

Correctional Education Council (CEC) Board Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2025
Google Meet

Council Members

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

Staff and Guests

Alexandra Pereira, Alyssa Webster, Anne Bocchini Pack, Benjamin Mourad, Brittney Hansen, Chanel Viator, Cynthia Blackwell, Danielle Cox, Ellen Bredt, Erica DuBose, Francisco Vega, Henry Franklin Jr, Ikea Barnes, Janell Johnson, Jay Miller, Jennifer Swiech, John Feaster III, Kari Pompili, Kathleen, Kenneth Jessup, Mark Smith, Melissa Volpe, Patrick Hruz, Peggy DallAcqua, Renard Brooks, Tamara Barron, Tanja Murphy, Tawanda Redding, Terenda Thomas, Tyneshia Heath

Absent

Rachel Stephens Parker, Secretary Scruggs

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) Secretary, Carolyn J. Scruggs was unable to attend and a quorum could not be reached. The items of this informal meeting and approval of last meeting's minutes are to be reviewed and approved at a formal meeting scheduled on December 18th.

Correctional Education Leadership Transition

Deputy Assistant Secretary John Feaster reported that Ruschelle Reuben, Director of Correctional Education, resigned effective the prior week. He acknowledged Director Reuben's significant contributions to the department and noted that her leadership had a meaningful impact and that she will be missed.

To ensure continuity of operations during the transition, Jessica Johnson, formerly Deputy Director, has been appointed Acting Director of Correctional Education, and Patrick Hruz, currently serving as Academic Coordinator, has been appointed Acting Deputy Director of Correctional Education. He expressed confidence in the interim leadership team's ability to maintain operations while permanent leadership decisions are under consideration.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Feaster requested that all agencies and units communicate these leadership changes to appropriate personnel. He also noted that he remains available to address any questions or concerns related to the transition. Acting Director Jessica Johnson and Acting Deputy Director Patrick Hruz shared details about their background and formally introduced themselves to the CEC in their new roles.

Action Item Review

Re-Entry Roles:

Acting Director Johnson outlined the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) re-entry model that begins with regionally assigned transition specialists who work with currently enrolled individuals to develop individualized transition plans focused on education history, release location, employment interests, and pathways to living-wage jobs. This work is supported by transition teachers who deliver employment readiness, parenting, life-skills, and financial literacy instruction. She also highlighted the newly added student success specialist role, which serves as a liaison to ensure transition plans are completed and to facilitate warm handoffs to re-entry navigators, particularly for individuals about six months from release. Re-entry Navigators then provide intensive case management starting roughly 90 days pre-release and continuing up to one year post-release, focusing on employment placement and retention, alignment with correctional education coursework, and coordination of wraparound supports such as housing, mental health, and medical services.

Director of Education Danielle Cox outlined DPSCS's parallel re-entry supports, including three newly contracted education employment specialists funded through a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant who will begin supporting college programs in the spring semester. These specialists will work with students up to two years prior to release and continue post-release support focusing on postsecondary continuation, employment placement, and access to wraparound services. She also described DPSCS transition specialists who serve as frontline, facility-based staff providing referrals to community supports, as well as college-based entry specialists required under federal regulations to deliver re-entry services through career development or student support offices, assisting incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students with career advising, employment assistance, and connections to community resources.

Students Preparing to Take the GED® Test:

Acting Director Johnson explained that Correctional Education uses data-driven instructional planning to track and support students' progress toward GED® readiness, with principals conducting regular bimonthly and monthly data reviews alongside instructional and central staff to monitor academic growth, align with annual credential targets, coordinate testing and interventions, and ensure continuity when students transfer between facilities. The group highlighted the GED® Ready assessment as a key benchmark for entry into official testing, noting that while it does not guarantee passage, the rising number of students reaching GED® Ready and taking GED® tests shows strong year-over-year growth and positive momentum toward the annual GED® goal, driven by consistent monitoring, targeted instructional supports such as math labs, and statewide sharing of effective practices.

Measuring the Impact of Individual Programs on Re-Entry Success:

Deputy Assistant Secretary Feaster shared that efforts are underway to enhance outcome tracking through closer alignment between Correctional Education and the Re-Entry Navigator program within the Office of Workforce Development. Business Representative Jack Weber identified employer engagement as a key component of program quality, highlighting the role of Professional Advisory Committees (PACs) in ensuring industry relevance, curriculum alignment, and direct connections to employers. While PACs have been effective in other education and workforce

settings, CE leadership explained that implementing and sustaining them within correctional environments presents logistical challenges. Maryland Department of Commerce Representative Sarah Sheppard noted that the Governor's Workforce Development Board has recently been working to revamp and promote the work of PACs across the state. Jack Weber also offered to share resources to promote the successful operations of PACs with the CEC.

Finally, the CEC discussed methods for tracking employment outcomes, noting the use of both direct follow-up with individuals and employers and wage record analysis through the Maryland Longitudinal Data System. While each approach has limitations, participants agreed on the importance of continuing to track and report outcomes using available data sources, recognizing that imperfect measures still provide valuable insight into the impact of CE occupational programs on re-entry success.

DPSCS Updates:

Director Cox provided updates on postsecondary education, technology, and facility operations. The Goucher College postsecondary program will be relocated to RCI following the spring semester. Technology updates included continued use of the Origin learning management system, the purchase of 800 new replacement computers, plans to acquire smartboards for postsecondary programs, and ongoing coordination with Correctional Education to address implementation challenges. Finally, DPSCS reported the full depopulation of the Maryland Reception, Diagnostic and Classification Center due to building concerns and confirmed that, while correctional education programs are not based there, special education services remain uninterrupted through active tracking of student transfers and continuity of services at receiving facilities.

Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission

Deputy Assistant Secretary Feaster provided a brief overview of the Prison Education Delivery Reform Commission (PEDR), noting that the commission was established by legislation in 2024 to develop recommendations related to education and its impact on the criminal justice system. Mr. Feaster suggested that the CEC consider how its priorities and responsibilities overlap with PEDR's work, including whether and how PEDR updates should be integrated into future CEC meetings. Director Cox thanked Mr. Feaster for his joint leadership on the commission and noted that PEDR includes several state legislators. She shared that the commission has generated legislative ideas that may be introduced during the current legislative session, with more information to come as those proposals develop. The Chair of the PEDR, Stephen Steurer noted that while PEDR does not formally propose legislation, several bills have been informed by the commission's recommendations. He also referenced an annual report recently submitted to the Governor's Office that is expected to be released to legislative leadership in the near term. It was requested that this report be shared to all CEC members.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.