

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/making-the-case-for-correctional-education-is-focus-of-rand-report-and-veras-pathways-project>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

In a [recent report](#), the RAND Corporation explores the current state of correctional education for incarcerated adults and juveniles. First, RAND reports the results of a national survey of state correctional education directors, which included questions about the current use of computer technology, preparations for the new 2014 GED exam, and the impact of the 2008 recession. Second, to determine what works in correctional education for juveniles, RAND presents the results of its systematic review of education programs for incarcerated youth under age 21. Eighteen programs met the reviews eligibility requirements and two were deemed to be promising.

The new report builds on RANDs 2013 [meta-analysis](#) of correctional education programs, which found that for incarcerated adults who participated in correctional education programs the odds of recidivating were 43 percent lower than for those who did not. This translates to a 13 percentage-point reduction in the risk of recidivating defined as re-incarceration within three years of release for these students. The analysis also found that every dollar spent on education in prison results in five dollars saved on re-incarceration costs. In May, [postsecondary correctional education](#) was added with a rating of promising to [CrimeSOLUTIONS.gov](#), the Office of Justice Programs compendium of evidence-based programs and practices.

The report concludes with recommendations for further study, including potential strategies to determine more accurately what works in correctional education. Surveyed state correctional education directors expressed particular interest in learning how they might modify their education models to trim budgets without jeopardizing their programs positive impacts. In order to do this, they need to know which elements are essential to making their programs work. This information would benefit prisoners in many states: RAND reports that 32 states offer some version of postsecondary educational programming for adults.

Determining what works in postsecondary education in prison is the goal of Veras [Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education](#) national demonstration project. The project, funded by five national private foundations, provides funding and technical assistance to Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, as colleges and universities, correctional agencies and community-based organizations implement pilot projects providing high quality postsecondary education to students in prison and post-release along with vital reentry support services. Participating states are providing a 25 percent funding match in support of these efforts. The five-year project will be evaluated by RAND to determine the effectiveness of the interventions and will receive a cost-benefit analysis from Veras in-house experts.

RANDs report includes a foreword by Director Denise ODonnell of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, signaling the current administrations strong support of the use of evidence-based programs and practices in the nations criminal justice systems. Vera and our state partners are working to expand the evidence base for postsecondary correctional education and the critical role it can play in not only reducing recidivism and crime but also in raising families out of poverty and building healthier and safer communities. Stay tuned as we enter year two of the project!

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