihood of an inmate's re-involvement with the justice system, improve their social and vocational opportunities, and increase the safety of the communities to which these individuals return. Thus, NDTAC strongly encourages all States to examine how their Part D funds are being used in adult facilities, working toward providing comprehensive services and to find ways to attract and retain those youth not currently participating in educational programming.

By the Numbers: Youth in Adult Facilities

A recent report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) provides a snapshot of those individuals under the age of 18 residing in America's jails and prisons. Additionally, Consolidated State Performance data indicates that this population is significant in terms of Part D dollars spent.

The number of persons under age 18 in State prisons increased at midyear 2006.

- During the 12 months ending June 30, 2006, the number of juveniles in State prisons increased by 156 persons to reach 2,364, a 7.1% increase. This is the first annual increase in the number of persons under age 18 since 1995 [1].
- All but seven States housed at least one juvenile prisoner. Five States – Connecticut (425), New York (219), Florida (221), North Carolina (188), and Texas (162) – accounted for more than half of all juveniles held in State prisons [1].

From 2005 to 2006 the number of juveniles held in adult jails declined by 1.0%.

- Juveniles held as adults dropped 16% in the 12 months ending June 30, 2006, but the number held as juveniles increased by 26%. Overall, the number of juveniles held in local jails decreased 20% between 2000 and 2006 [1].

During SY 2005-2006, States reported serving 29,135 juveniles with Title I, Part D funds in adult correctional facilities.

The Need for Education for Youth in Adult Facilities

According to a 2000 national assessment conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, in addition to special management and programming needs, "youthful offenders need educational programming that is...structured, thorough, and intensive" [2]. The authors of the assessment claim that it is important to ensure that facilities are both aware of and adhering to federal mandates to provide regular and special education services to youth in their care. Incarcerated youth are required to receive regular, special, and vocational education services in accordance with State laws for public schools, the rules and regulations

of state boards of education, and the regulations of the 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).¹

The same assessment recommended that youth in adult correctional facilities should be offered an average of 5.5 hours of daily instruction, 5 days a week, by qualified teachers, in an environment that facilitates learning. Additionally, youth ought to be assigned to grade levels with curricula that are in accordance with their educational level, and they should receive academic credit for their educational achievements [2].

The Realities of Educating Youth in Adult Facilities

According to a 2007 study comparing the services provided in both juvenile and adult correctional facilities, introducing a younger population of inmates into correctional facilities accustomed to only adults may create practical problems for staff in these facilities:

- Protecting a more vulnerable population of youth may mean extra guards or enhanced surveillance to protect them.
- Overall, young prisoners cause more disorder and commit more acts of violence than adults in prisons and thus may require enhanced discipline and security measures to prevent them from committing crimes while incarcerated.
- Compliance with the “sight and sound” separation rule initially established by the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which requires that youth not be mixed with general adult populations, may be burdensome for prisons that can hardly afford space to create isolated youth wings.²
- Providing required educational curricula or even fresh milk (per Federal lunch requirements) might add to the difficulties of punishing youth in adult facilities, as well [3].

An example of education requirements in adult facilities

The same study found that like in most juvenile facilities, there are facility administrators who directly supervise the counseling, treatment, and educational programs in the adult facilities. The adult facilities in this study had stringent education requirements similar to those in the juvenile facilities, including:

- All inmates who test below a ninth-grade level in reading or math must be in school 5 days a week, for 3 hours a day of academics and 3 hours a day of vocational training.
- Any inmate younger than 21 with no high school degree (or GED) must be enrolled in school as well.
- Special educational programs for learning disabled students are available at these prisons due to their status as prisons specializing in young inmates [3].

The reports of inmates in the above-mentioned study indicated that “while adult facilities [often] offer a variety of institutional services, they [sometimes] fail to foster positive staff–inmate interaction.” The report’s author concludes that perhaps it is the case that adult facilities have few programs per capita, but these programs are only used by a small proportion of inmates – young adults. As a result, use of treatment and educational services would be concentrated among these youngest inmates [3].

¹ Although there are no national figures on the number of special education youth who are incarcerated, it is estimated at between 30 and 50 percent require this service. A study by Leone and Meisel (2000) on the proportion of special education youth incarcerated in Arizona, Florida, and Maine indicates that between 42 and 60 percent of the juvenile populations are classified as special education. The authors of the 2000 national assessment contend that this estimate shows the importance of ensuring that adequate special education services are available to those juveniles who are incarcerated. Further, they assert that proper identification of youth with special education needs, exposure to special education curriculum, and teachers certified as special education instructors should be available to juveniles in adult prisons as well as those in juvenile facilities [2].

² The 1974 Act applies to juveniles held in juvenile court jails but not to those transferred to criminal court and sentenced to adult prisons (Austin et al., 2000), though many states maintain sight and sound separation of juveniles and adults in prisons as well (Austin et al., 2000; National Institute of Corrections, 1995).

By the Numbers: Education and Correctional Populations

According to at 2003 BJS *Special Report*, about 9 in 10 State prisons, all Federal prisons, and almost 9 in 10 private prisons provide educational programs for their inmates. These facilities generally hold persons sentenced to at least a year in prison, giving inmates a long period to concentrate on achieving educational goals. By contrast, local jails house persons from arraignment through conviction and for short sentences. Approximately 6 in 10 local jails provide educational programs for their inmates, even though jail inmates generally stay for short time periods [4]. Additional education trends in adult facilities included in the report are:

- Secondary education programs, which focus on preparing for the GED, were the most prevalent type of courses in 2000. Over 8 in 10 State prisons, almost all Federal prisons, about 7 in 10 private prisons, and over half of jails offered high school level classes. Next most common were classes in basic arithmetic and reading, with 8 in 10 State prisons, almost all Federal prisons, 6 in 10 private prisons, and 1 in 4 local jails offering basic education programs.
- In State prisons between 1995 and 2000, the percentages of prisons offering classes increased for basic education (76% to 80%), high school courses (80% to 84%), and special education programs (33% to 40%), while the percentage with college classes went down (31% to 27%).
- Vocational training, special programs designed to train participants for a job, were reported by 56% of State prisons, 94% of Federal prisons, 44% of private prisons, and 7% of local jails [4].

Over half of inmates reported participating in an educational program since their most recent prison admission.

The same BJS report demonstrated that many inmates have taken advantage of educational opportunities while they were incarcerated. About 52% of State prison inmates, 57% of Federal inmates, and 14% of jail inmates said they had taken education classes since admission to a correctional facility or their most recent sentence to probation. Of these, vocational programs and high school or GED preparation classes were most popular. About a third of State and Federal prison inmates had participated in vocational training to learn particular job skills. About a quarter of prison inmates took high school level classes. Among jail inmates, 5% had vocational training and 9%, high school classes [4].

Less educated inmates are more likely than more educated inmates to be recidivists, convicted as juveniles.

State prison inmates without a high school diploma and those with a GED were more likely to have a prior sentence than those with a diploma or some college or other postsecondary courses. Similarly, less educated inmates were more likely than those with more education to have been sentenced as a juvenile [4].

The Positive Effects of Education for Incarcerated Persons, Facilities and Society at Large

Arguably the most best large-scale correctional education research study to date was conducted by Streur, Smith and Tracy (2001). The study, the design of which was reviewed by a number of highly regarded correctional researchers, highlights the positive impact education can have on reducing criminal behavior and improving the chances for successful employment after release from prison. For several reasons, the authors of the report conclude that education does make a difference for offenders, and the difference is significant in terms of reduced recidivism and the wages earned after release from incarceration [5]. Specific highlights from the report are explored below.

Key Findings on Recidivism³

The study monitored released inmates to see if they had any re-involvement with the justice system following their release. The study found:

- For re-arrest, re-conviction, and re-incarceration, correctional education participants had statistically significant lower rates of re-arrest when compared to the non-participants.
- Overall, there were no significant differences between the participants and non-participants in the types of new offenses committed. Both groups had less serious re-arrest offenses compared to their original offense for which they had been in prison [5].

Key Findings from Employment Outcomes

The study also tracked the employment outcomes of released inmates in the study. As a result, the researchers noted:

- While employment following release was high for both groups, for each of the three years wage earnings were reported, data showed that correctional education participants had higher earnings than non-participants [5].

Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program

Building on Streur, Smith and Tracey's work, a 2004 study hypothesized that there are two main reasons why researchers believe in-prison education can reduce future criminal activity. The first involves the impact of increased cognitive skills on changes in behavior and the second contends that participants can learn how to live a crime-free life by participating in education courses [6]. Applying this hypothesis to a cost-benefit analysis of incarceration versus education, the study's authors found that:

- Prison capacity expansion has been estimated to prevent 60,000 to 340,000 crimes per year with a respective cost of 200 million to 5.5 billion dollars.
- Once correctional education participants are released, they are about 10 to 20 percent less likely to re-offend than the average released prisoner.
- One million dollars spent on correctional education prevents about 600 crimes, while that same money invested in incarceration prevents 350 crimes.
- For each re-incarceration prevented by education, States save about \$20,000. One million dollars invested in education would prevent 26 re-incarcerations, for net future savings of \$600,000 [6].

So as research has demonstrated, providing comprehensive educational services to youth, and adults, in adult correctional facilities can lead to positive results for incarcerated individuals, the facilities themselves and society at large. While challenges will continue to exist in providing such services for youth in these facilities, proper planning in the use of Title I, Part D and other funds may help to overcome them. Additionally, reaching out to youth in facilities not currently participating in educational programs will likely improve their likelihood for success upon release. One State that has successfully planned and provided for the comprehensive education of youth held in their adult correctional facilities is Texas with the Windham School District (WSD). A brief overview of the WSD and its services is provided below. Additional, information regarding Title I student participation in Windham programs is provided at the end of this document. Texas and the WSD are only one system demonstrating success in educating youth in adult facilities. There are no doubt other States and localities that are providing similar educational programs and services and NDTAC is pleased to assist any State looking to improve their academic offerings in adult facilities.

³ Recidivism, thought most widely used, is not the only measurement of the success of correctional programming for inmates. Inmates may demonstrate measurable progress emotionally, mentally, or intellectually while incarcerated and may still recidivate (though often for lesser crimes than their original convictions). However, the event of an inmate, juvenile or adult, not re-entering the justice system is a positive demonstration of the impact of education and other correctional programming.

The Windham School District: Providing Quality Education in Adult Facilities [7]

The Windham School District (WSD) in Texas provides academic and vocational education to eligible offenders incarcerated within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). Windham operates in Institutional Division (ID) prisons and State Jail (SJD) facilities. Windham provides appropriate educational programs to meet the needs of the eligible offender population, thus reducing recidivism by assisting offenders in becoming productive members of society. Studies show that education and employment reduce recidivism and save tax dollars. The district, which began operation in 1969, was established by the Texas Legislature and was named by the Texas Board of Corrections for the late James M. Windham, a 24-year member of the Board. It is the first education system of such scope to be established within a statewide prison system. Classes are conducted in prison units across the state.

The mission of the Windham School District is to provide appropriate educational programming and services to meet the needs of the eligible offender population in TDCJ and reduce recidivism by assisting offenders in becoming responsible, productive members of their communities. The goals of WSD are:

- To reduce recidivism.
- To reduce the cost of confinement or imprisonment.
- To increase the success of former offenders in obtaining and maintaining employment.
- To provide an incentive for offenders to behave in positive ways during confinement or imprisonment.

Windham Programs

Windham provides a variety of academic classes and Career and Technology Education (CTE). In addition to WSD programs, the Division of Continuing Education offers offenders the opportunity to participate in college courses, Project Re-Integration of Offenders (RIO), and recreational activities. WSD operates over 80 schools serving the Institutional Division (ID) and State Jail Division (SJD) of TDCJ.

An interdisciplinary approach addresses multiple learning styles in real-world contexts. Emphasis is placed on skills employers demand, such as tolerance, teamwork, and problem solving.

- *Basic Academic Program* emphasizes literacy training and GED preparation. Curricular content includes workplace skills, consumer education, career exploration, life skills, and social thinking skills.
- *Special Education Program* provides appropriate modifications to the regular academic program so that learning disabled, blind, physically handicapped, deaf, and hearing impaired inmates can attain academic success.
- *Title I Program* supplements the remedial instruction provided by basic academic programs for eligible offenders who are under 21 years of age.
- *Division of Continuing Education* supervises and administers Post- Secondary, Project RIO, and Recreation programs. Continuing Education administers programs designed to meet the needs of the eligible population and addresses performance measures and riders that are legislatively mandated.

For more information about the Windham School District, visit their Web site at <http://www.windhamschooldistrict.org/>.

The tools, programs, and resources highlighted in this paper have not been evaluated by the Technical Assistance Center, nor do we support them in any way. If you have any comments, questions, or additional resources, please contact Nick Read at NRead@air.orgEMAIL, or by phone at (202) 403-5354.

Resources

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**Appendix: Windham School District (TX):
Title I, Part D Data**

Number of Facilities	8
Number of Teachers	9
Number of Participants	859
Male	638
Female	221
American Indian	0
Asian	5
Black	395
Hispanic	293
White	166
Number Participating in Project RIO	354
Number Participating in CTE	79
Number Participating in CHANGES (Prerelease)	110
Number Participating in Cognitive Intervention	123
Number Participating in Parenting	35
Percent Making Progress on TABE	84%
Number Receiving GEDs	148
Percent Passing GED	86%
Number Continuing in Literacy Classes After Title I Completion	239
Number Continuing in Post Secondary Academic Program	3
Number Continuing in Post Secondary Vocational Program	3
Number Receiving Title I Transition Services	231