



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #241

Educational Initiatives (Corrections -- Adult Institutions)

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 124, #5]

CURRENT LAW

The Department of Corrections offers Adult Basic Education (ABE) instruction at nearly all of its adult institutions. These studies generally include reading, writing, math, and life skills. The type of instruction in these areas vary depending on the individual teacher, site, and inmate-student need. Instruction may be individualized, computer-assisted, peer or community tutor assisted, small-group, and/or regular class format.

The Department of Corrections additionally offers Career and Technical Education (CTE)/vocational programs in 17 different institutions across 24 different program areas. The programs are connected to the Wisconsin Technical College System member colleges and include focuses such as: barbering/cosmetology, cabinetry, masonry, machine tool operations (such as welding), and refrigeration essentials, among others subject areas.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Under the bill, funding and positions would be provided for two specific educational initiatives: the ABE program and the CTE program.

Adult Basic Education

2. All individuals processed at Dodge Correctional Institution (for males) and Taycheedah Correctional Institution (for females) are asked a series of questions about his or her basic academic experience upon admission. At the end of 2019-20, 31.2% of the Division of Adult Institution population indicated that their highest level of education attained was twelfth grade or less (no high school graduation). If an inmate indicates that they do not have a high school diploma (or High School

Equivalency Diploma (HSED) or General Education Development (GED)), a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is administered when the inmate is received at their first permanent institutional site. The TABE is an achievement test that measures basic academic skills commonly found in adult education curricula in high school and adult instructional programs, and indicates what grade level an individual is able to read at. The TABE scores are used to create an adult basic education plan for each inmate-student.

3. The pace at which inmate-students complete the ABE curriculum varies depending on the institution and education level at intake. According to Corrections, in May, 2019 (the most recent data available), the average time length ranged from 200 to 2,032 days. Class sizes are generally small (eight to 12 students per class), to accommodate individualized student needs and learning challenges.

4. The ABE courses are designed to prepare students for the successful completion of the HSED or GED test. Once individuals have successfully passed the HSED/GED test, they are considered to have successfully completed ABE.

5. A total of 2,221 inmates were enrolled in ABE programming at some point in 2019-20. Of these 2,221 ABE participants, 257 (11.6%) successfully completed the program, 541 (24.3%) failed to complete the program for a reason related to the participant's actions (such as voluntarily dropping out to participate in other programs, like the earned release program), 789 (35.5%) failed to complete the program for a reason unrelated to the participant's actions (such as releasing to the community before completion), 530 (23.9%) were still enrolled as of the end of March, 2021, and 104 (4.7%) were placed back on the waitlist (for various reasons, including other programming priorities. These individuals can re-join the program at any point).

6. While the program has a relatively low completion rate, the 23.9% still enrolled and the 4.7% placed back on the waitlist may successfully complete the program at a later date. In addition, those who do complete the program have a high employment success rate upon release to the community. Of ABE participants released to community supervision in 2019, 76.1% were employed within one year of release, or were not seeking employment (for example, individuals who were disabled, retired, students, or homemakers, among others). The four-year average is higher, at 81.3%. The Department did not track employment rates for a non-ABE participant comparison group, so it is difficult to determine what impact, if any, ABE programming had on the post-release employment rate.

7. Further, while Corrections does not have data that specifically correlates education attainment with reduced recidivism, the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates that "research shows inmates who participate in correctional education and literacy programs have 43% lower [recidivism] odds of returning to prison than those who do not." In addition, participants may feel a general sense of personal growth and accomplishment by successfully completing ABE programming, and can obtain skills relevant to everyday life, such as reading and writing.

8. While educational programs were limited or suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, classes have since resumed with social distancing precautions. As of July 1, 2020, 2,075 individuals were participating in ABE, and 2,326 were on the waitlist. The waitlisted individuals are spread across all Division of Adult Institution (DAI) facilities. As a result, the proposed ABE

expansion under the bill would allocate additional teacher positions to institutions that indicated they have the need and existing infrastructure to accommodate a new teacher(s). The resulting allocation and approximate number of new inmate-students served would be as follows:

<u>Facility</u>	<u>New Teachers</u>	<u>Approximate New Participants</u>
Columbia Correctional Institution	2.0	20
Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Center	2.0	20
Drug Abuse Correctional Center	1.0	10
Jackson Correctional Institution	1.0	10
Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution	1.0	10
Milwaukee Woman's Correctional Center	1.0	10
New Lisbon Correctional Institution	1.0	10
Oakhill Correctional Institution	1.0	10
St. Croix Correctional Center	1.0	10
Taycheedah Correctional Institution	1.0	10
Winnebago Correctional Center	1.0	10
Wisconsin Secure Program Facility	<u>1.0</u>	<u>10</u>
TOTAL	14.0	140

9. According to Corrections, the increased staffing would allow for at least an additional 140 to 168 inmate-students to participate in ABE. However, because ABE is open-ended and self-paced, the Department cannot predict an exact number of new participants, or how those new participants would exactly be allocated between the institutions. Generally, each teacher has a class size between eight and 12 individuals, and most teachers only teach one cohort per year (given that the average class time length ranges from 200 days to over five years).

10. Under the bill, 5.0 vacant GPR teacher positions would be reallocated for this purpose. Initially, the vacant positions identified for reallocation were from educational programs at various DAI facilities. However, Corrections and the State Budget Office indicate that the intent is for Corrections to be able to make substitutions, if any of the vacant positions become filled or a more-suitable position(s) for reallocation is identified. As a result of the proposed reallocation, the Department would need additional position authority for 9.0 of the 14.0 teacher positions, and would use approximately \$287,500 of existing budget authority by reallocating the remaining 5.0 positions, as shown below:

<u>Division</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>GPR Funding</u>		<u>GPR Positions</u>
		<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>	
Management Services	Bureau of Finance and Administrative Services	\$17,400	\$23,200	0.00
Adult Institutions	Bureau of Health Services	3,000	0	0.00
Adult Institutions	Institutions, Division Administration	780,400	926,800	14.00
Adult Institutions	Green Bay Correctional Institution	-57,500	-57,500	-1.00
Adult Institutions	Columbia Correctional Institution	-115,000	-115,000	-2.00
Adult Institutions	Racine Correctional Institution	-57,500	-57,500	-1.00
Adult Institutions	New Lisbon Correctional Institution	<u>-57,500</u>	<u>-57,500</u>	<u>-1.00</u>
	TOTAL	\$513,300	\$662,500	9.00

11. Given the size of the ABE waitlist (currently, Corrections is providing programming for less than half of the individuals with an identified need), and the existing programming space available at specific institutions, the Committee could provide \$513,300 GPR in 2021-22, \$662,500 GPR in 2022-23, and 9.0 GPR teacher positions annually to expand ABE programming. This alternative would require the Department to reallocate an additional 5.0 vacant GPR positions (for a total of 14.0 positions) and associated funding to fully staff the expansion. [Alternative A1] The initial 5.0 reallocated positions were determined by comparing positions included in each budget item with long term vacancies (12 months or more). As noted, however, DOA intends to provide the Department with discretion to make substitutions when necessary.

12. The Committee could alternatively provide 10.0 total positions (including the 5.0 positions identified in the bill from reallocations, and approximately half (5.0) of the 9.0 newly-created teacher positions identified under the bill as introduced) to allow the Department to expand ABE, albeit on a smaller scale. The cost of 10.0 teacher positions would be \$572,000 GPR in 2021-22 and \$678,600 GPR in 2022-23. This cost is partially offset by the reallocation of 5.0 vacant GPR positions and funding identified under the bill (-\$287,500 annually) (for a total cost of \$284,500 GPR in 2021-22, \$391,100 GPR in 2022-23, and 5.0 GPR positions annually). [Alternative A2] This alternative would require Corrections to reallocate 5.0 vacant positions and to identify institutions of highest priority for the 10.0 teacher positions.

13. The Department did not identify this item in its 2021-23 agency budget request. In addition, the 2019-20 ABE completion rate was only 11.6% (although a portion of the remaining 88.4% may complete the program in the future). As a result, the Committee may choose to take no action. [Alternative A3]

Career and Technical Education

14. The CTE program allows inmate-students the opportunity to earn a technical certification and/or diploma in 24 different program areas. The Department contracts with local Wisconsin Technical College System member colleges to provide instruction. According to the Department's Becky Young Recidivism Reduction Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2020, all CTE fields offered are projected to see statewide growth. While COVID-19 temporarily suspended CTE programming in 2019-20, 127 of 151 participants (84.1%) completed programming (or were continuing programming in 2020-21).

15. Between 2014-15 and 2019-20, inmate-students participating in CTE programming had an 86% post-release employment success rate across all programs, with an average starting hourly wage of \$14.67. On average, participants obtained employment after 51.2 days in the community.

16. According to Corrections, equipment needs to be updated periodically to maintain current industry standards (such as welding equipment). In addition to general upkeep and modernization, funding would allow the Department to purchase equipment for newly created programs to keep up with the current job market (such as a culinary arts program). While specific equipment needs and future new programs have not yet been identified, Corrections provided industry examples of high-cost machines including: \$12,000 for a three-dimensional printer, \$40,200 for a milling machine, \$40,300 for hydraulic shears, and \$100,000 to replace five welding machines (\$20,000 per machine).

17. As provided in the bill, the Committee could provide \$1,500,000 GPR annually for ongoing high-cost CTE equipment maintenance and purchase. [Alternative B1]

18. Under 2019 Act 9 (the 2019-21 biennial budget) \$440,000 GPR was provided annually to operate two new technical mobile labs, including a welding mobile lab and an electrical/mechanical mobile lab. Of the \$440,000 GPR provided, \$200,000 annually was for vocational training program realignment, which involves updating and replacing program equipment. The Department indicated that the funds may be used for mobile lab equipment, or for any other vocational program that the Department operates. Funding was allocated as supplies and services under the Becky Young community corrections appropriation.

19. Given that there is not a specific piece(s) of equipment identified that need updating or purchasing, and that funding was provided last budget partially for this purpose, the Committee could provide a different funding level. If, for example, half of the amount of funding (\$750,000 GPR annually) were provided, Corrections could purchase or upgrade its highest priority items, once such items are identified. [Alternative B2]

20. The Department did not request additional CTE funding in its 2021-23 agency budget request. If the Committee chose to take no action, the Department would continue operate CTE programming with existing equipment. [Alternative B3]

ALTERNATIVES

A. Adult Basic Education

1. Provide \$513,300 GPR in 2021-22, \$662,500 GPR in 2022-23, and 9.0 GPR positions annually to expand ABE programming. Require Corrections to reallocate an additional 5.0 vacant GPR positions (for a total of 14.0 positions) and associated funding to staff the expansion.

ALT A1	Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$1,175,800	9.00

2. Provide \$284,500 GPR in 2021-22, \$391,100 GPR in 2022-23, and 5.0 GPR positions annually to expand ABE programming. Require Corrections to reallocate an additional 5.0 vacant GPR positions (for a total of 10.0 positions) and associated funding to staff the expansion.

ALT A2	Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$675,600	5.00

3. Take no action.

B. Career and Technical Education

1. Provide \$1,500,000 GPR annually to upgrade and purchase CTE/vocational equipment.

ALT B1	Change to Base	
GPR	\$3,000,000	

2. Provide \$750,000 GPR annually to upgrade and purchase CTE/vocational equipment.

ALT B2	Change to Base	
GPR	\$1,500,000	

3. Take no action.

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