

Five Ways States Can Prep Youth in the Justice System for Employment

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Youth and young adults in the juvenile justice system are older than in years past—as of 2015, approximately 75 percent of incarcerated youth were age 16 and over. Therefore, they are likely to seek employment upon release. Yet, most state juvenile correctional agencies aren't adequately preparing them to enter the workforce. In fact, a recent study showed that only eight states provide comprehensive workforce development services to these young people.

Several factors contribute to the minimal career technical education (CTE) available in state juvenile justice systems. First, programs aren't matched to local labor market needs, meaning youth aren't provided with the tools needed to have the greatest chance of finding a job. Second, a lack of partnerships between juvenile justice, education, and workforce development agencies makes transitioning from services inside correctional facilities to those in the community that much more difficult. Third, a lack of data on student outcomes and program success makes it hard for agencies to determine what's working and what's not.

These are some of the areas where state CTE directors can play a critical role in bringing relevant stakeholders together to improve access to high quality services for young people in the justice system. But how? A new brief from Advance CTE and The Council of State Governments Justice Center outlines five actions state CTE leaders can take to ensure that youth and young adults in the juvenile justice system get the education they need:

1. Ensure CTE programs in the justice system are of the same quality as those in communities.
2. Help justice and education agencies and program providers implement promising practices.
3. Leverage federal funding for CTE programs in correctional facilities.
4. Appoint a specific person at the state level to oversee CTE programming in the justice system.
5. Collaborate with justice agencies to collect and share student and program outcome data.

Each of these actions is complex and requires commitment and resources, but the opportunity is too great to ignore. For more details on why each action is important and guidance on how to implement it, check out [*Improving Equity and Access to High-Quality CTE for Youth and Young Adults in the Justice System*](#).