

MEMORANDUM

TO: Corrections Oversight Committee
FROM: Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary of Education
COPY: John Fischer, Deputy Secretary
Frank Gerdeman, Assistant Director
Jill Remick, Communications Director and Legislative Liaison
SUBJECT: Community High School of Vermont (CHSVT)
DATE: November 12, 2014

Thank you for your interest in supporting AOE and DOC as we work together to improve educational opportunities for students involved with the corrections system. We agree that this is a population that needs sustained support and opportunities to improve skills and earn a diploma.

I have attached the memo agreed on by Secretary Vilaseca and Secretary Racine, and sent by Secretary Vilaseca in confirmation of decisions made at the meeting. I was in error in saying the memo was jointly signed, but was able to confirm that it was the agreed upon documentation of agreements between these Secretaries. Others who were involved in the drafting of the memo confirm:

- it is not an MOU but rather a letter documenting the conclusions of a meeting
- it reflects the statute

The intent of the letter was to affirm AHS and AOE commitments to seamless continuity of services for an educationally vulnerable population.

The processes as outlined in the attached memo work when and where they have been implemented with fidelity between local CHSVT community sites and adult education providers. Because of varying local relationships, this works more smoothly in some areas than others - even when dealing with the same adult education provider organization.

To further improve our work, we recommend developing and implementing a more intentional referral of students from CHSVT to the adult education provider. We agree that merely informing a student to contact the local adult education center and leaving it at that increases the risk of “losing” the student.

At the same time, the adult education provider needs to provide follow up in those cases where students are positively transitioned from CHSVT. (Note: this assumes the student agrees to authorize the adult education provider to share information with CHSVT. Without this agreement from the student, there could be the risk of FERPA violations.)

We believe this could best be done by a small work group of adult education representatives and CHSVT administrators. The AOE would be happy to facilitate such meetings.

We realize that no single program is the perfect fit for every student. However, the adult education system provides a variety of ways for students to engage that helps them serve over 3,000 adult students per year, including almost 600 who earned a high school diploma or GED last year (FY14) - the majority of those through the high school completion program. Unlike CHSVT, the adult education system does not award diplomas, but helps create and manage personalized learning plans, consistent with state standards, that result in a diploma from a student's local, partnering high school.

We are not aware of any other agreements or MOUs between the AOE and DOC that aren't related to special education grants.

We also agree that in tight fiscal times, we need to figure out how to spend public dollars in the most efficient way possible to achieve state goals. To this end, we need to reduce duplication and partner effectively with other state agencies to ensure efficiency and continuity of services with a minimum of administrative burden. These are conversations we will continue to have with DOC and AHS.

If you have further questions about the Secretary's letter or Adult Education in Vermont, please contact Jill Remick. She can coordinate with John Fischer and Frank Gerdeman at the AOE to arrange for them to speak to the committee.