

Correctional Education Council (CEC) Board Meeting Minutes
April 30, 2025
In Person Meeting & Zoom Webinar

Council Members

Secretary Carolyn J. Scruggs, Co-Chair, Deputy Secretary Jason Perkins-Cohen, Jack Weber, Jennifer Gauthier, Ruschelle Reuben, Dr. Kathleen M. Jordan-D'Ambrisi, Sarah Sheppard, Lyndsay Silva, Mary Ann Thompson, Rachael Stephens Parker

Staff and Guests

John Feaster, Renard Brooks, Danielle Cox, Katharine Lander, Stacey Hoffman, Stacey Royal, Benjamin Mourad, Patrick Hruz, Dr. Tamara Barron, Dr. Frances Tracey-Mumford, Jay Miller, Lloyd Day, Peggy Stanford, Casey Tiefenwerth, Brittney Hansen, Mary Keller, Deron Crawford, Janell Johnson, Laura Martin, Ellen Bredt, Shakera Lambert, Francisco Vega, Alyssa Webster, Henry Franklin Jr., Peggy Dall'Acqua, Shea Zwerver, Amy Sines, Robin Conley, Diane Dabbs, Cynthia Blackwell, Lyndsay Silva, Amy Sines, Andre James, Ainsley Moench, Kari Pompili, Velma Honaker, Mary Gable, Shayla Senn

Absent

Rachel Stephens Parker, Mary Ann Thompson, Secretary Carolyn J. Scruggs

Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) Deputy Secretary, Jason Perkins-Cohen called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. A quorum was unable to be reached with Secretary Scruggs absent.

Approval of Minutes

The approval of the December meeting minutes was postponed due to not reaching a quorum and will be reviewed alongside the April meeting minutes at the June meeting.

Data Dive

Director Reuben provided a concise review of the student journey within the GED program, emphasizing the importance of understanding each component from enrollment to successful transition. The committee was reminded of the significant operational barriers to the GED program including institutional shutdowns, segregation, and transfers between institutions. The presentation on segregation that Special Education Coordinator, Katharine Lander, presented in October was identified as a point of reference. Efforts to address barriers through enhanced data management were highlighted, covering metrics such as direct instructional days, calendar days, and specific impacts on English language learners.

Additionally, the committee discussed the newly acquired Tableau dashboard, designed to facilitate an at-a-glance evaluation of completion rates, certification achievements, and industry-recognized credentials across programs. The committee expressed enthusiasm about this tool's potential to support informed decision-making and strategic planning. In particular, there was interest to develop

a public facing dashboard to provide up-to-date reporting.

Finally, the committee reviewed the newly developed professional learning framework aimed at providing consistent, job-embedded support to staff at all levels, including leadership, teachers, and students. This initiative has begun aligning professional training directly with identified institutional needs and school improvement goals and has been supported by internal feedback loops and leadership reviews.

Later in the meeting, Director Cox shared preliminary recidivism data. Overall, individuals that received correctional education programming had a lower recidivism rate than those that did not. Additionally, individuals that attended Goucher College for at least 2 semesters had only a 3% recidivism rate. There were a few categories where individuals that participated in correctional education had a higher recidivism rate, so a closer look is warranted to understand the data at a qualitative level.

Highlighting Success at MCTC

Principal Deron Crawford provided a detailed presentation highlighting the Maryland Correctional Training Center's (MCTC) successful approach to overcoming significant operational challenges and achieving educational goals. He emphasized the critical support provided by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), specifically acknowledging how case managers were leveraged and allowed academic and occupational classes to remain open more consistently. This significantly reduced shutdown days and contributed greatly to improving GED completions from 25 in fiscal year 2024 to 49 thus far in fiscal year 2025.

Furthermore, Crawford highlighted how important this was for occupational programs, noting their hands-on nature and the necessity of uninterrupted practical training for credential completion. Thanks to the flexibility provided by DPSCS, MCTC has been able to maintain occupational completions and even offered the ASE Electric Vehicle Safety certification as a brand new credential for the first time.

Education Programs Led by DPSCS

Post-Secondary Education Programs:

Director Cox outlined the post-secondary programs offered by DPSCS that complement MD Labor programming. Director Cox explained the robust process used to on-board and vet post-secondary institutions, describing a comprehensive approval and evaluation process for colleges aiming to offer prison education programs, involving stakeholder advisory committees, extensive accreditation, and continual review to ensure these programs serve the best interests of incarcerated students.

Several Maryland-based institutions currently participate, including Goucher College, University of Baltimore, Bowie State University, and Georgetown University, offering degrees ranging from American Studies to Sociology and Entrepreneurship. Although Wor-wic Community College is ending its program due to financial constraints, new partnerships are emerging with Towson University, Anne Arundel Community College and Hagerstown Community College.

Vocational Programs:

DPSCS has also expanded key vocational programs through grants and post-secondary partnerships. In addition to the long standing Vehicles for Change auto mechanics program and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training offered by Hagerstown and Wor-Wic community colleges, Vehicles for change has started offering virtual reality training in auto mechanics through a Department of Justice grant and several colleges are partnering with DPSCS to provide training with CDL mobile trailer simulators.

Re-Entry Subcommittee.

The Re-Entry Subcommittee is actively working on refining roles, strengthening partnerships, and expanding employment opportunities for returning citizens. A joint meeting is being scheduled to clarify the roles of Reentry Specialists and Reentry Navigators to minimize overlap and improve service coordination.

Resource fairs continue to be a valuable tool for connecting individuals with employment and reentry support. However, due to high demand, space limitations have led to some organizations being turned away. To address this, the subcommittee is exploring a rotation system to ensure all necessary providers can participate over time. A recent resource and reentry fair at Roxbury Correctional Institution was highly successful, allowing labor representatives and employers to share opportunities with incarcerated individuals preparing for release.

On the employment front, efforts are underway to strengthen manufacturing sector partnerships following a recent employer tour at Occupational Skills Training Center (OSTC), with ongoing discussions about structuring hiring pathways. A January employment and resource fair at OSTC is in the planning stages, with additional fairs being considered at venues like War Memorial and Enoch Pratt.

Further, the subcommittee is exploring work release opportunities, particularly in manufacturing, for individuals currently placed in minimum and pre-release programs. Secretary Scruggs emphasized the importance of transitioning these individuals into industries aligned with their training rather than limiting them to fast-food roles.

A key initiative involves an MOU with the Maryland Vehicle Administration (MVA) to facilitate CDL licensing for returning citizens. Secretary Scruggs offered to escalate discussions with MVA leadership to ensure the program moves forward efficiently.

Program Innovation

Mr. Hruz highlighted programmatic innovation developed in response to institutional shutdowns and scheduling constraints affecting GED testing opportunities. The initiative, originally suggested by Secretary Scruggs, involves conducting GED testing during evenings and weekends to ensure consistent testing schedules despite daytime scheduling limitations. Implementation at institutions such as Western Correctional Institution (WCI) and North Branch Correctional Institution (NBCI) yielded positive outcomes, with WCI achieving five GED completions over two evening sessions and NBCI securing two completions, alongside multiple students passing individual GED sections.

Additionally, Principal Caston from Maryland Correctional Institution (MCI)-Jessup (MCIJ) adapted this strategy to address enrollment testing backlogs, successfully administering initial placement tests to 21 potential students outside regular school hours and addressing an issue that would otherwise have turned into a longer waitlist at MCIJ.

The committee received an update on the Transition Independent Study (TISP) pilot program, designed to provide equitable access to reentry and transition resources through a self-directed educational model. Initially piloted at MCI-Womens, MCI-Hagerstown, Eastern Correctional Institution (ECI)-East, and ECI-West, the program responded directly to staffing challenges and institutional lockdowns exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Courses offered include Parenting, Success at Work, Financial Literacy, Entrepreneurship, and Reentry Resources, all delivered via self-paced, digital formats supported by institutional facilitators, primarily through facility libraries. Participants for the program are chosen on a voluntary basis with priority for individuals closest to release.

The pilot has seen early success, with participants progressing through modules efficiently, and two students at MCIH recently became the first to fully complete the program. The committee noted plans to scale the program statewide, incorporate participant feedback to refine course content, and enhance partnerships with community-based employers. Expanding course content by reviewing readily available online content was also of interest to the committee.

Re-Entry Subcommittee

The recently completed public service announcement (PSA) to hire returning citizens has been disseminated through various media channels, including social media, radio, and television. The committee discussed plans to further leverage the PSA through coordinated efforts by communications teams at both DPSCS and MD Labor.

The committee also discussed an emerging partnership with the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation aimed at providing transitional employment opportunities to recently released individuals. This initiative seeks to match returning citizens with one-year state-funded employment placements, facilitating immediate work experience and supporting smoother transitions back into the community. The committee expressed optimism about the program's potential and plans to evaluate and report outcomes from the initial cohort by September.

Concluding Remarks (Deputy Secretary Perkins-Cohen & Secretary Scruggs)

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the CEC will be on Wednesday, June 18, 2025.