


# WASHINGTON'S CORRECTIONS EDUCATION PROGRAM

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*This program isn't about financial gain for me; it's about finding oneself and to be able to be a productive member of society.<sup>1</sup>*

*Shane Sweetman, student formerly at Centralia College at Cedar Creek Corrections Center*

 Watch a video <http://bit.ly/2j8YhKz>

## Improving lives and safety

The Department of Corrections contracts with community colleges to provide basic education and workforce associate degrees in job training at each of the state's 12 adult prisons so upon release, individuals are more likely to get jobs and less likely to return.

Most incarcerated individuals entering the prison system lack the education to find work and succeed in society. The average Washington incarcerated individual scores at an eighth-grade level or lower in basic literacy skills, such as reading and math.

## Reentry begins at reentry

There are 14 prison site education navigators and 10 college site education navigators assisting incarcerated individuals into a guided pathway of education opportunities into careers in high demand and provide for family-wage jobs in and out of their incarceration.

Community colleges build a bridge for incarcerated individuals to successfully reenter communities. In 2020-21, 5,019 incarcerated individuals participated in community college programs. These students earned:

- 311 GED® certificates
- 85 high school diplomas using High School+
- 522 vocational certificates
- 83 associate degrees<sup>2</sup>



*Incarcerated students learn valuable skills that put them on a path to find a well-paying job upon release. This student is working as part of the Construction Trades Apprenticeship Program. Photo courtesy of the Department of Corrections.*

## A smart investment

On average, incarcerated individuals who participate in correction education programs have 43% lower odds of returning to prison than inmates who do not, according to a 2014 study by the RAND Corporation.<sup>3</sup>

The return to taxpayers and society is substantial. A 2018 update by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that for every dollar invested in these programs, up to \$19.80 is saved from fewer new crimes and costly incarcerations.<sup>4</sup> Instead of paying for prison beds, money is freed for public education, infrastructure, job creation and other priorities that impact the lives of everyday Washingtonians.

1

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Of the nearly 8,000 individuals released from DOC in 2018, 27% returned by 2021.<sup>5</sup> Corrections education helps ensure they don't come back. In doing so, it gives incarcerated individuals a fresh chance to be successful community members and gives residents a safeguard from crime.

## College and prison partnerships

Airway Heights Corrections Center  
Spokane Community College

Cedar Creek Corrections Center  
Centralia College

Clallam Bay Corrections Center  
Peninsula College

Coyote Ridge Corrections Center  
Walla Walla Community College

Larch Corrections Center  
Clark College

Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women  
Tacoma Community College

Monroe Correctional Complex  
Edmonds College

Olympic Corrections Center  
Peninsula College

Stafford Creek Corrections Center  
Grays Harbor College

Washington Corrections Center  
Centralia College

Washington Corrections Center for Women  
Tacoma Community College

Washington State Penitentiary  
Walla Walla Community College

1. Shane Sweetman testimony before House College and Workforce Development Committee, Jan. 20, 2021.
2. Washington Community Colleges Correctional Education Annual Report. (October 2021). Olympia: SBCTC.
3. RAND Corporation and Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice (2014). How Effective Is Correctional Education and Where Do We Go from Here?
4. Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP). (Cost-benefit data last updated 2018). Inventory of Evidence-Based and Research-Based programs for Adult Corrections. WSIPP.
5. Department of Corrections Data Analytics. <https://www.doc.wa.gov/information/data/analytics.htm>

## Programs offered

Every prison offers adult basic education programs, which provide a foundational education in reading, writing, math and English language. This includes GED® preparation programs. Several also offer High School+, a competency-based high school diploma program. With High School+, students can earn high school credits by proving they have mastered required subjects through past education or life experience. They then take classes to fill in the gaps and earn a high school diploma.

Job-search courses are also available at every prison. Workforce programs vary by institution and include:

- Accounting and Bookkeeping
- Automotive Mechanics Technology
- Automotive Collision and Repair
- Baking and Pastry Arts
- Business Administration and Management
- Business and Commerce
- Technical Design and Computer Aided Design (CAD) Drafting and Design
- Carpentry
- Computer Programming
- Diesel Mechanics
- Digital Media: Web and Multimedia
- Drywall, Roofing and Siding
- Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management
- HVAC Technology
- Horticulture
- I-BEST Automotive\*
- I-BEST Carpentry\*
- I-BEST HVAC Technology\*
- I-BEST Machinist/CNC Technology\*
- Machining/Computer Numerical Controlled Manufacturing (CNC)
- Welding

\* Washington's nationally recognized I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) program pairs basic education with hands-on job experience so students learn in real-world settings.