

BRIEF

Maximizing
Access &
Success
for Special
Populations



Supporting Justice-Involved Learners in Career Technical Education

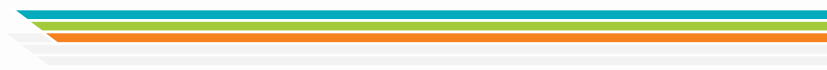
Career Technical Education (CTE) policies and programs have increasingly focused on supporting the needs of historically marginalized learners and closing access and performance gaps among learner groups. Perkins V, the latest iteration of federal CTE legislation known as the [Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act](#), is part of this trend. The law defines nine learner groups as special populations and includes a number of provisions that address expanding access to and supporting success within CTE programs for special populations. This brief will describe strategies for another learner group that, while not named as a special population in the legislation, may benefit from strategies to close gaps: justice-involved learners.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V

LEARNER GROUPS DEFINED AS SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V:

- Out-of-workforce individuals
- English learners
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals with disabilities
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Youth who are in/have aged out of the foster care system
- Individuals preparing for careers that are non-traditional for their gender
- Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, ex. low-income youth and adults

*CTE educators are developing strategies to support learner groups who, while not special populations under the law, may need additional supports, including **migrant and undocumented, LGBTQ+, justice-involved and Tribal learners.***



DEFINING JUSTICE-INVOLVED LEARNERS

Perkins V does not define these learners or treat them as a special population. However, states must direct up to 2 percent of state leadership funding toward learners in state-supported settings, which may include adult correctional and juvenile justice facilities. As of FY 2022, only seven states had chosen to allocate the full 2 percent for programs that serve individuals in state-supported settings, with more than \$10 million dedicated to justice-involved juveniles and adults.¹ In addition, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II funds allow states to use up to 20 percent of their workforce development funding on correctional education for adult and juvenile populations.²

Despite not being a formal special population in the law, CTE educators remain concerned about this population because research has shown that each dollar invested in prison education returns four to five dollars to taxpayers from lowered recidivism rates.³ However, more than 50 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals hold no more than a high school diploma or GED, and formerly incarcerated individuals are eight times less likely to complete postsecondary education.⁴

STRATEGIES FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED LEARNERS

The Perkins Act has directed funding toward state-supported settings such as juvenile justice and correctional facilities for decades. Potential state (🏛️) and local (📍) approaches include:

Cross-agency coordination and partnerships 🏛️ 📍

On the state and local levels, CTE agencies and departments can coordinate with corrections and juvenile justice agencies, re-entry support organizations and legal aid groups to understand the needs of justice-involved learners.

Federal funding 🏛️

State CTE leaders can provide the maximum Perkins state leadership dollars allowable, along with professional development and other supports, to help correctional and juvenile justice facilities offer high-wage, in-demand CTE programs of study. In addition, states can maximize the allowable amount of the WIOA Title II funding allocation that supports education in correctional and juvenile justice settings.

¹ Advance CTE. (2023, July). Career Technical Education and the justice system: State strategies to improve outcomes for justice-involved learners in Career Technical Education programs. https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CTE_and_the_Justice_System_Brief_Elevating_Knowledge_2023.pdf

² *Ibid.*

³ Lloyd, A. (2023, April 28). Second chances: Education and justice involved students. Homeroom. <https://blog.ed.gov/2023/04/second-chances-education-and-justice-involved-students/>

⁴ National Conference of State Legislatures. (2023, January 17). Postsecondary education programs for incarcerated or previously incarcerated individuals. <https://www.ncsl.org/education/postsecondary-education-programs-for-incarcerated-or-previously-incarcerated-individuals>

State funding 🏛️📍

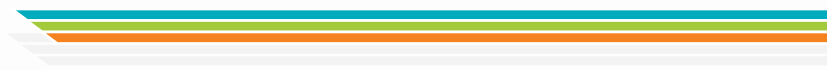
In addition to leveraging federal funds, states can use state funding sources to provide professional development and other supports to programs in correctional and juvenile justice settings and to other educators working with justice-involved individuals. This assistance should include subsidies to help institutions cover costs for supporting this population so that charges are not passed on to learners.

Financial aid 🏛️📍

States should ensure that justice-involved learners are eligible for financial aid, without making aid or award amounts contingent on factors such as sentence length or time since release. On the local level, postsecondary institutions such as community and technical colleges can apply for the Second Chance Pell Pilot program. In addition, counselors and career development professionals can help justice-involved learners navigate requirements and complete forms to further their education and career plans, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the Pell grant application.

Enrollment policies 🏛️📍

State and local CTE programs can eliminate eligibility criteria that prevent incarcerated learners from accessing CTE programming. States can also adopt policies such as sentence reduction credit that can shorten sentences for incarcerated learners who are engaging in productive activities such as pursuing CTE coursework and credentials.



Identification policies 🏛️ 📍

State policies can ensure that justice-involved learners are able to retrieve forms of identification such as birth certificates and driver's licenses, while counselors and career development professionals can help facilitate this process on the local level.

Credit transfer agreements 🏛️ 📍

Articulation agreements on the state and local levels between correctional agencies and postsecondary institutions can ensure credit transfer between CTE programs in correctional and juvenile justice settings and CTE programs at other institutions.

Work-based learning 📍

Local CTE practitioners can coordinate with partners offering work-based learning experiences to ensure that background checks do not limit the participation of justice-involved learners.

Data collection 🏛️ 📍

State and institution leaders must carefully consider decisions about if, when and how to collect criminal justice information. Many advocates encourage districts and institutions to not collect this information on initial applications. If and when this data is collected, there should be a process for ensuring that the information is correct and can be easily updated if an individual's records are cleared.

Coordination of supports across special populations 🏛️ 📍

Justice-involved learners may be members of one or more Perkins V special population groups, such as individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. State and local CTE leaders can coordinate across service providers to deliver comprehensive programming and supports such as assistance in applying for benefits and help in finding housing.

For additional resources, visit Advance CTE's [Perkins V Section](#), the [Maximizing Access and Success for Special Populations in Career Technical Education series page](#) in the [Learning that Works Resource Center](#) and ACTE's [Perkins Implementation page](#).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The strategies described in the previous section are not mutually exclusive, and not all will be appropriate based on the needs of your justice-involved learner population. Before enacting new strategies, assess the current state of justice-involved learners in your CTE programs and dig into root causes of barriers and challenges:

- What do justice-involved learners tell you about their needs, challenges and successes?
- What does your data show about the CTE participation and concentration of justice-involved learners?
- What does your data show about the CTE performance of justice-involved learners?
- What programs of study are offered in state or local correctional and juvenile justice facilities? How do they align with labor market need and high-wage, in-demand careers? How do they align with the elements of high-quality CTE?
- What data about justice-involved learners do you collect? If you collect criminal justice information, how easily can it be modified or corrected?
- What supports do you provide to help justice-involved learners apply for further education, financial aid and employment?
- How do you help employer partners feel comfortable offering work-based learning opportunities to justice-involved learners?
- What support services are available for justice-involved learners? How are they made aware of these services?
- Which agencies or community organizations could you connect with to support justice-involved learners?

CASE STUDY



The SOAR Academy at the [San Diego County Youth Transition Campus \(YTC\)](#), provides a variety of educational, counseling and support services to its residents. Young people who are committed from three to 12 months live at the YTC, which is modeled after a postsecondary campus, and take part in CTE programs in business and construction, graphic arts and/or culinary arts, among other services. In 2023, SOAR Academy began offering a [pre-apprenticeship program in culinary arts](#), with a goal to expand the program to additional Juvenile Court and Community Schools. According to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) team at the San Diego County Office of Education, the pre-apprenticeship is a partnership between the county and non-profit Kitchens for Good, which acts as the apprenticeship adviser.

The program is approved by the state's Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) and is the first pre-apprenticeship in culinary arts at the high school level in San Diego County. Learners complete 80 hours of instruction in culinary arts, receiving a certificate from DAS upon completion. They are eligible for priority consideration for jobs with Kitchens for Good once they graduate or leave custody. In addition, the CCR team provides support services and referrals. Grant funding also helps with transportation, interview clothing and preparation and more.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT JUSTICE-INVOLVED LEARNERS

- **Beyond the Box 2023** (U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, 2023)
- **Career Technical Education and the Justice System: State Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Justice-Involved Learners in Career Technical Education Programs** (Advance CTE, 2023)
- **Beyond the Ban: A Toolkit for Advancing College Opportunity for Justice-Impacted Students** (The Education Trust, February 2022)
- **On Track: How Well Are States Preparing Youth in the Juvenile Justice System for Employment?** (The Council of State Governments Justice Center, September 2019)
- **Patterns and Trends in Educational Opportunity for Students in Juvenile Justice Schools** (Bellwether Education Partners, August 2019)
- **Toolkit: Fostering Success for Formerly Incarcerated Students on Campus** (Corrections to College California, 2017)
- **From Incarceration to College Graduation: How Colleges Can Support the Education Goals of Formerly Incarcerated Students** (EdInsights Center)
- **Juvenile Justice Reentry Education Program: Tools and Resources for Designing and Implementing Juvenile Justice Reentry Education Programs** (U.S. Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education)

