

**Vermont Department of Corrections Proposal/s FY2017**  
**Corrections Education**  
**February 22, 2016**

The following two proposals address the current proposed budget considerations regarding Community High School of Vermont and address the continued educational and statutory requirements to offer educational services to offenders under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. The first proposal conceptualizes a way to maintain Corrections Education as an independent school within the Department of Corrections and achieve efficiencies through further integration with Program Services, specifically, Risk and Need Reducing Services. The second proposal identifies that the mechanisms to maximize education of offenders may have more latitude and efficiencies available were the services managed through the Department of Education.

**Proposal One**

*Background:* Over the last 5 years, Corrections Education and Program Services have respectively shifted their models of delivery and culture to more closely implement evidenced based principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity. Recently, the two areas have come under one structure and have looked toward continuous quality improvement to integrate where appropriate common language, planning and resources.

*Concept:* This proposal identifies merging the two models, particularly in correctional facilities to form one Risk, Need and Responsivity intervention school model. It proposes that as an independent school, Corrections Education redefine its mission and population as a specialized population and thereby incorporate core education and specialty education services - thereby permitting the new structure to incorporate a broader array of risk and need services. Corrections Education (facility based) and Adult Basic Education ( or other statewide community based educational entity) could enter into a statewide agreement to accept each others students and learning plans, thereby permitting students to continue education seamlessly.

*Statutory Considerations:* There are statutory changes proposed in language in 28 V.S.A 120, which are attached. Those changes specifically address redefining the population and mission of this independent school to more closely align with the population and evidence in working with this population in a criminal justice context.

*Accreditation/Licensing:* Community High School of Vermont is an independent accredited school through NEASC. An independent school can define its population and identify how it will incorporate core educational services with specialty education/ services. CHSVT is due for accreditation review in October 2016. We will not know how NEASC will recommend that this redefining be accomplished until further discussion. Potentially, it may require beginning an whole new accreditation process or it may be granted a form of accommodation.

*Operational Considerations:* To our knowledge, this level of integration has not been attempted in another Correctional system. The model of a specialized independent school, will permit current educational staff increased flexibility in the delivery of curriculum while further permitting current contracted intervention staff to provide more specialized services for substance use, violence and sexual offending. It offers the current educational staff increased ability to formally address criminogenic needs not currently addressed in dosage, such as financial, leisure and civic and health skills. It specifically is expected to increase the integration of educational curricula and services into a Risk and Need Reduction Plan, thereby increasing both referrals and monitoring of participation in those services. It conceptually has the potential to permit more consistency and efficiencies in the intervention model by further integrating a model of dosage, proficiencies, multi disciplinary intervention team and unified supervision structure. However, developing and operationalizing this model will require much planning and cross training and is anticipated to require not less than one year from the direction to pursue it.

*Financial Implications:* It is anticipated that fully integrating is likely to assist in stabilization of both educational and contractual staff through provision of increased teaming and support, may realize role efficiencies through natural attrition. Both Corrections Education and Risk Reduction are funded through general fund. It is unclear at this preliminary juncture how this proposal might influence the ability to apply for multiple types of grants, such as RSAT and/or Title 1. The statutory changes along with the model change permits flexibility in consideration of the number of sites and whether they remain both field and facilities or are reduced.

*External Contingencies:* This proposal requires the ability to craft one agreement with an entity such as Adult Basic Education. It also requires support from the Agency of Education specific to oversight and consistency of the system throughout Vermont. Implementation may also be influenced by NEASC and the accreditation process.

## **Proposal Two**

*Background:* Vermont has been and is currently continuing to review how education is both delivered and funded. Several school districts have been encouraged to consider mergers and/or other mechanisms to achieve reductions in budgets and manage decreases in enrollment. Corrections Education, as an independent school with decreasing mandated enrollment and with a statewide presence, continues to be subject to similar pressures while striving to retain its identity as a fully accredited independent school.

*Concept:* The Agency of Education may be better positioned with more flexibility to determine how to most efficiently and effectively deliver education for individuals under correctional supervision. The concept is to close Community High School and turn the entire education budget over to the Agency of Education, thereby permitting AOE to

determine the most effective and efficient means to meet the statutory requirements for education delivery within correctional facilities.

*Statutory Considerations:* All language regarding Community High School of Vermont would need to be removed. Statutory language guiding how the Agency of Education and the Department of Corrections will collaborate to ensure that educational requirements are met, particularly in correctional institutions.

*Accreditation/Licensing:* This is dependent upon the model recommended and employed by AOE to deliver educational services.

*Operational Considerations:* Department of Corrections anticipates that this proposal initially would present considerable disruption to Department Staff and current CHSVT students. Since Vermont Correctional Industries and Offender Work Program are integrated with Corrections Education, there would be considerable interruption in services (i.e. industry certifications) as well as potential negative financial impacts.

*Financial Implications:* Offender Workforce Development is not eligible for educational support and reductions in curriculum and/or equipment. The potential impact of Reduction in Force is considerably higher.

*External Contingencies:* VDOC anticipates that the closure of Community High School would have initial operational and political impacts. Several current partnerships would likely be effected, including the Town of Hartford, Salvation Farms, Department of Labor and Vermont Works for Women.