Building Bridges: Better Practices in Correctional and Reentry Education

Michigan Association of Community & Adult Education 2022
Presented by: Jeffrey Abramowitz, JD
The bridge we will be building today

1- Why do we need a bridge?

2- What’s in our tool box?

3- Making a sturdy bridge!

4- Crossing the bridge: What’s on the other side?
Hello!

I am Jeffrey Abramowitz, JD

Buckle Up as we build that bridge!
Rather than focusing on the obstacles in your path, focus on the bridge over the obstacle.
Why do we need a bridge?

Let’s start with the facts
Just the facts!

We remain the most incarcerated country in the world!

A person without data is just another person with an opinion.

Source: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2021.html
1,774,900

Whoa! That’s a big number! (Spring 2021)
US Prisons

1,193,000 (-2%)

US Jails

647,000 (-9%)

Youth population dropped by 46%

Michigan prison/jail population decreased 13% from 1/20 through 12/21
Diversity, equity, & confusion – The Gap Gets Larger

- **White**: 28% decrease
- **Black**: 22% decrease
- **Latinx**: 23% decrease
As a result of the pandemic

- States & Federal Govt’s released fewer people in 2020 than 2019.
  (Decrease was not related to releases, but fewer admissions)
- Local jails still held far too many people with low level offenses and technical violations.
- Deaths inside our prisons increased by 46% from 2019–2020
70–100 Million

People in the US with a criminal history.

(It starts with an allegation or charge and may never go away)
113 Million people have an immediate family member who have been incarcerated.

(1/2 of the US adult population)
There are over 44,000 barriers facing justice involved individuals (70% of these are related to employment).

The Unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated individuals stands at:

27%

That is higher than the peak of the Great Depression! (5.4% Today)

“Laying the Groundwork: How States Can Improve Access to Continued Education for People in the Criminal Justice System”.
83% of all collateral consequences persist indefinitely!
ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM FACT SHEET
REPORTING PERIOD: JULY 1, 2018 - JUNE 30, 2019

Purpose: Adult education programs in Michigan assist in building skills and earning credentials that lead to postsecondary education, sustainable employment, and economic self-sufficiency.

Employer Skill Needs: In 2020, 65% of all jobs in the United States will require some level of postsecondary education. Priority sectors in Michigan include agriculture, construction, energy, healthcare, hospitality, information technology, manufacturing, and skilled trades.

OUR PERFORMANCE
High School Credentials awarded to those enrolled in our program: 3,502
Individuals improving one or more skill levels: 10,184

INDIVIDUALS IN NEED OF ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES
562,557: Number of working-age adults (18-64) in the state without a high school credential
100,136: Number of adults in the state who do not speak English well or at all
54,940: Working-Age Adults (18-64) Without High School Diploma and Unemployed

OUR FUNDING
13,117,912: Federal Funding
26,357: Our Enrollment

Download State Fact Sheets
Download or share the National Data Sheet
Outside of every prison and jail!
Where do we start to build that bridge?

It’s not the job that’s hard, it’s finding the perfect tool to get the job done.
Building that bridge starts with a strong foundation

Adult Education

Digital Literacy

Skills & Training
**Low skilled adults crossing our bridge are:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>Probability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 X More likely to be unemployed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3X More likely to be in poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>4x More likely to be in poor health</td>
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<tr>
<td>8X more likely to be incarcerated</td>
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4 Fundamental Building Blocks of Your Bridge (Laying the Groundwork)

Funding

Offerings

Lack of Restrictions

Incentives & Supports
Teaching on the Bridge

1- Innovations in teaching
   Blended learning
   Better materials/
   Contextualized learning tools
   Incentives
   Virtual learning tools
   Digital literacy supports

2- Inside Out Connectors

3- Peer tutoring/mentoring at work
4- Integrated Educational Training Models

5- Post secondary supports – Pell Grant (tools)

6- Wearing the glasses of our students: test taking, basic literacy skills, digital divide, background
**Integrated Education & Training Programs (IET)**

Require:

1. Adult education & literacy activities
2. Workforce training
3. Workforce preparation activities

*(IET in Corrections Project– OCTAE)*
Integrated Education & Training Programs (IET) Must also:

1- Be of sufficient intensity & quality
2- Offer all three elements simultaneously
3- Use occupationally relevant instructional materials
4- Have a single set of learning objectives
5- Align with state content standards
6- Be part of a career pathway
The beams/supports of our bridge

- Transitional Housing
- Education
- Skill Training/Employment
- Medical & Addiction Support
- Basic Needs: Identification, clothing, transportation
- Legal Support
COVID 19 Behind & Beyond the Walls

(The Bridge shutdown for a bit, but now we need to open it up and let people cross.)
Making that sturdy and indestructible bridge?

It’s all in the planning!
Words Matter!
Bridge to Digital Literacy

Cables on the bridge:
- Hardware
- Skills/training
- Access

Call Me/Text Me
Crossing the bridge. What’s on the other side? Just more bridges to build.
What’s on the other side??
Tools that help once across...

Hiring policies & practices
Federal/State/Local Laws
  - Ban the Box
  - Clean Slate
  - Licensing
Background checks/Drug screening
WOTC & Bonding
It’s NOT just about getting a job...

It’s needs to be about finding a career!
Getting Talent Commuting Across the Bridge
Top Skills Employers Need:

1- Professionalism/work ethics
2- Team work/collaboration
3- Oral Communications
4- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
5- Written Communications
6- Ethics/Social Responsibility
7- Information Technology/Application
8- Life Long Learning
9- Diversity
10- Creativity/Innovation
11- Leadership
Bridge supports that can keep the bridge strong and traffic flowing!

- Adult Literacy Agencies
- Career One Stops
- Community Colleges
- Apprenticeships
- Employers/Unions/WDB
Coalition on Adult Basic Education – www.coabe.org
Building this bridge will truly take a village and once completed will lead to yet another bridge that needs to be built.

You are making change happen! Keep it up.
Resources

www.jeffrey-Abramowitz.com

LINCS Correctional & Reentry Community of Practice https://lincs.ed.gov/
Career Pathways Sample (PA)
https://www.paadultedresources.org/sector-strategies/


Steve Steurer
"How to Unlock the Power of Prison Education"

"Apprenticeship and the Justice System: Adapting a Proven Training Model to Serve People in Prison"

"U.S. Skills Map: State and County Indicators of Adult Literacy and Numeracy"

"Laying the Groundwork: How States Can Improve Access to Continued Education for People in the Criminal Justice System"

"Reconnecting Justice: Pathways to Effective Reentry through Education and Training"

"Reentry Education Framework: Guidelines for Providing High-Quality Education for Adults Involved in the Criminal Justice System"


SHRM- Getting Talent Back to Work
www.gettingtalentbacktowork.org
State prisons and local jails appear indifferent to COVID outbreaks, refuse to depopulate dangerous facilities. [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2022/02/10/february2022_population/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2022/02/10/february2022_population/)

"Laying the Groundwork for Education“, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, February 2020

"Cost Calculator“, The Council of State Governments' Justice Center, January 2021

"After the Sentence - Collateral Consequences“, The Council of State Governments' Justice Center, January 2021

"Recidivism Rates: What You Need to Know“, Council on Criminal Justice, September 2021

"Incarceration and It's Far-Reaching Consequences“, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, June 2021

"Reducing Homelessness for People with Behavioral Health Needs Leaving Prisons and Jails“, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, February 2021

"No Access to Justice: Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness and Jail“, Vera Institute of Justice, August 2020
THANKS!

Any questions?