

Review of the Correctional Education and Training Programs at the Mississippi Department of Corrections

A Report to the Mississippi Legislature
Report #734
September 1, 2026



PEER Committee

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Kevin Ford, Vice Chair
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PEER provides a variety of services to the Legislature, including program evaluations, economy and efficiency reviews, financial audits, limited scope evaluations, fiscal notes, and other governmental research and assistance. The Committee identifies inefficiency or ineffectiveness or a failure to accomplish legislative objectives, and makes recommendations for redefinition, redirection, redistribution and/or restructuring of Mississippi government. As directed by and subject to the prior approval of PEER, the Committee's professional staff executes audit and evaluation projects obtaining information and developing options for consideration by the Committee. PEER releases reports to the Legislature, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, the agency examined, and the general public.

The Committee assigns top priority to written requests from individual legislators and legislative committees. The Committee also considers PEER staff proposals and written requests from state officials and others.



Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review

PEER Committee

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September 1, 2026

Honorable Tate Reeves, Governor
Honorable Delbert Hosemann, Lieutenant Governor
Honorable Jason White, Speaker of the House
Members of the Mississippi State Legislature

On September 1, 2026, the PEER Committee authorized release of the report titled ***Review of the Correctional Education and Training Programs at the Mississippi Department of Corrections.***

Representatives

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. C. McMahan".

Senator Chad McMahan, Chair

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This report does not recommend increased funding or additional staff.

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CONCLUSION: The Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) could be providing correctional education and career training programs that are effective in reducing recidivism. However, MDOC program data reported in Offendertrak and by each facility did not match, was incomplete, and included errors. Due to these data quality concerns, the data cannot be used to accurately assess the effectiveness of MDOC's programs.

Background

MDOC is responsible for accepting adult inmates committed by the courts for incarceration, care, custody, treatment, and rehabilitation. As part of its responsibilities, MDOC is required to provide programs, such as correctional education, to prevent, control, and reduce recidivism. On April 3, 2026, there were 17,560 inmates housed in one of MDOC's 24 state, private, or regional facilities in Mississippi.

In CY 2025, program expenditures for state correctional facilities totaled approximately \$3 million, less than one percent of MDOC's total expenditures. MDOC was unable to provide a complete list of program staff at each facility.

Research on the Effectiveness of Correctional Education Programs

The research shows that correctional education programs not only have an impact on reducing recidivism but can also be cost effective. Research suggests that correctional education can reduce recidivism by 13 percentage points.

Additionally, providing evidence-based programs can be critical to mitigating high recidivism rates. However, evidence-based programs must be delivered with fidelity to the critical elements of program design.

Recidivism

Recidivism is the percentage of individuals re-incarcerated within 36 months of initial release. It is the most common measurement used to demonstrate how successful or unsuccessful a correctional department is in rehabilitating its inmates.

MDOC's Correctional Education Programs

MDOC provides the following programs designed to help inmates have better opportunities to obtain employment upon release:

- **Adult Basic Education:** addresses basic literacy and secondary education needs.
- **Post-Secondary Education:** provides college-level courses
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** offers education and skills in a variety of vocations (e.g., welding).

Key Findings

- **Program information is not consistently reported in MDOC's data management system and did not match the data reported by each correctional facility in the program inventory, which is also incomplete and inconsistent.**

While program data should be entered into the data management system, less than two percent of the participant, completion, and withdrawal data matched between the two sources.

- **MDOC's data reliability issues are caused by the unreliability of its current data management system and inconsistent data entry practices and program requirements across facilities.**

Data reliability is further hindered by limited oversight and monitoring, no routine audits of program data, and limited training and collaboration.

- **Unreliable program data has an impact on MDOC's ability to measure and report on the success of its programs.**

If the Mississippi Legislature cannot trust the information being provided by MDOC, it may not allocate resources to the most effective programs. Further, program data helps the Parole Board determine if inmates have worked towards rehabilitation and are ready to be released.

Matching CTE Programs to In-Demand Jobs

CTE programs should target industries that are in high demand throughout the state. MDOC currently uses labor market data to match some of its vocations to in-demand industries. However, MDOC could further improve its CTE programs offered by targeting industries expected to experience job growth over the next several years. It is also important to understand that even with programs and certifications, formerly incarcerated individuals can still struggle to obtain employment due to a lack of experience, competition, and additional education, licensure, and certifications needed.

Tracking Post Release Employment Outcomes

The post release employment data collected by MDOC is limited to those individuals released on parole. Other states also struggle to track employment status for inmates not on parole. Some states have worked to address this tracking issue by entering into collaborative agreements and sharing information across databases.

Summary of Report Recommendations for MDOC

Improving Program Data Reliability

1. As it transitions to a new data management system, MDOC should:
 - a. verify that the information in its current system is accurate and complete prior to migrating the data to the new system;
 - b. implement effective application and user controls over the system;
 - c. regularly monitor and audit program information entered in the system to ensure accuracy; and,
 - d. implement end-user training.
2. Work to eliminate the reliance on spreadsheets and other documents to monitor and track programs.
3. Update its policies and procedures or provide additional guidance regarding data collection processes and practices to ensure more consistent and uniform data collection.
4. Determine who will be responsible for entering program information into the system.
5. Once its data is more reliable, it should report to the Legislature on program outcomes and program costs to determine if its programs are not only cost-effective but also reduce recidivism.

Improving Correctional Education Programs

6. Determine if its programs are being implemented with fidelity to program design.
7. Create an inventory of all its programs and publish the information to its website on a regular basis.
8. Ensure that any inmate participating in programs are not transferred to another facility.
9. Continue to evaluate its CTE programs to ensure it offers programs that prepare inmates for high-demand employment opportunities upon release.
10. Continue to encourage colleges and universities to participate in the Prison Education Program.
11. Strengthen its intergovernmental agreements with colleges and universities providing post-secondary education by including additional provisions in the agreements, such as allocation of resources.

Improving Oversight and Monitoring of Regional and Private Facilities

12. Strengthen the language in the agreements with regional and private facilities housing state inmates to require more oversight and monitoring.

Strengthening Post Release Tracking and Reentry Efforts

13. Continue to find opportunities to connect inmates to employers before and after release.
14. Collaborate with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security to determine a way to track employment outcomes for former inmates, including paroled and no-paroled inmates.

Review of the Correctional Education and Training Programs at the Mississippi Department of Corrections

Introduction

Authority

The PEER Committee, under the authority granted by MISS. CODE ANN. Section 5-3-51 (1972) et seq., conducted a review of correctional education and career training programs provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC).

Scope and Purpose

In conducting this review, PEER sought to:

- provide an inventory of correctional education and career training programs provided to adult inmates in the custody of MDOC and housed in one of the state's 24 correctional facilities (i.e., state, regional, or private);¹
- utilize program data to determine if MDOC is efficiently and effectively providing programming to rehabilitate inmates and improve reentry outcomes;
- determine any barriers that can hinder MDOC in providing programs and training to inmates during incarceration; and,
- provide best practices to determine if there are opportunities to help MDOC improve its programs and data collection efforts.

While MDOC did provide information and data for all of its inmate programs offered during incarceration, this report focuses on correctional education, which includes adult basic education, post-secondary education, and career and technical training programs. For an overview of other programs offered during incarceration, such as alcohol and drug treatment, cognitive behavioral programs, and religious programs and services refer to Appendix A on page 58.

Scope Limitation

MDOC program data reported in Offendertrak and by each facility did not match, was incomplete, and included errors. Due to these data quality concerns, the data cannot be used to accurately assess the effectiveness of MDOC's programs. PEER cautions use of this data to draw any conclusions.

¹ This review does not include any MDOC inmates residing in a county jail.

Initially, PEER sought to determine if MDOC efficiently and effectively provided programming to adult inmates in its custody, by using program data reported in MDOC's data management system, Offendertrak, and data reported by each correctional facility as part of the program inventory. However, program data reported in the system and by the facilities did not match, was incomplete, and included errors. Therefore, due to these data quality concerns, the data cannot be used to accurately assess the effectiveness of MDOC's programs. PEER notes that many of the program data concerns identified through this review were similar to the issues identified in *PEER Report #673, Management of Offender Data and Records by the Mississippi Department of Corrections* (hereinto referred to as the 2022 Data Management Report), released on September 13, 2022.

Due to the differences in the data reported in Offendertrak and by each correctional facility, where possible, PEER made the decision to utilize data reported in the system because Offendertrak should be the source used for an inmate's official record, and MDOC staff stated multiple times that all correctional education program information should be recorded in the data system.

PEER notes that it did not use the data to report on the effectiveness of MDOC's programs; however, there is some program data provided throughout the report. PEER cautions that any data used should be considered provisional due to the quality of data provided.

Method

To conduct this analysis, PEER reviewed:

- applicable state laws, rules, and regulations;
- relevant data and documents provided by MDOC, including but not limited to policies and procedures, the inmate handbook, annual and monthly reports, budget requests, organizational charts, staff lists, and program data from the data management system and submitted by each correctional facility;
- intergovernmental agreements between MDOC and colleges in Mississippi providing post-secondary education to state inmates;
- contractual agreements between MDOC and regional and private facilities housing state inmates;
- best practices for providing education and training programs in a correctional setting; and,
- Mississippi labor market data published by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security.

PEER also:

- interviewed MDOC staff and the Chairman of the Parole Board;
- conducted phone interviews with program staff and case managers at various facilities and colleges in Mississippi providing correctional education; and,
- cleaned and analyzed data provided by MDOC.

Background

This chapter provides:

- an overview of Mississippi correctional facilities and the inmate population on April 3, 2026;
- correctional program funding and expenditures in CY 2025;
- the organizational structure and staffing for correctional programs; and,
- inmate placement into correctional programs.

Overview of Mississippi Correctional Facilities and the Inmate Population

MDOC is responsible for accepting adult inmates committed by the courts for incarceration, care, custody, treatment, and rehabilitation. As part of its responsibilities, MDOC is required to provide programs to prevent, control, and reduce recidivism. On April 3, 2026, there were 17,560 state inmates housed in a state, private, or regional facility in Mississippi.

MISS. CODE ANN. Section 47-5-10 (1972) designates MDOC as the state agency tasked with the care and custody of adult inmates committed by the courts to serve their sentence with the state. As part of this legal responsibility, MDOC is required to plan, develop, and coordinate a statewide, comprehensive correctional program designed to train, treat, and rehabilitate offenders in order to prevent, control, and reduce recidivism (i.e., percentage of individuals re-incarcerated within 36 months of initial release). MDOC oversees a total of 35 correctional facilities across the state, including:

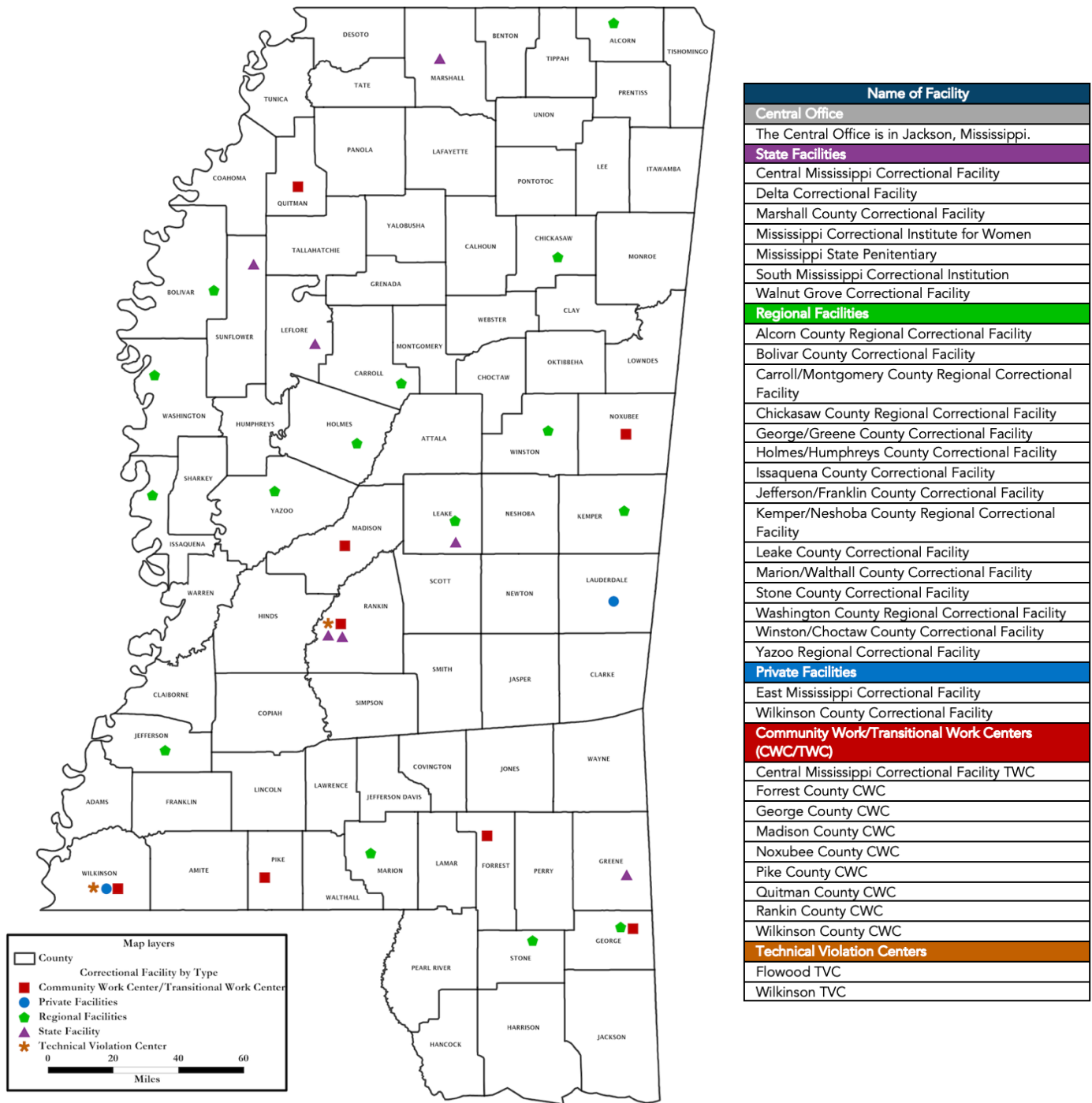
- seven state correctional facilities (i.e., state-owned and operated);
- fifteen regional facilities (i.e., county-owned and operated, but overseen by the state);
- two private facilities (i.e., county-owned, privately operated, but overseen by the state);
- nine community work and transitional centers (i.e., state-owned and operated as an alternative to incarceration); and,
- two technical violation centers (i.e., state-owned and operated to house inmates violating conditions of supervision, not new crimes). ²

Inmates are assigned to a housing location at MDOC's discretion based on classification status, space availability, level of care, and eligibility. Exhibit 1 on page 4 provides a map of the 35 correctional facilities housing MDOC's adult inmates as of April 2026. While not included on the

² A small percentage of inmates can reside in county jails rather than in an MDOC facility. This can occur if an inmate is awaiting transfer to an MDOC facility, the county has contracted with MDOC to house state inmates, or if the sheriff of the county has submitted a formal request for the inmate to reside at the county jail. Inmates housed in county jails are excluded from this review.

map, MDOC's central office is located in Jackson, Mississippi. Central office staff are responsible for monitoring and providing oversight of correctional facilities throughout the state.

Exhibit 1: MDOC Correctional Facilities as of April 2026



SOURCE: PEER analysis of correctional facility location data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

MDOC Inmate Population

This review focuses on correctional education and career training programs offered to adult inmates in an institutional setting, which includes the 24 state, private, or regional correctional facilities.³ PEER notes that MDOC does provide programs and services to inmates housed in community work centers, transitional centers, and technical violation centers, as alternatives to incarceration. Data from those facilities is excluded from this review because MDOC has more opportunity to prioritize the programs and services provided in an institutional setting. However, a brief overview is provided in Appendix B on page 60.

Exhibit 2 on page 5, provides an overview of the demographics for the inmate population on April 3, 2026, as reported in MDOC's data management system, Offendertrak. As shown in the Exhibit, on April 3, 2026:

- there were approximately 17,560 inmates housed in state, private, and regional correctional facilities;
- the majority of inmates resided in one of the six state-operated facilities (62%);
- approximately 92% of the inmate population was male;
- the majority of the inmate population was either black (64%) or white (34%); and,
- the average age of the inmate population was 41, with a minimum age of 18 and a maximum age of 91.

In regard to level of education, approximately:

- 46% (8,029) of inmates had a high school diploma, GED, or high school equivalency;
- 12% (2,046) of inmates had some college courses;
- one percent (246) of inmates had a bachelor's degree or higher; and,
- 38% (6,723) of inmates did not graduate from high school.⁴

Exhibit 2: MDOC Inmate Demographics on April 3, 2026

Total Population		
17,560		

Population by Type of Facility		
State	10,941	62%
Private	2,072	12%
Regional	4,547	26%

Age		
Average	Minimum	Maximum
41	18	91

Gender		
Female	1,398	8%
Male	16,161	92%
Unknown	1	<1%

Race		
Black	11,202	64%
White	6,040	34%
Spanish or Hispanic	232	1%
Asian	29	<1%
Unknown	12	<1%

Note: The inmate population reflects the count on April 3, 2026, the date MDOC pulled the data from the system. Additionally, these counts include inmates housed in either a state, private, or regional facility and does not include inmates in community work centers, transitional centers, or technical violation centers.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of inmate data reported in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' data management system.

³ This review excludes the Youthful Offender Unit operated by the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

⁴ Approximately three percent of inmates did not have level of education data reported in the system.

In regard to correctional education programs:

- 1,368 (8%) inmates were enrolled in at least one education program (e.g., adult basic education); and,
- 815 (5%) inmates were enrolled in at least one career and technical education program (e.g., welding).

A majority of the inmate population was not participating in correctional education on April 3, 2026. Further, of the entire inmate population, 9,321 (53%) had never been enrolled in any program while incarcerated by MDOC (includes the programs listed in Appendix A). PEER notes that there are program data quality concerns and these inmate counts could be under or overstated.

Due to the program data quality concerns any inmate counts could be under or overstated.

Correctional Program Funding and Expenditures

Program expenditures for state correctional facilities totaled approximately \$2,990,395 in CY 2025, less than one percent of MDOC's total expenditures.

Total MDOC Expenditures

In CY 2025, MDOC had estimated total expenditures of \$418,880,852. The vast majority of MDOC financial resources are expended on maintaining the security of the state's prisons and providing

A majority of MDOC's financial resources are expended on maintaining the security of the state's prisons and providing for the health and safety of its inmates.

for the health and safety of the inmates housed therein. During the year, contractual services (58%) and salaries, wages, and fringe benefits (30%) made up the majority of MDOC's total expenditures. MDOC's contractual services expenditures were primarily for medical services,

inmate housing provided by private and regional correctional facilities, food services, and institutional utilities.

In CY 2025, approximately 96% of MDOC's expenditures were funded by state general funds. The rest (4%) were funded by special funds (e.g., the inmate welfare fund) and grant funds (less than one percent).

Correctional Program Expenditures for State Facilities

For state facilities, MDOC utilized information reported in the state's accounting system, MAGIC, to determine total correctional program expenditures at those facilities. This analysis includes expenditures for education and career training programs, as well as other MDOC programs (reported in Appendix A).

Program expenditures for state facilities account for a very small portion of MDOC's total expenditures.

MDOC pays regional and private facilities a total amount for housing state inmates and does not collect individual program expenditure data for these facilities. PEER requested this information through its program inventory efforts. However, the information provided by these facilities varied and was not consistently itemized across all locations. Further, MDOC tried to work with these facilities to obtain the information, but many of the facilities do not maintain separate or standardized line-item accounting specific to individual programs. In many cases, these expenditures are incorporated within broader facility operational budgets, donated services, volunteer support, or county managed inmate welfare accounts. Therefore, PEER could only report program expenditures for state facilities.

Total program expenditures include salaries, wages, and fringe benefits, materials and equipment, fees and services, and incentive pay earned by inmates for program and work participation. In CY 2025, state program expenditures totaled approximately \$2,990,395.⁵ Salaries for programs, including the Deputy Commissioner of Programs and central office program staff, totaled approximately \$1,433,051 (48% of total program expenditures).

Total program expenditures accounted for less than one percent of total MDOC expenditures in CY 2025. These expenditures are funded by state general funds, federal grants (e.g., funds provided to MDOC to support inmate programs administered at state facilities), and the inmate welfare fund.

Organizational Structure and Staffing for Correctional Programs

MDOC's Workforce Development team provides oversight and support to program staff within each correctional facility throughout the state. Each facility is responsible for carrying out and providing correctional programs and treatment to inmates in MDOC's custody. The number and type of positions vary by each facility. Further, MDOC could not provide a current comprehensive organizational chart.

Pursuant to MISS. CODE ANN. Section 47-5-26 (1) (d) (1972), MDOC has a Deputy Commissioner of Programs, Education, and Reentry (Deputy Commissioner) responsible for initiating and administering programs offered to inmates. The Deputy Commissioner oversees the Workforce Development team located at MDOC's central office. Program staff at the central office provides oversight and support to program staff within each correctional facility throughout the state, such as program selection and collection of program data.

Each facility has program staff responsible for carrying out and providing programs to inmates. The number and type of positions vary by each facility. Examples of program staff include but are not limited to:

- correctional program specialist;
- correctional program team lead;

While PEER requested a complete and updated organizational chart, MDOC could not provide one for all correctional facilities. Further, the program staff lists were also incomplete and inconsistent, which hinders MDOC's ability to count the number of staff responsible for providing programs.

⁵ This excludes expenditures for the Youthful Offender Unit at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

- academic teacher;
- vocational training instructor;
- correctional officer;
- reentry specialist; and,
- chaplain.

Additionally, some facilities also have volunteers, university or community college staff, and inmate instructors that assist with and teach programs. Further, case managers have a significant role in ensuring that inmates are enrolled in and receive programs that align with their needs and risk of recidivating once released.

A current count of program staff could not be accurately obtained. According to MDOC, it is in the process of transitioning to a new software for its organizational charts. As a result, not all facilities have created new charts. Additionally, the program staff lists provided by many of the facilities were incomplete, inconsistent, and did not match the organizational charts that were submitted. While PEER did attempt to use the information provided to report the number of program staff at each facility, MDOC did not verify the count. PEER notes that most state-operated facilities provided more detailed information than the regional and private facilities, but there were still discrepancies.

Inmate Placement into Correctional Programs

Case managers refer inmates to programs based on their risk to recidivate and the specific type of intervention needed to address their criminal behavior. Priority is given to inmates with a high or moderate risk of recidivating.

All MDOC inmates are initially classified at the Reception and Classification Center at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility and then reclassified at least every 12 months to assess the appropriateness of the inmate's classification plan. The reception and classification process establishes an inmate's custody level (i.e., minimum, medium, close), including facility assignment, correctional program/treatment needs and eligibility, and supervision requirements. The classification system should include an objective assessment of each inmate's risk and need, specify the type of program(s) needed, and provide regular review.

According to MDOC's policies and procedures, during this process inmates are counseled and evaluated by staff utilizing the Risk and Need Assessment tool. The Risk and Need Assessment is a standardized instrument that contains risk factors which are predictors of recidivism [e.g., age, gender, current convicted offense(s)] and produces risk levels associated with an inmate's likelihood to recidivate which range from zero to seven. Risk levels are ranges of total scores based on the entire risk assessment. These risk levels indicate if an inmate is at low, moderate, or high risk to recidivate.

Low Risk = 0 to 1 point

Moderate Risk = 2 to 3 points

High Risk = 4 to 7 points

Inmates should be placed in programs and interventions targeted to factors that relate to their individual criminal behavior. Facility location and/or classification may dictate availability of

treatment/programming. When possible, according to MDOC, it will transfer inmates to facilities that offer programs that target their needs.

Program Priority

According to MDOC's policies and procedures, programming and treatment referrals are based on the results of the inmate's risk and need assessment and if the inmate can complete the program/treatment prior to being released. Priority for programming should be given to high and moderate risk inmates whose criminogenic needs are met by the program/treatment. Criminogenic need risk factors include a history of antisocial behavior, antisocial personality pattern, antisocial cognitions, and antisocial associates. Research shows that if these risk factors are reduced it can decrease the chances of criminal involvement.

Priority should be given to inmates with a high or moderate risk of recidivating.

According to MDOC data, of the inmates in custody and enrolled in at least one program (includes all programs, not just correctional education), on April 3, 2026, approximately:

- 47% (1,668) had a low risk of recidivating;
- 34% (1,206) had a moderate risk of recidivating;
- 14% (499) had a high risk of recidivating; and,
- 5% (170) did not yet have a risk level classification in the system.

If there is a waiting list, MDOC prioritizes the following factors (in order):

- **Release date:** Inmates who have the soonest release date and can finish the program/treatment while in custody.
- **Prior treatment attempts:** Inmates who have not attempted treatment will be prioritized over those who have already received some form of treatment.

According to MDOC staff, the department does not utilize traditional waitlists for its programs. Upon arrival at their designated housing facility, any inmate who has been court-ordered to participate in a program should be promptly enrolled in the required program(s). When a program reaches its capacity, the facility should use a waitlist that is monitored by the facility's program director. When space in the program becomes available, the program director should review and select inmates based on eligibility criteria and program requirements.

It is MDOC's goal to ensure that inmates who are placed into programs are able to complete those programs prior to being released from custody or transferred to a different facility that may or may not provide the same type of programs.

Program Eligibility

MDOC requires all inmates who are physically able to work in a prison job or be assigned to an approved education or training program. According to policies and procedures, inmates can

Program participation is encouraged by MDOC staff, but in most cases, is not required.

refuse to participate in any rehabilitation or treatment program except for adult basic education and programs that are required by statute or ordered by the sentencing court or paroling authority. However, according to MDOC staff, if the program is not court-ordered,

the inmate can choose not to participate. MDOC staff also noted that program participation is encouraged but is not mandatory, even for adult basic education.

According to MDOC's *Inmate Handbook*,⁶ educational programs are available to inmates who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Inmates interested in vocational education will need to be at the appropriate academic level to participate. While MDOC staff stated that most vocational programs required at least an eighth-grade academic level to participate, there is no specific policy that mandates the requirement.

Program Placement

During the classification process, the case manager will make an initial assessment regarding an inmates' risk factors and develop a case plan that should include recommendations for programs. A case plan is updated through the duration of an inmate's sentence. Case managers and program staff should work together to assess the needs of inmates and ensure they are in appropriate programs to address their criminogenic needs.

Case managers are primarily responsible for placing inmates in programs.

According to the *Inmate Handbook*:

- referral for placement in either an academic or vocational program is made by the case manager and reviewed by a vocational counselor or academic instructor who will then check release dates in order to give priority to inmates with less than five years to serve before parole eligibility or release date;
- program staff meet with inmates to discuss rules and regulations and to test academic level to evaluate eligibility and needs for placement; and,
- eligible inmates are placed in the academic or vocational program deemed necessary.

According to MDOC staff, case managers are the primary group responsible for entering program data into Offendertrak. Program staff can assist case managers as needed. An inmate is officially enrolled in a program once a case manager completes a staff request in the data system.

Incentives for Program Participation

MDOC offers incentives for program participation to eligible inmates, including:

- **Meritorious Earned Time (MET):** MET is a discretionary grant of earned time and is awarded for good conduct and performance. MET may be awarded for participation in educational or instructional programs, regular institutional work, attainment of educational benchmarks, satisfactory participation in approved work projects, and/or satisfactory participation in special incentive programs.
- **Trusty Status:** Inmates may be recommended for Trusty Status based on institutional needs, outside labor crew needs, and inmate's ability and skill. An inmate in trusty status may be awarded a trusty time allowance of 30

MDOC offers several incentives to encourage program participation.

⁶ The *Inmate Handbook* is a document compiled by MDOC and given to inmates during reception and classification. MDOC revised the handbook in CY 2023.

days reduction of sentence for each 30 days of participation in approved programs. MET and Trusty Status cannot be awarded for the same program, project, or work assignment.

- **Certifications:** MDOC offers certificates of completion and some nationally recognized certifications for those who participate in and complete programs.
- **Incentive Pay:** Incentive Pay is awarded to inmates housed in state correctional facilities to motivate work and participation in some programs.

Inventory of MDOC's Prison-Based Correctional Education in CY 2025

For the purposes of this report, a program inventory is a catalog of programs and services offered to adult inmates incarcerated by MDOC. A program or intervention is a systematic set of activities or practices that engage participants to achieve desired outcomes (e.g., reduce recidivism). Correctional interventions are designed to teach inmates valuable skills and target criminogenic needs to help inmates be successful upon release from prison. This chapter specifically focuses on:

- adult basic education (includes secondary education);
- post-secondary education; and,
- career and technical education (includes inmate jobs and work programs).

An additional inventory of other rehabilitative interventions offered by MDOC is included in Appendix A. The programs in Appendix A focus on changing behaviors and helping inmates make better decisions upon release. The programs in this chapter are designed to help inmates have better opportunities to obtain employment upon release, which can be difficult for individuals who have been convicted of a crime and incarcerated. According to research, correctional education programs can provide inmates the knowledge, training, and skills needed to obtain employment, which can then have an impact on recidivism.

As shown throughout this chapter, inmates housed in state facilities will have more programming options than those housed in a regional or private facility. Further, the way in which programs are taught can vary by facility.

Adult Basic Education

Adult basic education provides instruction to address each inmate's basic literacy and secondary education needs. In CY 2025, as reported in Offendertrak, 21 of the 24 correctional facilities provided adult basic education to inmates in custody.

Adult basic education programs focus on addressing each inmate's basic literacy and secondary education needs. The basic program offers instruction in reading, writing, and math, typically below the secondary school (high school) level (ninth grade). The goal of the basic program is advancing the academic level of each inmate. Secondary education provides high-school level coursework to prepare inmates to earn a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency, by either taking the High School Equivalency Test (HiSet) or the General Educational Development (GED) test. Some facilities also offer GED/HiSet classes that are designed to further prepare inmates to take and pass these tests while incarcerated.

Exhibit 3: Checklist of Facilities Providing Adult Basic Education in CY 2025

Facility	Adult Basic Education
State	
Central Mississippi Correctional Facility ¹	✓
Delta Correctional Facility	✓
Marshall County Correctional Facility	✓
Mississippi State Penitentiary	✓
South Mississippi Correctional Institution	✓
Walnut Grove Correctional Facility	✓
Private	
East Mississippi Correctional Facility	✓
Wilkinson County Correctional Facility	✓
Regional	
Alcorn County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Bolivar County Correctional Facility	✓
Carroll/Montgomery County Regional Correctional Facility ²	
Chickasaw County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
George/Greene County Correctional Facility	✓
Holmes/Humphreys County Correctional Facility	
Issaquena County Correctional Facility	✓
Jefferson/Franklin County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Kemper/Neshoba County Regional Correctional Facility	
Leake County Correctional Facility	✓
Marion/Walthall County Correctional Facility	✓
Stone County Correctional Facility	✓
Washington County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Winston/Choctaw County Correctional Facility	✓
Yazoo County Regional Correctional Facility	✓

¹ Program data for the Mississippi Correctional Institute for Women is included in the data for the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

² The facility did not report programs in Offendertrak in CY 2025.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of inmate data reported in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' data management system.

In CY 2025, according to Offendertrak, 21 facilities provided some variation of adult basic education to inmates. Refer to Exhibit 3 on page 13 for a checklist of facilities offering this type of correctional education. As shown in the Exhibit, all state facilities provided adult basic education.

The length and frequency of these programs is dependent upon the facility and the participants. For example, two facilities reported that adult basic education takes four months and occurs four hours per week, while another facility reported that it takes approximately one-year, but is designed to be participant paced. The method of delivery also varies by facility. Most classes are taught in person by an academic teacher or inmate instructor.⁷ However, some classes provide inmates with a packet of materials they can review on their own outside of normal classroom instruction.

These programs are available to inmates who do not have a high school diploma. According to MDOC's data, approximately 38% of inmates on April 3, 2026, did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Additionally, some facilities reported that inmates

must be RVR free, while others did not have that requirement. The timeframe of the RVR free requirement varied, including three months, six months, or even a year. While MDOC's policies and procedures state that inmates cannot refuse to participate in adult basic education, MDOC staff stated that participation is encouraged but the program is not mandatory, even for those who need it. According to the data provided by state facilities, there were no inmates currently waiting to be enrolled in adult basic education.

PEER requested that MDOC provide a list of inmates obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent from CY 2022 to CY 2025 for each correctional facility. While MDOC did provide this information for state facilities,⁸ the data provided did not align with another Offendertrak dataset provided for successful program completion during the same timeframe.

⁷ According to MDOC, inmates with at least a bachelor's degree can provide teaching and tutoring services to other inmates. This helps MDOC when an academic instructor is unavailable.

⁸ The certification data provided by regional and private facilities was often incomplete or not provided in a useable format for analysis.

Post-Secondary Education

Inmates incarcerated in some correctional facilities will have the opportunity to participate in college-level courses offered by colleges and universities throughout Mississippi.

Exhibit 4 on page 14 provides a checklist of facilities with post-secondary education opportunities as reported in Offendertrak for CY 2025. MDOC enters into intergovernmental agreements with colleges (e.g., Hinds Community College, Mississippi Delta Community College, and Mississippi Valley State University)⁹ throughout the state to provide post-secondary education to inmates. Post-Secondary education provides inmates the opportunity to participate in college-level courses and work towards earning a college degree, such as an associate degree or bachelor's degree during incarceration. Colleges can offer classroom instruction or web-based courses that are offered to traditional students but in a correctional setting. Course offerings are limited but structured for inmates to earn degrees or college credits. The most common degrees that are offered and can be earned by inmates are an Associate of Arts and an Associate of Applied Science.

Examples of courses provided include but are not limited to:

- Art Appreciation, which is designed to explore visual arts through the study of creative expression, visual elements, and historical context;
- Anatomy and Physiology, which teaches students the parts and functions of the different systems within the human body;
- College Algebra, which covers advanced functions, equations, graphics, and logarithms; and,

Exhibit 4: Checklist of Facilities with Post-Secondary Education Opportunities in CY 2025

Facility	Post-Secondary Education
State	
Central Mississippi Correctional Facility ¹	✓
Delta Correctional Facility	✓
Marshall County Correctional Facility	
Mississippi State Penitentiary	✓
South Mississippi Correctional Institution	
Walnut Grove Correctional Facility	
Private	
East Mississippi Correctional Facility	
Wilkinson County Correctional Facility	
Regional	
Alcorn County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Bolivar County Correctional Facility	
Carroll/Montgomery County Regional Correctional Facility ²	
Chickasaw County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
George/Greene County Correctional Facility	✓
Holmes/Humphreys County Correctional Facility	
Issaquena County Correctional Facility	✓
Jefferson/Franklin County Regional Correctional Facility	
Kemper/Neshoba County Regional Correctional Facility	
Leake County Correctional Facility	
Marion/Walthall County Correctional Facility	
Stone County Correctional Facility	✓
Washington County Regional Correctional Facility	
Winston/Choctaw County Correctional Facility	
Yazoo County Regional Correctional Facility	

¹ Program data for the Mississippi Correctional Institute for Women is included in the data for the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

² The facility did not report programs in Offendertrak in CY 2025.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of inmate data reported in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' data management system.

⁹ It is not clear which colleges are currently providing post-secondary education. The list of colleges offering services varied by dataset. PEER conducted phone interviews with staff from Mississippi Delta Community College, Hinds Community College, and Mississippi Valley State University.

- English Composition, which teaches students how to compose an essay or research paper to further their education.

Colleges providing coursework to inmates can now apply for the Prison Education Program, which is funded through Pell grants from the United States Department of Education. Pell grants are subsidies that assist students in paying for college, allowing inmates to take college courses at no costs to the inmate or MDOC.

According to data provided by MDOC, from CY 2021 to CY 2026, 10 inmates have earned college degrees, and there are currently no waitlists for post-secondary education. In a separate dataset, for certifications earned from CY 2022 to CY 2025, only one state facility reported that an inmate had earned an associate's degree.

The role of the college and type of programming provided varies by college and is determined through the intergovernmental agreement. These agreements detail and formalize both parties' role in operating and providing post-secondary education to inmates. Colleges are responsible for various educational, administrative, collaborative, and support roles in delivering programs in MDOC facilities. This entails schools registering, enrolling, testing, grading, and monitoring course progression for prison education students.

MDOC's role in the prison education program is to provide facilities and resources to facilitate the daily operations of delivering the educational or vocational course. MDOC will also identify eligible participants for the prison education program.

Career and Technical Education, Work Programs, and Inmate Jobs

Career and Technical Education programs and training provide inmates with skills in a variety of vocations, such as welding, plumbing, and carpentry, and often include a combination of classroom time and hands-on learning.

Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (CTE), often referred to as vocational education, offer education and skills in a variety of vocations, such as welding, plumbing, and carpentry. These types of programs often include a combination of classroom time and hand-on practice. Completion of these programs can result in a certification that shows mastery of a vocational skill set that can help individuals find and retain employment upon release. CTE programs also help reduce behavioral incidents during incarceration by engaging inmates in constructive work activities.

Exhibit 5 on page 16 provides a checklist of correctional facilities offering at least one CTE training program as reported in Offendertrak in CY 2025. Further, Exhibit 6 on page 17 provides a list of the specific CTE programs and training provided in CY 2025, by type of correctional facility. As will be further discussed in the report, some facilities reported limited information in MDOC's data management system. As a result, there may be more facilities offering additional CTE opportunities that are not reflected in Exhibits 5 and 6. For example, East Mississippi Correctional Facility, a private facility, did not report vocational programs in the system. However, the facility did list vocational programs in the program inventory submitted to PEER.

As reported in Offendertrak, in CY 2025 there were 15 correctional facilities (Exhibit 5) offering at least one CTE opportunity to inmates. As shown in Exhibit 6, MDOC offers over 37 different CTE programs at the various facilities.

Not all programs are offered at each facility. Several vocations are offered at both state and county regional facilities throughout the state, including but not limited to construction/carpentry, forklift, welding, electrical, horticulture, and small engine repair. However, inmates housed in a state facility will have more CTE options compared to regional and private facilities.

MDOC also has a Vocational Village at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility. It is a designated area where vocational training programs are conducted. Vocational villages are specialized correctional education programs designed to give inmates additional skills, certifications, and support to help secure employment after release.

According to MDOC, eligibility requirements for CTE programs vary by specific program, and some require participants to possess a high school diploma or its equivalent. These eligibility requirements are not currently in MDOC's policies and procedures or the Inmate Handbook and not only vary by program but also by correctional facility.

While MDOC has vocational instructors that will provide CTE programs, the department also relies on inmate instructors and intergovernmental agreements with colleges to provide technical classes to inmates, such as welding, HVAC, automotive mechanics, and commercial driving.

Exhibit 5: Checklist of Facilities with Career and Technical Education Opportunities in CY 2025

Facility	CTE Programs and Training
State	
Central Mississippi Correctional Facility ¹	✓
Delta Correctional Facility	✓
Marshall County Correctional Facility	✓
Mississippi State Penitentiary	✓
South Mississippi Correctional Institution	✓
Walnut Grove Correctional Facility	✓
Private	
East Mississippi Correctional Facility	
Wilkinson County Correctional Facility	
Regional	
Alcorn County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Bolivar County Correctional Facility	✓
Carroll/Montgomery County Regional Correctional Facility ²	
Chickasaw County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
George/Greene County Correctional Facility	✓
Holmes/Humphreys County Correctional Facility	
Issaquena County Correctional Facility	
Jefferson/Franklin County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Kemper/Neshoba County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Leake County Correctional Facility	
Marion/Walthall County Correctional Facility	✓
Stone County Correctional Facility	✓
Washington County Regional Correctional Facility	
Winston/Choctaw County Correctional Facility	
Yazoo County Regional Correctional Facility	

¹ Program data for the Mississippi Correctional Institute for Women is included in the data for the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

² The facility did not report programs in Offendertrak in CY 2025.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of inmate data reported in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' data management system.

Exhibit 6: Career and Technical Education Programs Reported in Offendertrak in CY 2025

Vocational Education Program Name	Total Programs ¹	State	Regional
Agriculture Basics	1	√	
Automotive Body Repair	2	√	
Automotive Mechanics	2	√	
Barbering	4	√	
Building Trades	2		√
Business Technology	1	√	
Commercial Driving License (CDL) Class	4	√	√
Computer Class	1		√
Computer Programming	1	√	
Computer Technology	1	√	
Concrete Construction	2	√	
Construction/Carpentry	11	√	√
Cosmetology	1	√	
Culinary Arts ²	3	√	
Diesel Mechanics	1	√	
Electrical	4	√	√
Electronic System Technician	1	√	
Forklift	9	√	√
Heavy Equipment Operations	3	√	
Horticulture	4	√	√
HVAC/HVACR	4	√	√
Industrial Electricity	1	√	
Industrial Sewing	1	√	
Maritime Structural Fitting	1	√	
Marketing	1	√	
Masonry	1	√	
Pipefitting	2	√	√
Plumbing	3	√	
ServSafe ²	3	√	
Shipfitting	1	√	
Small Engine Repair	4	√	√
Tiling Class	1		√
Upholstery	1	√	
Vehicle and Mobile Repair	1	√	
Veterinary Medical Applications	1	√	
Welding	7	√	√
Zero Turn	1	√	

¹ Private facilities did not report CTE programs in Offendertrak for CY 2025.

² ServSafe is a certification offered through the Culinary Arts program. Some facilities recorded it as a separate program in Offendertrak.

Note: PEER cautions that program data reported in Offendertrak and by each facility did not always align.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of Offendertrak data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Through its CTE training programs, MDOC offers several industry-recognized certifications with the goal of helping inmates obtain employment upon release. MDOC focuses on certifications offered through the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). Examples of the NCCER certifications, include:

- the CORE certification that teaches basic construction and safety skills and is a prerequisite for additional or further specialized credentials;
- the carpentry credential that teaches jobsite safety rules, residential and commercial building materials, and reading blueprints for carpentry and construction jobs (four-level program);
- the HVAC credential that covers installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting of heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration (four-level program); and,
- the welding credential that covers fundamental and advanced welding techniques (four-level program).

MDOC also offers a forklift certification that teaches participants how to safely operate and maintain a forklift in a working environment, and the ServSafe certification (i.e., basic food and beverage safety certificate) for completion of the culinary arts program.

Not all of MDOC's CTE programs will provide nationally recognized certificates. MDOC does provide certificates of course completion. PEER notes that in the program inventory, some correctional facilities reported offering certifications, while others did not. It is essential for inmates to receive industry-recognized certifications for completions of CTE training programs. Nationally recognized credentials are portable and can be used in Mississippi and out of state. Certification availability should be consistent among all facilities providing the same programs.

Work Programs

Inmates housed in certain correctional facilities can receive on-the-job training. MISS. CODE ANN. Section 47-5-579 (1972), known as the Mississippi Prison Industries Act of 1990, established a non-profit corporation, now known as MAGCOR Industries (MAGCOR) to employ inmates while in custody of MDOC. This operation was designed to provide inmates with training, work experience, and life skills to assist with reentry. These programs use inmate labor to manufacture products and services for purchase by state agencies, local governments, educational institutions, and private entities as authorized by state law. In FY 2025, MAGCOR operated several prison industry work programs at three state facilities, Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, Mississippi State Penitentiary, and South Mississippi Correctional Institution, and one regional facility, Jefferson/Franklin Regional Correctional Facility. The types of industries, include:

- apparel and textile (e.g., correctional uniforms, jumpsuits, mattresses);
- metal manufacturing (e.g., benches, grills, planters);
- printing (e.g., manuals, signage, newsletters);
- service and recycling (i.e., plastics and sterile cleaning); and,
- warehouse operations (e.g., bedding, office furniture, footwear).

PEER did not request data for inmates participating in jobs through MAGCOR because PEER has conducted separate reviews of the operation, with the last review released in 2021. While MDOC

and MAGCOR have joint responsibilities to the prison industries program, MAGCOR is responsible for its program operations.

Inmate Jobs

Pursuant to MDOC's policies and procedures, all inmates are required to work while incarcerated, unless assigned to an approved education or training program, or prohibited from working by a medical condition. An inmate's classification plan, established by a case manager, should include eligibility requirements for work assignments. MDOC offers various work assignments throughout each facility, including but not limited to:

- kitchen support;
- food preparer;
- laundry services;
- education tutor;
- mentor;
- nursing aid;
- field minister;
- hairstylist;
- dorm orderlies;
- carwash detail;
- file clerk; and,
- grounds keeper.

Inmate jobs support facility operations rather than provide formal training or certification.

Incentive Pay

MISS. CODE ANN. Section 47-5-371 (1972) authorized the creation of the Inmate Incentive to Work Program, which allows eligible inmates housed in state correctional facilities to earn incentive pay to work. Expenditures for incentive pay are funded through the Inmate Welfare Fund at each state facility. In CY 2025, as reported in MAGIC, incentive pay expenditures totaled approximately \$913,015.36.

According to MDOC's policies and procedures, no inmate should earn more than eight hours of incentive pay each workday nor earn more than 40 hours each workweek. Inmates can also earn incentive pay for participation in MDOC programs.

Exhibit 7 on page 20 provides the top three jobs/programs (largest amount paid for incentive pay at the facility during the year) at each state facility offering incentive pay in CY 2025. As shown in Exhibit 7, in all but one facility with incentive pay, pay for program participation rank in the top three. PEER notes that the total incentive pay expenditures reported in Offendertrak and provided by MDOC did not match the total expenditures reported in MAGIC and provided by MDOC.

Exhibit 7: Top Three Incentive Pay Jobs/Programs for Each Participating State Facility in CY 2025, as reported by MDOC

Work Program	Total Paid in CY 2025	Months Paid ¹	Average Monthly Payments ²	Total Inmates ³
Central Mississippi Correctional Facility				
Vocational Programs	\$23,116	12	\$1,926	95
Seminary Program at the Mississippi Correctional Institution for Women	\$21,346	12	\$1,779	49
Superintendent's Work Crew	\$8,715	12	\$726	21
Delta Correctional Facility				
Education Program	\$40,117	12	\$3,343	442
Kitchen Program (Shift 2)	\$7,298	12	\$608	67
Kitchen Program (Shift 1)	\$7,058	12	\$588	82
Marshall County Correctional Facility				
Institutional Programs	\$12,275	12	\$1,023	33
Kitchen Program (B Shift)	\$4,516	12	\$376	64
Vocational Programs	\$4,229	12	\$352	12
Mississippi State Penitentiary				
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (Post-Secondary Education)	\$88,142	12	\$7,345	131
Vocational Programs	\$31,739	12	\$2,645	319
Field Minister	\$23,978	12	\$1,998	36
South Mississippi Correctional Institution				
Reentry Academy	\$43,698	12	\$3,641	764
Students Program	\$42,150	12	\$3,512	790
Inmate Tutors	\$28,628	12	\$28,628	88
Walnut Grove Correctional Facility				
Central Kitchen Program	\$8,160	12	\$680	112
Superintendent's Work Crew	\$6,671	12	\$556	12
Field Minister	\$4,507	12	\$376	7

¹ Months paid represents the number of months in CY 2025 the program paid at least one inmate.

² Average monthly payments are the total payments in CY 2025 divided by the total months paid.

³ Total inmates are unique inmates participating in the program (i.e., an inmate may have participated each month in the vocation program but is only counted once).

Note: PEER cautions that program data reported in Offendertrak and other financial data (e.g., MAGIC) did not align.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of Offendertrak data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Research on the Impact of Correctional Education Programs

The research shows that correctional education programs not only have an impact on reducing recidivism but can also be cost effective. Additionally, providing evidence-based programs can be critical to mitigating high recidivism rates. However, MDOC's data reliability concerns hinder the ability to assess its program effectiveness.

There is some degree of evidence that correctional education programs in general are effective in reducing recidivism, and the more education an inmate receives, the less likely they are to recidivate. A meta-analysis, published by the RAND Corporation (RAND),¹⁰ establishes that across relevant rigorous studies, the odds of a participant in a correctional education program recidivating are around 0.6 to 0.7 times those of a nonparticipant.¹¹ This means, on average, the odds of recidivating among inmates receiving correctional education is between 60 and 70 percent of the odds of recidivating among inmates not receiving correctional education. It is important to note that this is a generalization across many different specific educational interventions, some presumably more effective than others; it cannot be assumed to apply to a specific intervention, any more than any given Mississippian can be assumed to be the average height for Mississippians. As such, it is still important that individual interventions have evidence of effectiveness.

For the same reason, correctional education can generally be assumed to be highly cost-effective. RAND estimates, which may not be reflective of Mississippi's costs of recidivism or inmate education, suggest that between a 1.9 and 2.6 percentage point reduction in three-year recidivism would be a break-

Research suggests that correctional education can reduce recidivism rates by 13 percentage points.

even point, at which the costs of correctional education equaled the avoided costs of recidivism. RAND estimates (using a low bound of their odds ratios) that correctional education reduces the three-year recidivism rate by 13 percentage points. In general, correctional education programs are highly cost-effective and can reduce recidivism; however, it is important to conduct individual studies of the programs being offered at specific institutions to determine the specific costs and levels of effectiveness of the programs. As will be discussed in the following chapter, MDOC's data are not sufficient to establish specific program effectiveness.

MISS. CODE ANN. Section 27-103-159 (1) (a) (1972) provides the definition of evidence-based program that should be used to classify programs. Mississippi's statutory definition of evidence-based is constructed to give decision makers the reason to believe that any program that meets it is effective at reducing recidivism or other program outcome. Not all definitions of evidence provide such assurance.

Barriers to Providing Correctional Programs as Reported by MDOC

According to MDOC, it faces a complex combination of structural, operational, and societal challenges that impact the delivery of correctional programs and reentry services, such as program disruptions, limited classroom space, technology limitations, and lack of motivation from participants.

¹⁰ The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that supports decision making through research and analysis.

¹¹ Bozock, R, Steele, J.L, Davis, L.M., Turner, S. (2018). Does providing inmates with education improve post release outcomes? A meta-analysis of correctional education programs in the United States. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation. Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. N. V. (2013). Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional education: a meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

According to MDOC there are several internal and participant-related barriers that impact the overall effectiveness of providing programs and reentry services. Institutional priorities often emphasize security over rehabilitation, and facility incidents can result in program disruptions, cancellations, and movement restrictions that limit consistent participation. Inmates can also be transferred from one facility to another prior to program completion. Additionally, many correctional facilities face budget constraints and infrastructure challenges, including limited classroom space, and restricted access, which hinders digital learning and workforce readiness training. Further, correctional facility staff reported that inmate movement and unit space are also barriers that limit MDOC's ability to consistently provide programs. For example, some programs are only offered in certain units within the facility. If there is limited space within the unit, the inmate will have to wait to receive the program until space opens within the unit.

Participant-related barriers also exist, such as low literacy and educational attainment levels, the need for foundational education, and the high prevalence of mental health and substance abuse disorders. In some cases, there is also a lack of motivation or distrust that further affects engagement. Additionally, classification status, inmate behavior, and offense disqualifications can limit program participation for those that may greatly benefit from the program.

Multiple MDOC staff stated that lack of motivation or interests in programs hinders inmate participation.

According to MDOC, it faces a complex combination of structural, operational, and societal challenges that impact the delivery of consistent, high-quality programming and reentry services. It recognizes that addressing these barriers will require a coordinated and strategic approach that includes strengthened partnerships, infrastructure improvements, and a continued shift toward rehabilitation-focused practices.

PEER notes that accurate and consistent program data can help MDOC demonstrate the effectiveness of its programs and help to address some of these barriers.

Post-secondary education staff at the colleges also mentioned that limited technology and digital learning can be a barrier for providing college courses in the correctional setting to inmates.

Barriers to Post-Secondary Education

According to college program staff, some of the challenges of providing post-secondary education in a correctional setting to inmates, include but are not limited to:

- lack of internet access and limited technology to support digital learning;
- varying procedural requirements for staff entering MDOC facilities (e.g., obtaining security clearance for training, instructional, and classroom materials);
- inconsistent notification of inmate transfers or releases that causes issues with reentry and continuing education services upon release; and,
- lack of collaboration between the colleges and MDOC to discuss program operations, share information and insights, and receive updates from MDOC.

Assessing the Effectiveness of MDOC's Programs

Data is a vital tool in evaluating the effectiveness of programs and monitoring compliance. However, data must be consistent, complete, and reliable in order to be useful. This chapter provides an overview of data issues identified through this review, the reasons for these issues, and the impact of unreliable data.

Inconsistent and Incomplete Program Data

Program information is not consistently reported in MDOC's data management system and did not match the data reported by each correctional facility in the program inventory, which is also incomplete and inconsistent.

Program Participation and Completion Data

Program information is not consistently reported in MDOC's data management system, Offendertrak, and did not match the data reported by each facility in the program inventory. As part of this review, to determine correctional programs and inmate participation, PEER requested:

- an inventory of programs offered at each facility including but not limited to facility name, program name, description of the program, eligibility requirements, enrollment, waitlists, and number of program participants, completers, and withdrawals in CY 2025; and,
- from CY 2022 to CY 2025, for each facility and program offered, a list of inmates enrolled, including entry date, exit data, reason for exit, and reason for withdrawal if applicable.

Each correctional facility was responsible for providing a program inventory, and MDOC used Offendertrak to provide the enrollment and completion information for the years requested. Initially, PEER planned to use the data provided in the program inventory to report programs and participation. However, some facilities provided incomplete and inconsistent information (e.g., listed programs but did not provide participation data). As a result, PEER decided to use Offendertrak data to obtain the missing information for the programs reported in the inventory, with the assumption that the programs in the inventory would match the programs in the system. According to MDOC, all correctional education program information should be reported in the system and should match facility records.¹² However, upon review, PEER discovered that the information reported by the facilities and the data recorded in Offendertrak did not match. Consequently, less than two percent of the participant, completion, and withdrawal data matched between the two sources. In most cases where there was a match, it is because a "zero" was

¹² MDOC stated that the only programs not reported consistently in Offendertrak are religious programs and miscellaneous programs and recreation.

recorded. Additionally, some programs were listed in the data management system but not reported by the facility in the program inventory, and vice versa.

Exhibit 8 on page 25 shows the differences in education program data recorded in Offendertrak and reported by each correctional facility.

Exhibit 8 on page 25 provides a comparison of program participation and program completion data for correctional education programs. As shown in Exhibit 8, there were 8,321 program participants reported in Offendertrak, and 12,158 program participants reported by

facilities, a difference of 3,837 participants. For completions, Offendertrak showed that 2,168 inmates completed correctional education programs in CY 2025, while the correctional facilities reported 7,750 completions, a difference of 5,582. As such, depending on which dataset is used, MDOC could have a program completion rate of 26% (Offendertrak) or 64% (correctional facilities), which is drastically different.

PEER notes that the program participants reported for adult basic education from both sources is similar (difference of 125 participants), which appears to suggest that correctional facilities are more likely to report participation for adult basic education in Offendertrak than other education programs. PEER also notes that it appears that state correctional facilities are more likely to report data in the system than private and regional facilities. For example, for state facilities, the difference in program participants when comparing the two datasets is 949, but for regional and private facilities the difference in reported participants is 2,888. Private facilities are largely underreported in both datasets.

Nonetheless, the incompleteness and inconsistency of both Offendertrak data and facility data is concerning and makes it difficult to evaluate the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of MDOC's programs. Neither the data management system or the correctional facility data represent a complete list of programs and accurately report program participation and completion.

Neither Offendertrak or the data provided by the facilities represent a complete list of programs and accurately report participation and completion.

PEER notes that MDOC's Internal Auditor also pointed out similar issues of inconsistent and unreliable data in an internal evaluation of inmate programming (conducted two years ago). The issues identified by MDOC's Internal Auditor are still occurring today.

Refer to Appendix C on page 61 for graphics depicting the differences in the two datasets.

Exhibit 8: Comparison of Offendertrak Correctional Education and Training Program Data to Data Reported by the Correctional Facilities for CY 2025

Exhibit 8.1: Differences in Correctional Education Program Participant Data Reported in Offendertrak and by Correctional Facilities

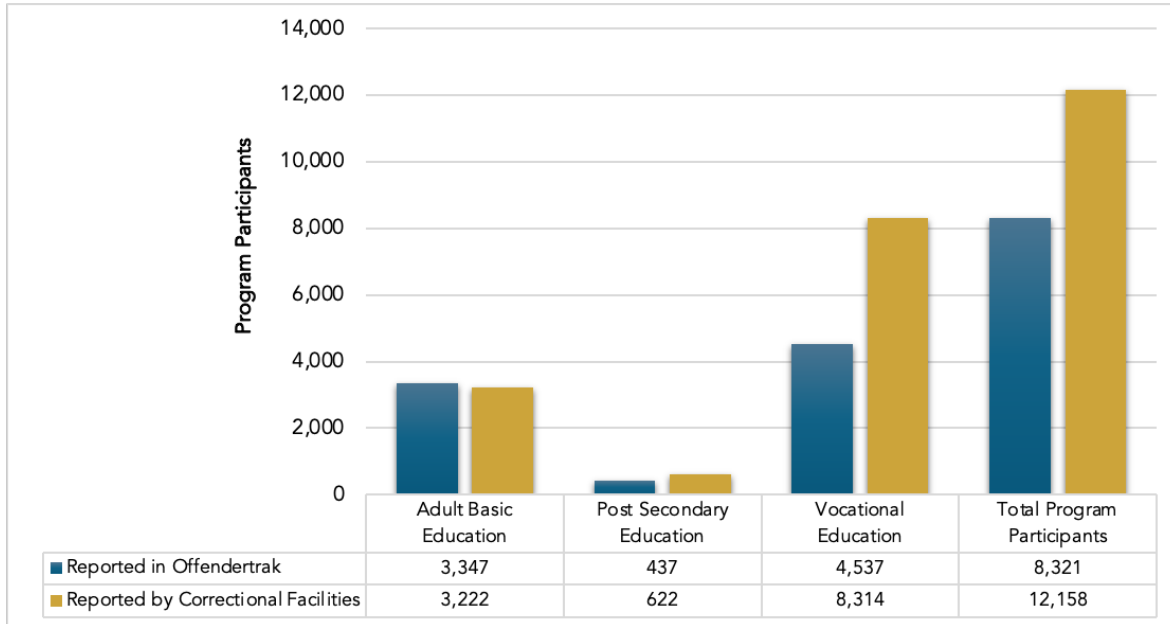
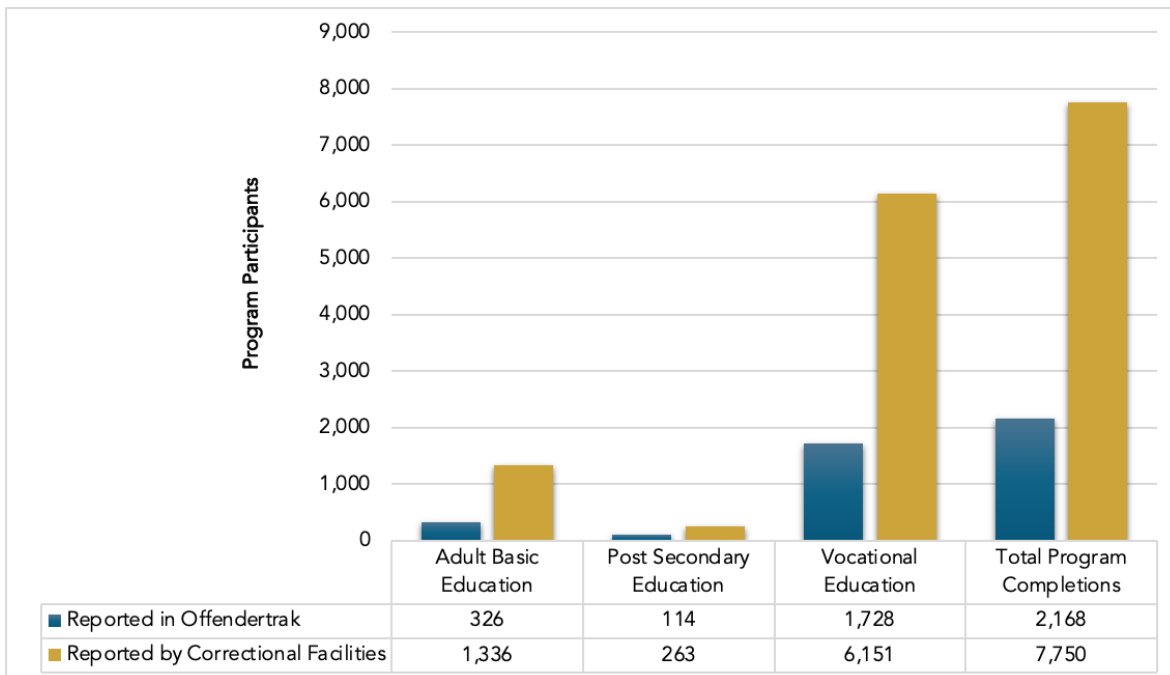


Exhibit 8.2: Differences in Correctional Education Program Completion Data Reported in Offendertrak and by Correctional Facilities



Note: As illustrated, program data reported in Offendertrak and by each facility did not always align.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of Offendertrak data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Data for Inmates Withdrawn from Programs

One of the barriers for MDOC in providing programs during incarceration is how often inmates are removed from programs prior to completion. The reason inmates are removed from programs can vary from disciplinary, medical, release, or prison transfer. As with the program participation and completion data, the reported program removals from Offendertrak and the correctional facilities did not match. In CY 2025, according to Offendertrak there were 4,438 withdrawals from correctional education programs, but according to the correctional facilities there were 2,911, a difference of 1,527 withdrawals.

It is common for correctional facilities not to record the reason for an inmate's withdrawal from programming in Offendertrak. As reported in the system, 47% of inmates did not have a reason for removal recorded. It is important to know the reason why inmates are being removed from programs to help MDOC and the correctional facilities make the best decisions regarding its inmates and the programs provided. The second most commonly reported reason for removal (39%) is that inmates are released from prison or transferred to another facility prior to program completion. MDOC stated that the Commissioner issued a directive for inmates not to be transferred to another facility if they are participating in programs. However, the data reflects that these transfers still occur. Prison Education Program staff at the colleges interviewed by PEER stated that MDOC does not always inform them when an inmate has been transferred from one facility to another or released from prison, even though this is in the intergovernmental agreements. This can cause confusion for the colleges and interrupts class participation and post-release follow up.

The data on program withdrawals from CY 2022 to CY 2025 does suggest that more correctional facilities were recording the information into the system in CY 2025 than in CY 2022. This could show some improvement in correctional facilities entering information into the system.

Other Program Data Inconsistencies and Concerns

There were several other program data inconsistencies and concerns identified through this review. Those concerns are discussed in the following section.

Inconsistent Program Titles

In both the correctional facility program inventory data and the Offendertrak data, the titles used for the same program varies by correctional facility. For example, in CY 2025, there were at least 35 different names for adult basic education in Offendertrak. This can be a problem, especially in a database, because it further limits the analysis that can be done on programs across facilities, and extends the amount of time it takes to attempt analysis. It is difficult to categorize and compare programs across facilities if the titles used are not consistent. Exhibit 9 on page 27 provides examples of naming issues that were present in both datasets. This chart includes correctional education programs, as well as programs reported in Appendix A.

Exhibit 9 on page 27 provides inconsistencies in program class names in Offendertrak and as reported by the facilities.

The Parole Board Chairman stated that this is often an issue for the Parole Board when reviewing programs that inmates have attended. For example, program titles in Offendertrak can vary from the program titles listed on the case plan. This makes

validation of the case plan difficult because it is not easy to determine if the required program has been completed or if alternate programs were taken instead.

Exhibit 9: Inconsistencies in Program Class Names in Offendertrak and as Reported by Correctional Facilities

Program Category	Class Name	Examples of Names in the Datasets
Adult Basic Education	Adult Basic Education	ABE ABE classes ABE I Adult Education (Facility Name) ABE ABE Unit 30
	GED	GED Class 01 GED Attending New Beginnings GED GED Packet Program
Vocational Education	Carpentry	CORE Class NCCER CORE NCCER CORE Class Carpentry CORE
	Welding	VO-TECH Welding Welding Program NCCER Welding Welding Level 1 SMCI Welding
Other Programs	Moral Reconation Therapy	Moral Conation MRT (Moral Reconation Therapy) SMCI Moral Reconation Therapy
	Thinking for a Change	Thinking 4 a Change Thinking for a Change (MSP)
	Alcohol and Drug Treatment	Alcohol and Drugs Program Alcohol and Drug Program Alcohol and Drug Alcohol/Drug

SOURCE: PEER analysis of data reported in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' data management system and information reported by correctional facilities.

Missing and Inconsistent Information

PEER requested information regarding each program offered to assess the overall effectiveness of the programs provided by MDOC. However, in the inventory collected for each facility there was often missing information. For example, Marshall County Correctional Facility, a state prison, provided a list of its programs, but the majority of supporting information, such as descriptions, eligibility, and participation, were missing from the inventory. The correctional facilities should be maintaining basic information

about each of its programs. This is an important factor when determining if programs are evidence-based and assessing fidelity to program design.

The Parole Board Chairman stated that program information is not always entered into the system. It may appear on the case plan or discharge plan but never be entered into Offendertrak. Missing information often does not mean that participation did not occur, rather it was never entered into the system by the responsible staff. This can hinder or slow down the validation of programs for parole purposes.

The interpretation of the data being requested was also inconsistent. For example, enrollment capacity is the maximum number of inmates that can participate in a program. However, for some correctional facilities, total participants would exceed its capacity. In addition, some capacity numbers seemed impossible. MDOC stated that it uses capacity to move people to and from program waitlists. If the correctional facilities cannot correctly report capacity, MDOC cannot ensure it is effectively managing its waitlists.

Additionally, there were inconsistencies in the length of programs and program eligibility requirements. For the length of programs, some programs that should have the same or similar lengths have reported program lengths that are much different. This means an inmate at one facility may be in a vocational program for six months and receive a certification, while an inmate at another facility in the exact same program may be in the program for more than a year. While some education programs are based on student progression, programs that are similar, should take a similar amount of time to complete. This can be important when trying to ensure that inmates can participate and earn a certification prior to being released.

Further, eligibility requirements are different depending on the facility offering the program. For example, an inmate with a disciplinary violation (referred to as an RVR), choosing to participate in Carpentry may be eligible for participation at Leake County Regional Facility because it only requires an inmate to be within two years of release and has no RVR restriction. However, the same inmate may not be eligible for Carpentry at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, because it requires inmates to be six-months RVR free before being able to participate in the program. Not having a consistent eligibility requirement creates a disadvantage for inmates depending on where they are housed.

Inaccurate Data Reported in Offendertrak

The Offendertrak data had obvious errors, such as impossible date ranges (e.g., an inmate started and ended the program on the exact same date) and duplicate entries. PEER removed these errors from the data in order to attempt analysis.

Concerning Program Statistics

There are several instances where the data in Offendertrak contradict MDOC's policies and procedures. For example, MDOC's policies and procedures state that all inmates will be enrolled in the pre-release program (i.e., a program that provides reentry assistance) automatically when they are within 180 days of release (i.e., six months). However, on April 3, 2026, there were 643 inmates within 180 days of release, and only 51 of these inmates were enrolled in a pre-release or reentry program as required by MDOC. This appears to be the exact opposite of what would be expected based on the requirements in the policies and procedures.

Additionally, according to MDOC, priority is given to inmates with five years or less remaining on their sentence. On April 3, 2026, there were 5,276 inmates (30% of the total incarcerated population) who were not enrolled in any programs but meet the five-year threshold. There were only 976 (5%) of inmates meeting the five-year threshold that were enrolled in at least one program (includes correctional education and other rehabilitative programs).

The completion rates for correctional education programs also appear to be inaccurate and vary from what is reported in other MDOC reports.

Large Number of Inmates Never Participating in Programs

According to Offendertrak data, approximately 69% of the inmate population on April 3, 2026, were not enrolled in an education program and had never been enrolled in an education program while incarcerated. Additionally, 76% had never been enrolled in a CTE training program. This could represent a higher percentage of “never” participants than it actually is. In the Offendertrak data for the inmate population, there were no missing values in the fields corresponding to present and past program enrollment. Given the frequency of missing and incorrect data in other datasets provided by MDOC, this comprehensive coverage does not appear accurate. An inmate with no record of having participated in a program is not the same as an inmate with a record of having “never” participated in a program. The two may have gotten conflated here, thus accounting for the large number of “never” participants.

Discrepancies in Post-Secondary Education Data

The data provided for post-secondary education did not consistently match across various datasets and documents provided by MDOC. PEER could not accurately determine which colleges were providing post-secondary education based on the information provided. MDOC’s website even reports different colleges.

Possible Reasons for Data Reliability Issues

MDOC’s data reliability issues are caused by the unreliability of its current data management system and inconsistent data entry practices and program requirements across facilities. Data reliability is further hindered by limited oversight and monitoring, no routine audits of program data, and limited training and collaboration.

PEER identified several possible reasons for MDOC’s unreliable data, including but not limited to:

- the unreliability of Offendertrak;
- inconsistent data entry practices;
- confusion regarding data entry responsibilities;
- reliance on spreadsheets and other databases;
- limited oversight and monitoring of regional and private facilities;

- no routine audits of program data conducted to identify errors, inconsistencies, or missing data;
- limited training and collaboration; and,
- lack of staffing as reported by MDOC.

PEER notes that there could be other reasons not identified through this review.

The Unreliability of Offendertrak

Offendertrak is an outdated legacy system that causes many of the problems with MDOC's unreliable data when compared to each facility's data.

As previously reported by PEER (see *Report #673*), MDOC's data management system, Offendertrak, causes many of the problems with MDOC's unreliable data. It is an outdated and inefficient legacy system that is no longer being supported by the system's vendor (as of June 30, 2025).¹³ While the system maintains a large amount of data, it is hard to use and often produces erroneous reports. For example, PEER observed that

the system still produces incorrect end dates on certain reports in the system. One report presumably shows the facility, program name, begin date, and end date for each program in which an inmate has participated. However, the end date on the report is often incorrect. If the inmate has changed prisons or has been released since participating in the program, the end date will reflect the date the change occurred, not the end date for the program. As a result, in the system, it could appear that someone participated in a program for six years instead of six months.

The following are some of the reasons why Offendertrak causes program data quality issues:

- It does not collect data in a way that is structured to facilitate analysis of inmate programs.
- It lacks database constraints and automatic error checks. This means it does not have constraints built into the system to ensure that data entered into one table automatically links to all tables in the database reporting the same data. It does not ensure data is consistent, valid, and intact, or flag potential errors or prevent impossible information from being entered into the system. This allows incorrect program data to be entered in the system and allows inconsistent program titles to be reported by each facility. It further allows program participation to appear on one report but not another, which can cause issues with program participation counts.
- It is not user friendly. Offendertrak users struggle with operation and navigation of the system. This increases opportunities for errors, makes it difficult to quickly and effectively inform decisions, and reduces the overall integrity of MDOC's data.

While program information may be entered into the system, MDOC explained that due to the limited capabilities of Offendertrak, the information may not appear on every report or screen. In some cases, Offendertrak will not show inmate participation in multiple programs. For example, if an inmate is enrolled in a vocational education program and then subsequently enrolled in a work program that offers incentive pay, Offendertrak will automatically remove the inmate from the vocational education program, even though the inmate is still participating in the program.

¹³ MDOC is in the process of replacing Offendertrak with a new system (see discussion on page 45).

Inconsistent Data Entry Practices

PEER recognizes that some of the issues with unreliable program data may not be the fault of Offendertrak but may be due to inconsistencies in system usage by prison facility staff. MDOC has limited policies and procedures regarding data entry processes. As a result, facility staff can inconsistently and incorrectly enter information into the system. Further, the policies and procedures do not provide guidance on how to count program participants, completions, and withdrawals. Therefore, the way in which these data elements are counted varies by facility. For example, in the inventory, some facilities counted inmates who were withdrawn from the program prior to completion as successfully completing the program. In some instances, the total number of successful completions exceeded the number of program participants, which would be impossible (e.g., one facility reported zero program participants but several program completions). In other instances, based on the numbers provided, there would be discrepancy in the number of participants, completers, and withdrawals, with several participants unaccounted for in the data. According to MDOC, this is a result of a tracking system limitation for some programs that are made up of several subcomponents. Data entry practices should be consistent across all facilities to ensure program information makes it into the system. This would help ensure program information is available for those who need it to make decisions regarding inmates (e.g., for program placement, for parole considerations).

Confusion Regarding Data Entry Responsibilities

While MDOC's policies and procedures state that case managers should enroll inmates in and out of programs in the system, correctional facility staff do not always agree on who should be responsible for the task. According to the Parole Board Chairman, sometimes the information on programs is not entered into the system and available when needed and does not always match with the case plan. The Chairman stated that some case managers dispute that it is their responsibility to enter the program information into Offendertrak. However, others will obtain help from program staff to get the information entered properly.

Instead of unreliable data being a system issue, it could be caused by information not being entered into the system.

All staff that were interviewed for this review reported that case managers and program staff work collaboratively on programs but there are no formal meetings to discuss inmate program needs. For example, at one facility, program staff hand delivers weekly attendance rosters to the case managers to record inmate program attendance in Offendertrak. There is no official guideline that requires it be done this way, and if the program staff forget or are not aware that this has to be done, the case manager may not properly record attendance in the system. This could lead to an inmate not receiving credit for program participation.

Among correctional facility staff interviewed for this review, there is no consensus on who is responsible for enrolling inmates in and out of programs. Some staff believe it is the responsibility of the case manager, and some staff believe it is a program manager's responsibility. For example, at one facility, program staff claim responsibility for inmate enrollment, while a case manager at the same facility claimed the same responsibility.

PEER notes that case managers do not report directly to the Deputy Commissioner of programs, which means that it could be more difficult to require case managers to enter program information into the system, if there is no direct line of authority.

MDOC stated that program information will be entered into the system but may not appear on the proper reports due to the limited capabilities of Offendertrak. If the end-user does not know where to look for the information, he or she may not be able to find it, even though it has been entered into the system.

Reliance on Spreadsheets and Other Facility Databases

According to program facility staff, it can be a hassle to obtain assistance with certain Offendertrak program reports from MDOC's central office. Facility staff feel it is better to maintain their own records outside of Offendertrak. As a result, some correctional facilities rely on spreadsheets and other documents to monitor and track programs. This can result in important program information never being entered into the system.

In addition to their own spreadsheets and databases, the central office also has a spreadsheet that it requires facilities to use to track information for its programs. This spreadsheet groups programs into different categories and requires total capacity, number of students, race of students, number of diplomas awarded, and number of certificates awarded. The spreadsheet contains monthly totals and year-to-date totals. According to MDOC staff the spreadsheets may have slightly different totals than what is reported in the system. This is due to when the information is entered into the system and recorded on the spreadsheet. Further, the spreadsheet currently being used is not organized for analysis purposes. Reliance on spreadsheets instead of the database can be a source of data reliability issues.

Limited Training and Collaboration with Program Staff

Correctional facility staff reported that there is limited training on how to operate Offendertrak. Issues with data being incorrectly entered into the system can arise when staff have not been properly training or provided guidelines on how to use the system. There is also no formal guidebook on programs to ensure that facilities are consistently and accurately reporting program information and recording it into the system.

Further, both facility and college staff reported that there is a lack of collaboration with MDOC's central office. For example, MDOC is required to inform colleges when an inmate is being transferred or released from prison. Transfers and releases can interfere with program participation. Providing this information to college staff over the Prison Education Program can ensure that the college is able to keep in contact with the student and ensure programming continues at the new facility for those students who are transferred from facilities.

Collaborative meetings allow for stakeholders and facilities to discuss ongoing challenges, opportunities for program improvement, implementation of technology and procedures for usage.

Limited Oversight and Monitoring of Regional and Private Facilities

MDOC enters into agreements with regional and private facilities to house state inmates. The agreements outline certain requirements that these facilities must meet. While there is limited information in the agreements regarding programs and treatment, the agreements state that all county facilities are required to provide counseling and mental health programs, as well as space for programs and education. The agreements state that any records will be immediately available for review by MDOC. However, there is no other mention of oversight or monitoring of programs provided by the facilities.

As discussed in this report, MDOC has a difficult time obtaining certain program information from regional and private facilities, including program expenditures, staffing, and specific program data (e.g., participation). This is not an issue for all regional facilities. Some facilities maintain better program data than others. MDOC stated that because it contracts with local facilities to handle the day-to-day management of some state inmates, the documentation for those inmates is held at the local facility level and may or may not be recorded, maintained, or retrievable in a format similar to MDOC records. This is concerning and makes it difficult to ensure that program data from these facilities is being reported.

No Routine Audits of Program Data to Identify Errors, Inconsistencies, or Missing Data

While MDOC's Internal Auditor did conduct an evaluation of programs and found similar issues as presented in this report, MDOC does not routinely audit program data entered into the system and reported by the correctional facilities to identify errors, inconsistencies, or missing data. According to MDOC:

MDOC internal audit [the Internal Auditor] did plan and is in the process of implementation [of] an audit of programs, but due to the overwhelming requests from PEER for program data, the process was put on pause until the PEER requests were met. MDOC internal audit does not have a completed audit available currently.

PEER notes that the information requested for this review included basic program information that should already be maintained by MDOC for each of its programs across all facilities. Maintaining this level of information can help MDOC with monitoring program compliance and reporting on effectiveness. Not having this information readily available prevents anyone, including MDOC, from determining if its programs are working as intended.

Lack of Staffing as Reported by MDOC

PEER asked MDOC what it believes are the reasons program information would not be in the system or would not match with the information reported by the correctional facilities. MDOC staff stated that a lack of staffing and delayed data entry would be the reason for the issues. PEER notes that MDOC could not provide a complete list of program staff and vacancies for its 24 correctional facilities. Therefore, PEER could not determine if MDOC has an issue with staffing for its programs. PEER notes that staffing is often an issue with adequately providing correctional programs.

Impact of Unreliable Program Data

Unreliable program data has an impact on MDOC's ability to measure and report on the success of its programs. If the Mississippi Legislature cannot trust the information being provided by MDOC, it may not allocate resources to the most effective programs. Further, program data helps the Parole Board determine if inmates have worked towards rehabilitation and are ready to be released.

This review focuses on the impact unreliable program data has on:

- MDOC's ability to measure and report on the success of its programs;

- parole decisions; and,
- reentry and post release success.

Impact on the Ability to Measure Success of MDOC's Programs

MDOC is responsible for training, treating, and rehabilitating inmates in order to prevent, control, and reduce recidivism. The goal is to provide programs and services that will provide the tools individuals need to be more successful upon release (e.g., obtaining employment). Recidivism is the most common measurement used to demonstrate how successful or unsuccessful a correctional department is in rehabilitating its inmates. While MDOC reports an overall recidivism rate, it also reports recidivism for its correctional education programs. Research suggests that individuals participating in correctional education programs while incarcerated are often more successful upon release and therefore, less likely to recidivate, than those who did not participate in education programs.

Recidivism is the percentage of individuals re-incarcerated within 36 months of initial release.

A key part of calculating recidivism for correctional education programs is having an accurate record of participation and completion. While MDOC reports a recidivism rate for its correctional education programs in various documents (e.g., strategic plan), due to the data concerns, the rate is not an accurate representation of its programs. MDOC cannot effectively measure the success of its programs until it addresses its issues with program data.

Some individuals interviewed by PEER, reported that the administration of programs at MDOC had improved over the last few years due to the work of the current Deputy Commissioner of Programs, who was hired in the role in CY 2022. Reliable data would help MDOC show such improvements over time. Its correctional education programs could be effective in reducing recidivism, as suggested in the research, but the data should not be used at this time to assess effectiveness.

The inability to measure program success in reducing recidivism can have an impact on MDOC, as well as the Mississippi Legislature. Data concerns limits MDOC's ability to show how well its programs are doing or where additional resources could be provided to make program improvements. The Legislature can use recidivism data to make decisions regarding MDOC's programs. Research suggests that correctional education is cost effective and can be a good investment, but the Legislature cannot use the data provided by MDOC to know if this is true for its programs.

Impact on Parole Decisions

According to the Parole Board Chairman, MDOC case managers are required to complete and submit a case plan and discharge plan for every non-violent inmate eligible for presumptive parole. Case plans should assign relevant programs, vocational training, and/or jobs for an inmate to accomplish during incarceration. Assigned programming should be relevant and measurable (e.g., an inmate should not be assigned to adult basic education if he or she has graduated college). Discharge plans should validate that the inmate has successfully accomplished everything agreed to on the case plan during incarceration. The case plans should include a summary of needs and focus on programs the inmate is currently attending and in need of completion, or additional relevant programs identified by the case manager.

The case plans and discharge plans are reviewed by the Parole Board, and program completion is validated by the information obtained on the inmate's parole data sheet in Offendertrak. All programs an inmate has or is participating in should be recorded on the data sheet. However, this does not always occur for every inmate and program. If it is not in Offendertrak during the program verification process, the reviewer assumes it does not exist and the inmate has not been participating in the agreed upon or required programs. However, lack of participation may not be the case; it could be that the case manager has not entered the information into the system yet. Either way, the program will not be counted if it is not on the data sheet in Offendertrak.

If the information needed to make parole decisions is not available and is not reliable, the Parole Board cannot make the best possible decisions for each inmate. This could result in inmates staying in prison longer than required.

Impact on Reentry and Post Release Success

Inmates need to have an accurate history of program participation. Unreliable program data can impact an inmate's time in prison as well as cause problems upon release. Inmates often transfer from one facility to another during incarceration, not accurately maintaining program information in Offendertrak makes it difficult for correctional facilities to know which programs inmates have participated in or should participate in. This could result in inmates not obtaining the programs and treatment needed to support successful reentry.

Upon release, if inmates cannot provide proper documentation regarding programs and work completed during incarceration, this could increase the difficulty of obtaining employment. The more difficult it is for an inmate to reenter society, the more likely the inmate is to commit another crime and return to prison, which affects MDOC's recidivism rate. Inmates should be able to rely on MDOC to maintain their data and help them successfully return to life outside of prison.

The Importance of Supporting Successful Reentry

According to MDOC, there are external factors that present significant challenges in providing correctional programs and supporting successful reentry. Individuals returning to the community can encounter limited employment opportunities and face community resistance due to the stigma associated with having a criminal record. Additionally, many individuals are released to rural areas with limited resources, where transportation barriers restrict access to employment, training, and supportive services. For these reasons, individuals are often more successful when they not only participate in correctional education programs but are provided with effective reentry support programs and services.

This chapter provides a brief overview of MDOC's efforts of:

- providing reentry programs and services during incarceration;
- connecting inmates to employment opportunities;
- matching CTE programs to in-demand jobs; and,
- tracking post release employment outcomes for inmates.

Providing Reentry Programs and Services During Incarceration

MDOC offers several reentry programs and services to inmates during incarceration, including developing resumes, conducting job searches, and assisting with financial awareness. MDOC also assists inmates in obtaining proper identification and other resources available post release.

Interview training and job preparation can be a critical resource for individuals released from prison and looking to obtain post-release employment. As shown in Exhibit 10 on page 37, in CY 2025, several correctional facilities reported reentry programs (most commonly referred to as pre-release by MDOC) in Offendertrak. All state facilities provided reentry preparation during the calendar year. According to MDOC, its reentry programming and services are designed to prepare inmates for the challenges they may face upon release, such as employment barriers, lack of housing, and financial obligations. The programs and services provided include assisting inmates in:

- identifying career interests;
- developing resumes;
- conducting job searches;
- becoming financially aware; and,
- developing positive behaviors that can impact real-world experience.

Reentry preparation should be combined with correctional education and other interventions (e.g., life skills, behavior modification) that address an inmate's rehabilitation needs as identified through the risk and needs assessment tool. According to MDOC's policies and procedures, inmates should be automatically enrolled in pre-release when they are within six months of their expected release date. However, inmates needing these services can be enrolled prior to that timeline.

Refer to Appendix A on page 58 for more information regarding reentry, life skills, and other interventions provided to inmates during incarceration.

Additional Reentry Resources

In addition to its reentry preparation programs and services, according to MDOC, it also prepares inmates for pre-release by providing access to the following resources prior to an inmate's release:

- Mississippi state-issued identification card and/or driver's license;
- Medicaid benefits for eligible inmates;
- Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income Benefits;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Child Support Assistance Program;
- Transitional Housing; and,
- Clothing.

MDOC also provides inmates with a guide, Pathway to Re-Entry, created by the Mississippi Community College Board. The Guide provides resources to inmates exiting incarceration, including regional probation and parole contacts, legal aid, affordable housing, food banks, childcare, transportation, ways to obtain proper documentation, medical and mental health care, alcohol and substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation, education and training opportunities, community colleges, and job centers. The document was last updated in CY 2022.¹⁴

Exhibit 10: Checklist of Facilities Providing Reentry Preparation in CY 2025

Facility	Reentry Preparation
State	
Central Mississippi Correctional Facility ¹	✓
Delta Correctional Facility	✓
Marshall County Correctional Facility	✓
Mississippi State Penitentiary	✓
South Mississippi Correctional Institution	✓
Walnut Grove Correctional Facility	✓
Private	
East Mississippi Correctional Facility	
Wilkinson County Correctional Facility	
Regional	
Alcorn County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Bolivar County Correctional Facility	
Carroll/Montgomery County Regional Correctional Facility ²	
Chickasaw County Regional Correctional Facility	
George/Greene County Correctional Facility	
Holmes/Humphreys County Correctional Facility	
Issaquena County Correctional Facility	✓
Jefferson/Franklin County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Kemper/Neshoba County Regional Correctional Facility	✓
Leake County Correctional Facility	
Marion/Walthall County Correctional Facility	✓
Stone County Correctional Facility	✓
Washington County Regional Correctional Facility	
Winston/Choctaw County Correctional Facility	✓
Yazoo County Regional Correctional Facility	✓

¹ Program data for the Mississippi Correctional Institute for Women is included in the data for the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

² The facility did not report programs in Offendertrak in CY 2025.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of inmate data reported in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' data management system.

¹⁴ PEER notes that while the information in the Guide does not appear to be out of date and should still be useful to inmates exiting prison, there are some resource links within the document that could be updated.

Connecting Inmates to Employment Opportunities

MDOC hosts several reentry job fairs across the state to help connect inmates to employment opportunities. However, MDOC could not report how many inmates participated in the job fairs or connected with employers.

It is important to connect inmates to employers willing to hire individuals with a criminal record. This can give individuals released from a prison a better opportunity to find employment. MDOC hosts reentry job fairs across the state to support inmates' successful transition from prison to the community. Job fairs are designed to connect participants with employers, training providers, and community organizations that can assist them in obtaining stable employment and accessing essential support services. These job fairs are typically sponsored through partnerships with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security's Governor's Job Fair Network, local Job Win Centers, workforce development agencies, community colleges, and community-based organizations.

According to MDOC, during the job fairs, participants:

- meet with employers who are actively hiring;
- learn about available job openings and career pathways;
- apply for jobs and participate in on-site interviews;
- receive information about vocational training and certification programs; and,
- connect with organizations that provide reentry support.

Additionally, workforce development agencies and education institutions often provide information on skills training programs that can help participants be more competitive in the job market.

MDOC stated that there are a variety of industries participating in MDOC job fairs, including:

- manufacturing;
- construction;
- logistics;
- warehousing;
- hospitality; and,
- healthcare.

According to MDOC, reentry job fairs play an important role in its broader reentry strategy by strengthening partnerships between corrections, employers, and community organizations. Its goal is not only to help returning citizens secure employment and access supportive services, but to also contribute to increased economic stability, successful reintegration, and reduced recidivism.

From March 2022 through March 2026, MDOC hosted 12 reentry job fairs across the state (e.g., DeSoto County, Hinds County, Marshall County, and Leflore County). While PEER requested a list

of the organizations participating in each job fair, the number of inmates in attendance, and the number of inmates obtaining jobs from these employers upon release, MDOC could not provide this information.

Matching CTE Programs to In-Demand Jobs

CTE programs should target industries that are in high demand throughout the state. MDOC currently uses labor market data to match some of its vocations to in-demand industries in Mississippi (e.g., construction). However, MDOC could further improve on its CTE programs offered by targeting industries expected to experience job growth over the next several years. It is also important to understand that even with these programs and certifications, formerly incarcerated individuals can still struggle to obtain employment due to a lack of experience, competition, and additional education, licensure, and certifications needed.

CTE programs and training should be designed to teach inmates skills that are marketable for specific jobs and industries. Programs should target industries that are in high demand throughout the state and offer livable wages (i.e., the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support themselves, working full-time or 2,080 hours per year).¹⁵ Completion of programs should lead to certifications that are nationally recognized by employers. This can give inmates a better opportunity to find and retain employment, as well as increasing total wages earned and improving financial stability upon release. Research suggests that acquiring steady employment following release from prison can be an important factor for inmates post release and can work to reduce their odds of returning towards criminal behavior.

According to MDOC, CTE program selection is:

- guided by current and projected labor market trends across Mississippi and surrounding regions;
- prioritized for programs developed in collaboration with local employers, community colleges, and workforce development agencies; and,
- focused on programs that offer direct employment pathways or lead to certifications/credentials recognized by employers (e.g., the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certifications and the ServSafe credential offered through culinary arts).

To determine if MDOC's CTE programs focus on in-demand jobs, skills, and certifications, PEER utilized relevant labor market data from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security to match MDOC's vocational programs to industries identified in the labor market data.

In-Demand Industries in Mississippi by Job Growth

PEER reviewed long term industry employment projections from CY 2022 to CY 2032 and then placed each MDOC program in one or more of the industries where an inmate participating in the

¹⁵ The Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimated that the living wage for one adult with no children was \$20.69 as of February 15, 2026.

program may be able to obtain employment once released. PEER notes that it classified the programs into industries based on job descriptions and certifications. There is a possibility that MDOC could classify the programs differently.

Exhibit 11 on page 41 shows the ten industries with the largest projected growth in jobs by CY 2032. In both charts, the industries highlighted in green shows that MDOC offers at least one program at one correctional facility that aligns with the industry. PEER notes that one program could qualify for more than one industry. As shown in Exhibit 11, MDOC's programs target four of the ten industries expected to have the largest change in job offerings from CY 2022 to CY 2032, most notably construction, warehousing and storage, and specialty trade contractors. There appears to be a moderate correlation not attributable to chance between the number of programs MDOC offers in an industry and the projected job count in that industry. However, there is no such correlation between offered program count and job growth.¹⁶ This suggests, that, intentionally or not, decisions about which programs to offer are oriented more toward the absolute number of jobs available in an industry than the likely future opportunities in that industry. While vocational training programs may not be available for all job categories, MDOC might expand the opportunities for former inmates by deliberately taking both job count and job growth into account.

Exhibit 11 on page 41 shows the ten industries with the largest projected growth in jobs by CY 2032. MDOC offers CTE programs that target four of these industries.

MDOC may not offer programs for some in-demand industries because of the hiring restrictions that can exist for those with a criminal record (e.g., health care, educational services).

While not presented in Exhibit 11, one industry that MDOC could consider expanding program selection is data processing, hosting, and related services. This industry is expected to have a percentage job growth of 129% (1,057 jobs in CY 2022 to 2,417 jobs in CY 2032). MDOC does currently offer some computer classes, which include computer programming. PEER notes that the expansion of computer classes, if possible, could help individuals with other employment opportunities upon release due to the increasing use of technology in most jobs.

PEER notes that a better analysis would be to compare the top industries to CTE program participation at MDOC. However, due to the concerns with participation data, PEER decided not to conduct that analysis. Ideally, a larger number of inmates would be participating in industries with a higher projected job growth. PEER notes that in order to ensure programs have the desired impact, participants should not be removed from programs prior to completion.¹⁷

Appendix D on page 62 provides a list of all industries in Mississippi organized by projected job growth.

¹⁶ PEER's analysis is in terms of job growth expressed as a percentage in order to separate the factors of market size and market increase, both of which are important.

¹⁷ According to MDOC's Offendertrak data, only 38% of inmates successfully completed CTE programs in CY 2025.

Exhibit 11: Top 10 In-Demand Industries in Mississippi based on Projected Job Growth from CY 2022 to CY 2032

Industry	Program(s) Offered by MDOC	Estimated Jobs	Projected Jobs	Projected Job Growth	Percentage Growth
Health Care and Social Assistance	None	160,040	177,468	17,428	11%
Construction	Construction/Carpentry	46,181	54,163	7,982	17%
Social Assistance	None	29,695	37,209	7,514	25%
Warehousing and Storage	Forklift	22,278	28,139	5,861	26%
Specialty Trade Contractors	HVAC/HVAR, Masonry, Pipefitting, Plumbing, Shipfitting, Tiling, Welding	25,749	31,120	5,371	21%
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	None	27,948	33,298	5,350	19%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	None	70,066	75,234	5,168	7%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	None	53,537	58,605	5,068	9%
Administrative and Support Services	Business Technology, Computer Class	66,070	70,933	4,863	7%
Educational Services	None	112,823	117,479	4,656	4%

Note: For industries highlighted in green, MDOC reported it has at least one program that aligns with jobs in the industry.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of long-term industry employment projections from CY 2022 to CY 2032 from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security and program data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Industries in Mississippi with Projected Negative Job Growth

While several of MDOC's CTE's programs prepare inmates for jobs that are currently in demand, there were eight industries targeted by MDOC's programs that were projected to have a decrease in jobs between CY 2022 and CY 2032. Exhibit 12 on page 42 provides a list of those industries that are targeted by MDOC's programs. While MDOC does not have to eliminate these programs, it should consider the benefit of offering more programs that meet projected job growth over programs that target industries with a decline in available jobs.

Exhibit 12 on page 42 provides a list of industries targeted by MDOC that are expected to have a decline in jobs between CY 2022 and CY 2032

Exhibit 12: Industries with a Projected Decline in Jobs between CY 2022 and CY 2032

Industry	Program(s) Offered by MDOC	Estimated Jobs	Projected Jobs	Projected Job Growth
Apparel Manufacturing	Industrial Sewing	1,220	1,216	-4
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	Concrete Construction	901	823	-78
Textile Product Mills	Industrial Sewing	828	738	-90
Forestry and Logging	Agriculture Basics, Horticulture	2,977	2,684	-293
Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	Tiling	8,755	8,285	-470
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	Culinary Arts	15,249	14,347	-902
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers	Industrial Sewing, Marketing	9,632	8,023	-1,609
Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	Upholstery, Construction/Carpentry	16,798	14,785	-2,013

SOURCE: PEER analysis of long-term industry employment projections from CY 2022 to CY 2032 from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security and program data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Mean Monthly Wages for Industries Targeted by MDOC

Some of MDOC's programs could lead to larger wages than others. Exhibit 13 on page 42 provides two charts that depict mean weekly wages in CY 2024 by industry. Exhibit 13.1 shows the five industries with the largest mean weekly wages for programs offered by MDOC. Exhibit 13.2 shows the five industries with the lowest mean weekly wages. It does not appear that MDOC uses wage data to determine programs it is going to offer. The correlation between wages and program count is minimal and can only be explained by random chance.

Exhibit 13: Wages for Industries with Targeted CTE Programs

Exhibit 13.1: Five Industries with the Largest Mean Weekly Wages for CTE Programs Offered by MDOC

Industry	Mean Weekly Wages
Primary Metal Manufacturing	\$1,690
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	\$1,508
Wholesale Trade	\$1,442
Construction of Buildings	\$1,314
Support Activities for Transportation	\$1,304

Exhibit 13.2: Five Industries with the Lowest Mean Weekly Wages for CTE Programs Offered by MDOC

Industry	Mean Weekly Wages
Food Services and Drinking Places	\$379
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers	\$417
Food and Beverage Retailers	\$485
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	\$494
Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	\$554

SOURCE: PEER analysis of quarterly census of employment and wages from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security for CY 2024.

Importance of Combining CTE Training with Reentry Assistance

While CTE programs can improve skills and it does appear MDOC attempts to select programs that match labor market demand, inmates can still have a difficult time obtaining employment upon release due to lack of experience, competition, and additional education, licensure, and certifications needed. Jobs often require years of experience that a former inmate may or may not have, as well as a high school diploma and professional licensure and additional certifications that may not be provided by MDOC.

MDOC focuses on the NCCER curriculum, which provides inmates an education in construction and craft specializations. The curriculum aligns with industry principles and practices. NCCER is a nationally recognized industry credential that could lead to entry-level employment and training programs. While it is important to offer this credential and teach these skills, some industry employers may be seeking more experienced and licensed professionals for positions. Specifically, openings for occupations such as electrician, HVAC technician, welder, and carpenter require licensure, certification and/or some form of supervised on-the-job training as position qualifications. NCCER credentials give students foundational, theoretical, and applied knowledge of trade and craft occupations but does not substitute for required in-field experience.

As a result, it is important to combine CTE training and other correctional education programs with reentry assistance and workforce readiness skills. Reentry services can provide inmates with career guidance such as interviewing skills, job referrals, and necessary credentials for improving employment opportunities.

Tracking Post Release Employment Outcomes

The post release employment data collected by MDOC is limited to those individuals released on parole.

MDOC's Community Corrections staff is responsible for collecting post release employment information for individuals released from confinement and placed on parole by directly contacting each individual. According to MDOC, contact should be made within seven days of post release, with follow up calls occurring 15 and 30 days after post release. MDOC staff is responsible for documenting the information from the calls in the caseload system and in a separate document that is forwarded to the supervisor for a compiled report of post release employment per regions. Further contacts can be made after 30 days to obtain more accurate updates on employment status and to follow up on pending hires. MDOC will try to remain in contact with those individuals who are unemployed after the 30-day follow up.

For those individuals released on parole, each month MDOC tracks the number of individuals:

- employed;
- unemployed;
- with job referrals made;
- in vocational programming after release;

- disabled;
- in a treatment or reentry facility;
- in jail; and,
- who were unable to be contacted.

The employment connections data sheet also includes the industry (e.g., manufacturing, food services) hiring the individuals during the month. The data sheet does not include how long an individual has been employed or how much the individual is making. MDOC began tracking this information in its current form in November 2025¹⁸ and has limited data on post release employment outcomes. PEER notes that the counts on the data sheet do not always match.

MDOC's current post release tracking efforts only focus on those individuals released on parole and does not yet include individuals released on other forms of supervision (e.g., Earned Release Supervision) or those released without any supervision requirements. Therefore, this tracking process only includes a small percentage of inmates being released from MDOC custody. For example, in November 2025, as reported in Offendertrak, 496 inmates were released from prison. Only 194 (39%) were contacted regarding post release employment.

To help track post release employment outcomes and earned wages, some state departments of corrections will collaborate and communicate with other entities, such as the Department of Employment Security, to obtain better employment data for individuals released from prison. MDOC does not currently communicate with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security regarding post release employment or earned wages. Further, MDOC does not request wages earned information from individuals during employment connections, only employer names.

¹⁸ According to MDOC, it began tracking post release in CY 2023, but in a different format.

Opportunities for Improvement

PEER sought to provide MDOC with strategies that could help improve its program data and its ability to assess program effectiveness, as well as some post release strategies that have worked in other states.

Improvement of Program Data Collection and Maintenance

As MDOC transitions to a new data management system, it should clean up its issues with program data that exist in the current system to ensure that inaccurate and incomplete data does not enter the new system. Further, implementation of effective internal controls, routine data audits, and guidance to support consistent data collect process and practices, would help improve MDOC's data reliability concerns.

As discussed, there are multiple reasons for MDOC's program data concerns, including issues with Offendertrak, a lack of training on how to use the system, and inconsistent processes and practices related to data collection. The following section provides an overview of ways MDOC can work to improve the quality of its program data.

Implementation of a New Data Management System

Offendertrak is no longer being supported by the vendor, and as a result, MDOC is responsible for all maintenance and upkeep of the Offendertrak software. MDOC is currently in the process of transitioning to a new system, with a goal of completing the transition by the beginning of CY 2027.¹⁹ This includes migrating the information from Offendertrak to the new system and training all end users on how to operate the new system.

With the implementation of a new data management system, MDOC has the unique opportunity to ensure that the system is able to collect data that is structured to facilitate analysis that can be used by MDOC, prison facility staff, the Parole Board, and policymakers to make more informed decisions regarding inmates. A good system should easily answer important questions about programs and recidivism. For example, there should be a report in the system that shows each program that is offered by each correctional facility and include important data, such as

MDOC has an opportunity to ensure that its new system is able to collect data that is structured to facilitate analysis and can be used to make more informed decisions.

¹⁹ MDOC entered into a contract with Strategic Communications, LLC., in November 2025, to implement a new data management system for an amount not to exceed \$18,431,920.86. These costs include the system set-up and configuration, warranty, maintenance for five years, training, and software licensing. Strategic Communications, LLC., is a Cloud Solutions Preferred Vendor (CSPV) with the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services.

program participation and enrollment, completion, withdrawals, capacity, and number of individuals on a waitlist for each program.

To improve the reliability of its program data in the new system and increase data integrity, MDOC should:

- verify that information in Offendertrak is accurate and complete prior to migrating the data to the new system;
- implement effective application and user controls over the system;
- regularly monitor and audit program information entered into the system to ensure accuracy;
- implement end-user training on how to operate and enter program data into the system, and ensure all new employees responsible for programs receive training during orientation; and,
- make the new system an inmate's master record and limit program records to an electronic format.

Migration of Program Data to the New System

Due to the program data concerns, when migrating data from Offendertrak, to the new system, MDOC will need to verify that the information that is in Offendertrak is accurate and complete prior to transferring it to the new system. If this step is not completed, inaccurate and incomplete information could be entered into the new system and result

It is essential for MDOC to verify the information that is in Offendertrak to ensure accuracy and completeness prior to transferring it to the new system. If it does not complete this step, the same problems with its data will continue to exist.

in the same data problems. This is very important as it relates to program data because the information has been inconsistently entered into the system or in some cases not entered in at all. This means MDOC not only needs to verify Offendertrak program data but will need to review facility records as well.

According to MDOC, program data will be migrated to the new data management system from legacy data stored in Offendertrak and facility records. MDOC is in the process of digitizing available facility records to transfer to Offendertrak and then to the new system. MDOC staff stated that data and records are under review for completeness and accuracy at all levels of MDOC operations to ensure a successful migration to the new system.

Currently, in Offendertrak, program/class names can be entered in by each correctional facility. This has resulted in many variations of the names for the same program/class. As discussed, this limits the ability to conduct analysis of the programs when the names are different and further confuses decision makers, such as the Parole Board, when trying to interpret the information.

Data integrity refers to the overall completeness, accuracy, consistency, and availability of data, and it is essential to making sound decisions regarding programs and treatment and supporting program decisions.

During the system migration process, MDOC should review all of the current program/class names that exist in Offendertrak to eliminate the variations in names for programs that are the same to ensure consistency in the new system. If MDOC transfers program data in its current format to the new system, it will continue to limit analysis and make comparisons difficult.

Effective Internal Controls over the New System

As reported in the 2022 Data Management Report, implementation of effective application and user controls result in increased data integrity for not only program data but for all data. As it transitions to a new system, MDOC should ensure implementation of the following application and user controls:

- **Completeness controls:** provide reasonable assurance that all data is input into the system, accepted for processing, processed once and only once by the system, and properly included in output.
- **Accuracy controls:** provide reasonable assurance that data is properly recorded and timely and produces reliable results (e.g., numbers are recorded in numeric format).
- **Validity controls:** provide reasonable assurance that all recorded data actually occurred, relate to the organization, are authentic, and are properly approved in accordance with management's authorization (additionally, output should contain only valid data).
- **Confidentiality controls:** provide reasonable assurance that application data and reports and other output are protected against unauthorized access.
- **Availability controls:** provide reasonable assurance that application data and reports are readily available to users when needed.

Currently, MDOC does not have consistent data entry processes and cannot ensure that the information entered into Offendertrak is complete, accurate, or valid. As it transitions to the new system, MDOC will need to ensure that program data is accurately and consistently entered into the system by all end-users. According to MDOC, it does not anticipate any changes to the process of data entry into the new system. This is concerning considering the issues with its program data. MDOC needs to ensure that data entered into the system is accurate and complete to increase the integrity of the state's inmate program data.

While MDOC currently has data quality issues with its program data, it does not anticipate any changes to the process of data entry into the new system. If MDOC does not change its processes, it will continue to have data issues.

PEER notes that once MDOC has a list of programs/classes in the system, there should be internal controls to limit additional program names from being entered into the system. This could be done by creating a stock list of programs in the system and have a dropdown menu that only allows selection of programs on the list. If MDOC implements a new program that would not fit into one of the programs already available in the system, an administrator, such as the Deputy Commissioner, should be the one to add the program name to the system. This would help alleviate the many different ways program names

are entered into the system and help improve analysis capabilities. If other information on programs is needed, such as specific class names or facility location, that data element should be a separate data field in the database.

Auditing Program Information

MDOC should conduct routine audits of its program data to identify errors, inconsistencies, or missing data, and have a process to ensure any issues are corrected in a timely manner. Any changes should be properly documented and communicated to staff to improve the amount of data entry errors that occur. This would help to ensure the most accurate information is in the system and can be used for analysis.

End-User Training

MDOC should train its staff on proper program data entry, documentation standards, and interpretation. This training should be continuous and incorporate any changes that are made to the system and to MDOC's processes.

Program Records in Electronic Format

Not all correctional facilities consistently utilize Offendertrak to report program data. There is reliance on spreadsheets and other documents to monitor and track programs. MDOC should use the transition to the new system as the time to limit records to an electronic format. If done properly and with effective internal controls over the system, limiting records to an electronic format would provide more control over access to the system, ensure more secure data, minimize program data inconsistencies, and allow more efficient searches for program information.

Guidance for Data Collection Processes and Practices

MDOC's policies and procedures could be updated to include more information regarding data collection processes and practices to ensure more consistent and uniform data collection. Additionally, MDOC could provide each facility with further guidance, such as a correctional program guidebook, to help ensure that every facility is using the same:

- definitions of program data elements being collected;
- processes for collecting the data;
- timeframe for data collection; and,
- system for entering all program data.

There are specific best practices available for correctional education program data collection. One example is a guidebook issued by the United States Department of Education in 2006, to provide a standard data collection framework for states to use when reporting and tracking correctional education program data.²⁰ It establishes common terms, metrics, and outcomes to enable consistent data reporting that better informs decisions. It outlines inmate demographics and

²⁰ The guidebook is based on guidance from correctional education administrators in 12 states, California, Florida, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Vermont, and The Bureau of Justice Statistics and Federal Bureau of Prisons. Arizona, Connecticut, Michigan, and Minnesota also provided some assistance for the guidebook.

program-specific information such as eligibility, education level, assessment scores, enrollment, and waitlist time.

According to the guidebook, all correctional facilities should:

- use the same program names and definitions to classify programs;
- provide detailed data on their correctional education programs;
- have consistent eligibility requirements and scoring threshold for program placement; and,
- have the same understanding of terminology, data elements, program requirements, and outcome measures to ensure consistencies across all facilities.

The guidebook also provides staffing characteristics that could help MDOC in determining how many staff, including those at regional and private facilities, are responsible for correctional programs.

MDOC could use this guidebook, other best practices, and the new systems data dictionary to create more guidance for its correctional facility staff on data collection.

Increased Training, Collaboration, and Communication Regarding Programs

MDOC should provide clear and timely communication regarding its expectations, processes, terminology, and timelines for collecting program data. All individuals responsible for programs and data collection, including case managers and staff at colleges responsible for post-secondary education, should be provided training.

More Oversight and Monitoring of Regional and Private Facilities

As discussed, documentation for inmates housed in regional and private facilities is maintained at the local facility level and may or may not be recorded, maintained, or retrievable in a format similar to MDOC records. While staff at these facilities have access to Offendertrak, it does not appear that program information is consistently entered into the system. Because these correctional facilities house state inmates, it is MDOC's responsibility to maintain accurate records and rehabilitate these individuals.

According to the agreements between MDOC and regional facilities, all county facilities are required to provide counseling and mental health programs, as well as space for programs and education. While these agreements do state that any records will be immediately available for review by MDOC, there are currently no specific requirements for program oversight and monitoring. In the data provided, inmates housed in these facilities have less program opportunities than those housed in state facilities. In order to ensure that programs are being provided to state inmates housed in these facilities and that data on programs is reported, MDOC could strengthen the language in the agreements to require more oversight and monitoring, such as requiring program data to be entered into the system.

According to best practices, contracted facility agreements should be modified to require facilities to collect and provide detailed data on their correctional education programs.

Ability to Conduct Analysis of Program Effectiveness

Reliable program data is critical to allow MDOC to conduct an analysis of program effectiveness. While PEER's analysis shows that a participant in one of MDOC's programs is less likely to recidivate than a nonparticipant, these results are suggestive at best based on MDOC's current data quality.

MDOC program data reported in Offendertrak was incomplete and included numerous errors. The data cannot currently be used to accurately assess the effectiveness of MDOC's programs without addressing these data quality concerns.

Should MDOC successfully address concerns in its data collection and improve the quality of its program data, it would then be able to conduct an analysis of the effectiveness of the programs offered to inmates. Ideally, MDOC would be able to analyze its program data to determine if those individuals participating in its programs are less likely to recidivate in comparison to those that do not participate. Further, MDOC should also be able to distinguish from such analysis which programs are more effective than others in reducing recidivism.

One example of how MDOC could determine program effectiveness is through survival analysis.²¹ A survival analysis is useful for comparing the length of time it takes for a person to experience an event of interest (e.g., recidivism) when some individuals under observation never experience the event. For MDOC purposes, a survival analysis is a tool that can be used to assess the length of time it takes for a person to recidivate. A survival analysis on recidivism also accounts for those persons who do not recidivate during the timeframe of the analysis.

In principle, MDOC collects the data necessary to perform such an analysis. However, in practice, while the formally necessary data are present, the data are not complete or correct and are not collected at a level of detail necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of specific programs. PEER conducted a survival analysis on the available data, as a demonstration of what could be achieved by MDOC and to generate, as opposed to testing, hypotheses about program performance.

Using release data provided by MDOC from CY 2022 through CY 2025, that classified participation status in correctional education programs, including CTE programs, PEER created Kaplan-Meier survival curves²² comparing participants to nonparticipants in educational and CTE programs. (See Appendix E on page 66.) For both program types, the overall survival probability (i.e., the likelihood of not recidivating) for participants is higher than for nonparticipants. This means that for any given point in time a participant in MDOC's programs is less likely to recidivate than a nonparticipant.

²¹ A survival analysis models comparative time-to-event data when some observations are censored—that is, when some individuals in the dataset do not experience the event of interest before observation of them is terminated. Such analyses are typically utilized in clinical and epidemiologic studies to describe how an outcome is affected by an exposure.

²² Kaplan, E.L.; Meier, Paul (1958). "Nonparametric Estimation from Incomplete Observations." *Journal of the American Statistical Association*. 53 (282): 457-481.

Based on the results of the survival analysis, PEER then used a Cox regression model²³ to control for the effects of demographic variables and an inmate's risk status on recidivism, and to separate the effects of educational and CTE programs from one another (since many inmates who participate in one also participate in the other). The results of this analysis are presented in Appendix E. Controlling for the effects of the other listed variables, the ratio of the likelihood of recidivating for participants in educational programs to nonparticipants was 0.78, indicating that at any given time a participant is less likely than a nonparticipant to recidivate. For vocational programs, the likelihood of recidivating was 0.82. Each of these ratios represent statistically significant differences.

An inmate's assessed risk status also showed a significant relationship to recidivism; low-risk individuals were 0.51 times as likely to recidivate at any given point in time than high-risk individuals, and moderate-risk individuals were 0.84 times as likely. The only demographic factor with a significant relationship to recidivism is gender, with males being 1.31 times as likely to recidivate as females at any given point in time.

Based on MDOC's data quality, the results of this analysis are hopeful but suggestive at best. Program effectiveness should be monitored by specific program implementation, not by program type. MDOC currently utilizes "catchall or umbrella programs" that should be unbundled in order to allow assessment of individual components. Further, self-selection into programs by the most motivated inmates should be monitored by keeping records of the procedures for granting access to programs, and all data should be made internally coherent and accurate.

Fidelity to Program Design

As discussed previously on page 21, a meta-analysis published by RAND shows that there is some degree of evidence that correctional education programs are effective in reducing recidivism, and the more education an inmate receives, the less likely he or she is to recidivate. While MDOC offers correctional education programs at its facilities, it is important for MDOC to review the programs being offered at each facility to determine if the programs are being provided with fidelity to program design. To achieve the effects reported in the research (i.e., reduction in recidivism and cost-effectiveness), the programs at each facility must be delivered with fidelity to the critical elements of program design. The components of a program critical to achieving the effects reported in the research must be identified and replicated by each correctional facility. These components include, but are not limited to, program content, intensity and duration, program provider qualifications, and target population. Ways to ensure fidelity of program implementation can include but is not limited to:

MDOC will need to address its program data concerns prior to evaluating fidelity.

- creating a fidelity audit plan for each program delivered to inmates and assess annually each program's compliance with the critical elements of successful implementation;
- monitoring program performance on an ongoing basis to ensure that reductions in recidivism reported in the research literature are being achieved;
- minimizing the movement of inmates in and out of programs prior to completion;

²³ Cox, David R (1972). "Regression Models and Life-Tables." Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series B. 34 (2): 187-220.

- matching programs to the inmate’s criminogenic needs; and,
- timing the delivery of programs.

PEER notes that MDOC will need to address its program data concerns prior to evaluating fidelity.

Strengthening Post-Secondary Education

MDOC could collaborate with college and university staff to strengthen the post-secondary education options available to inmates in its custody.

In an article published by the National Institute of Justice, some research shows that formerly incarcerated individuals who receive a post-secondary degree in prison often work more hours and earn higher overall wages than those without a degree. MDOC inmates can obtain an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Applied Sciences degree from participating colleges and universities throughout the state. While applied programs are typically employable, Associate of Arts degrees do not cover advanced or applied curricula. Associate of Arts are general study programs that cover pre-requisites for further or additional academic coursework culminating in a bachelor’s degree. These courses are best suited for students seeking to transfer to a four-year college or university.

Some research shows that obtaining a post-secondary degree in prison can be linked to higher overall wages for formerly incarcerated individuals.

As noted in an evaluation conducted by Virginia’s Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, inmates may struggle to complete and obtain a four-year degree while incarcerated or even upon release due the time and costs associated with such degrees. Further, former inmates may have a difficult time obtaining employment with only a general studies associates degree because these degrees lack specialized or applied skills in specific disciplines. Other states, such as North Carolina, have replaced or added programs to improve the employability of individuals completing two-year programs. These programs include but are not limited to human resource development, business administration, and a personal training certification. Applied degree programs and two-year certifications that prioritize employability and the labor market may be more beneficial for formerly incarcerated individuals when seeking employment.

Post Release Employment Tracking and Reentry Strategies

Other states also struggle to track employment status for inmates who are released but not on parole. Some states have worked to address this tracking issue by entering into collaborative agreements and sharing information across databases. Further, encouraging collaboration among state agencies and community partners can provide formerly incarcerated individuals more opportunities and support upon release and help reduce the chances of reincarceration.

Post Release Employment Tracking

MDOC does not have the legal authority to compel non-paroled individuals to share their post release status once released from MDOC custody. This can hinder MDOC's ability to evaluate correctional education programs and measure their respective impact on labor demands, employment, and recidivism outcomes. Relevant outcome data are collected and stored at various state agencies with different data formats, methods, and competencies. The lack of a robust statewide data infrastructure poses a challenge to MDOC in determining participants' employment outcomes and program effectiveness.

While states are generally able to collect employment data on inmates who have been paroled, they are much less successful tracking the employment status of inmates once they are released from supervision. States should consider building their capacity to match data across state administrative databases. This would require addressing various barriers, such as the accuracy of inmate-reported Social Security Numbers (SSN), the quality of centralized databases in other agencies, and the technical aspect of conducting matches between the databases. While overcoming these obstacles would require considerable effort, a better tracking system would provide states with valuable information about former inmates' reintegration into the community.

Other states' corrections departments experience similar data limitations in assessing post release outcomes. Various states have entered into formal statewide data sharing agreements or nationwide reentry initiatives to address gaps in data collection and sharing for evaluating programs. Examples include:

- **Alabama:** The Alabama Statewide Reentry Task Force was created to foster interagency collaboration utilizing data driven policies to address gaps in reentry services and expand access to healthcare, education, and employment. To address data issues specifically, the Task Force brought together representatives from the Alabama Department of Corrections, Bureau of Parole and Pardons, Community College System, Workforce Development, and additional cabinet agency directors to improve data standardization, collection, reporting, and infrastructure across the state. This partnership brings stakeholders together to utilize their existing operations and capabilities in furtherance of Alabama's recidivism goals.
- **North Carolina:** North Carolina has a collaborative data system (i.e., the Common Follow-Up System) that combines data from several entities to allow for tracking post release employment outcomes. This statewide collaborative merges corrections and labor market data to track program participants' employment progression. Insights gained from this analysis allows the department of corrections to review and improve education programming to meet labor demands and work to decrease recidivism rates.
- **Texas:** Texas also created a statewide framework consisting of its Workforce Commission, Licensing and Regulation department, Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Public Safety Department to measure program effectiveness, educational attainment, employment outcomes, and alleviate post release licensure barriers.

Data sharing agreements improve corrections department's ability to review programs using outcome data that reveals gaps and strengths of prison education programming and reentry services.

Reentry Strategies

In CY 2022, Reentry 2030 was launched as a national initiative to improve and expand fair, effective reentry outcomes for individuals leaving prison or under community supervision. This effort is led by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center and supported by other partners and advisors. Through this effort, CSG, with its partners, created a policy and practice guide to help state leaders when implementing reentry efforts to ensure that former inmates can be the most successful. The guide provides reentry policies and practices that have been implemented in other states to help alleviate some of the challenges formerly incarcerated individuals can face such as finding employment, obtaining housing, and accessing available healthcare. The guide encourages partnerships and collaboration between corrections departments, relevant state agencies, and community partners to provide services with the goal of reducing recidivism. The whole government approach promotes collaboration and aligns state agency operations with statewide recidivism objectives.

While the guide provides resources in several areas of reentry, this review focuses on how states have improved employment connections and educational opportunities available to formerly incarcerated individuals. It is important to expand access to employment, improve job readiness, and work with employers willing to hire individuals with a criminal record. It is also important to ensure access to educational opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. The following are strategies to improve employment and educational opportunities:

- **Identification:** Most employers require applicants to have some form of identification prior to being hired. As a result, individuals leaving prison need to have proper identification. Virginia created the DMV Connect Program, a mobile and onsite outreach initiative where department of motor vehicle staff visit correctional facilities to help individuals obtain or restore driver's licenses, state IDs, and vehicle registration before or shortly after release.
- **Licensing and Hiring Decisions:** Some states (e.g., Michigan) require licensing boards or agency decision-makers to determine whether the circumstances of the underlying crime(s) are substantially similar to the responsibilities held by the license or job that the candidate has applied for and identify the significant public safety implications that could arise if a convicted person participates in the specific tasks, duties, and obligations of the job or licensed activity.
- **Employee Connections:** It is important to identify employers willing to hire people with criminal records and addressing concerns. The National Second Chance Business Coalition comprises private employers committed to promoting second chance hiring within their companies and includes resources and tools to help implement hiring programs. Some states (e.g., Indiana) also offer virtual job fairs highlighting available positions for hire.
- **Professional Certifications:** It is important to ensure that post-secondary education and professional certifications offered in prisons lead to industry-recognized standards. Some states (e.g., California) have implemented specific policies that outline goals and considerations for CTE programs, including whether a program provides industry-recognized credentials. Other states (e.g., New Jersey) have implemented collaborative efforts that bring together employers, workforce development agencies, and other key stakeholders to ensure CTE programs meet labor market needs and are selected with an understanding of state occupational licensing barriers for those with a criminal record.

Recommendations

Improving Program Data Reliability

1. As the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) transitions to a new data management system, to improve the reliability of its program data and increase data integrity, it should:
 - a. verify that the information in its current system is accurate and complete prior to migrating the data to the new system (e.g., all programs an inmate has participated in during incarceration should be accurate in the system);
 - b. implement effective application and user controls over the system (e.g., controls over the system to provide reasonable assurance that all data is input into the system, accepted for processing, processed once and only once by the system, and properly included in output);
 - c. regularly monitor and audit program information entered in the system to ensure accuracy (i.e., routine audits of program data should be conducted to identify errors, inconsistencies, or missing data, and have a process for corrected errors in a timely manner); and,
 - d. implement end-user training on how to operate and enter program data into the system and ensure all new employees responsible for programs receive training during orientation.
2. Once the new system is implemented, MDOC should work to eliminate the reliance on spreadsheets and other documents to monitor and track programs. Limiting records to an electronic format and only one database would provide more control over access to the system, ensure more secure data, minimize program data inconsistencies, and allow more efficient searches for program information.
3. MDOC should update its policies and procedures or provide additional guidance to correctional facilities regarding data collection processes and practices to ensure more consistent and uniform data collection across all facilities. This guidance should include but is not limited to:
 - a. definitions of program data elements, program requirements, and outcome measures;
 - b. processes for collecting the data;
 - c. timeframe for data collection; and,
 - d. procedures for entering all program data into the system.
4. MDOC should determine if it would be more feasible for program staff to be responsible for reporting program data for each inmate into the data management system instead of case managers, who already have many responsibilities and do not consistently enter program data into the system. This could ensure that the Deputy Commissioner of Programs has more authority over those responsible for recording program data. If MDOC determines it is more feasible for case managers to retain the responsibility, MDOC should make sure there is an understanding that program data entry is a requirement of the position.

- a. As such, MDOC should also develop a process to ensure that program information in the system consistently matches with program information on case plans and discharge plans to make review of programs more efficient for the Parole Board or other decision makers.
- 5. Once its data is more reliable and processes are more consistent across correctional facilities, MDOC should report to the Legislature on program outcomes (e.g., recidivism) and program costs to determine if its programs are not only cost-effective but also reduce recidivism. This would include reporting the total number of program staff and total program costs for each facility, including regional and private facilities. The Legislature should be able to use the information to determine where resources could be used to be more cost-effective and to best ensure successful outcomes for inmates once released.
 - a. The new data management system should collect program data that is structured to facilitate analysis that can be used by MDOC, prison facility staff, the Parole Board, and policymakers to make more informed decisions regarding inmates.

Improving Correctional Education Programs

- 6. MDOC should determine if its correctional education programs are being implemented with fidelity to program design. To achieve the outcomes identified in the research, programs must be delivered with fidelity to the critical elements of successful implementation. This could be done by creating a fidelity audit plan for each correctional education program delivered to inmates and annually assessing each program's compliance with the critical components of implementation. Program components include but are not limited to, program content, program intensity and duration, program provider qualifications, eligibility, and target population. Correctional facilities with the same programs should be implementing programs similarly to meet these components.
- 7. MDOC should provide more transparency regarding its correctional programs by creating an inventory of all its programs and publishing it to its website and providing it to its inmates on a regular basis. This would provide more transparency to policymakers and would help ensure inmates are aware of the available programming options. The inventory should include but not be limited to:
 - a. program name;
 - b. description of the program;
 - c. correctional facility or facilities offering the program;
 - d. total expenditures by year;
 - e. eligibility requirements;
 - f. number of program participants, completers, and withdrawals during the year; and,
 - g. other program components (e.g., program intensity and duration).
- 8. MDOC should establish policies and procedures to ensure that any inmate participating in correctional education programs are not transferred to another facility until he or she has completed the program, unless the new facility offers the same program. This should also include not transferring inmates participating in post-secondary education. If this does occur, MDOC should ensure that it contacts the college or university regarding such move as required in the intergovernmental agreements.

9. MDOC should continue to evaluate its career and technical education programs to ensure it offers programs that effectively prepare inmates for high-demand employment opportunities upon release. It should focus on industries with projected job growth and consider replacing programs that are expected to have a projected decline in jobs over the next several years. For example, expanding its computer classes could be beneficial not only based on projected job growth in the data processing industry but also due to the increasing use of technology in most occupations.
10. MDOC should continue to encourage colleges and universities to participate in the Prison Education Program by applying for approval from the United States Department of Education. This could help ensure more inmates can utilize Pell grant subsidies to cover education costs for post-secondary education.
11. MDOC should strengthen its intergovernmental agreements with colleges and universities providing post-secondary education, by including additional provisions in the agreements, such as:
 - a. allocation of resources (e.g., classroom space);
 - b. procedures for college instructors entering MDOC facilities and also obtaining clearance for training, instructional, and classroom materials;
 - c. adding a contact person for each college and facility to be responsible for interagency communication regarding prison education; and,
 - d. detailed security training guidelines for instructors and any other college personnel that may be in the facility for long periods of time.

To further improve post-secondary education opportunities, MDOC should prioritize prison education partnerships with academic institutions by promoting collaboration and information sharing among prison education stakeholders and MDOC.

Improving Oversight and Monitoring of Regional and Private Facilities

12. MDOC should strengthen the language in the agreements with regional and private facilities housing state inmates to require more oversight and monitoring, such as requiring program data to be entered into the system and reporting costs for each program provided.

Strengthening Post Release Tracking and Reentry Efforts

13. MDOC should continue to find opportunities to connect inmates to employers before and after release.
14. MDOC should collaborate with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security to determine a way to track employment outcomes for former inmates, including paroled and non-paroled inmates.

Appendix A: CY 2025 Inventory of All Other MDOC Programs

Programs in this Appendix focus on changing behaviors and helping inmates make better decisions upon release.

Psychological and Behavioral Skills Training and Therapy Programs

MDOC offers several programs designed to help inmates recognize negative thought patterns and develop skills for positive change. Programs in this category, such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy, focus on improving problem-solving, self-control, and decision-making.

Examples of classes, include:

- **Anger Management:** This class aims to teach participants how to manage anger, stop the violence or the threat of violence, and to develop and strengthen skills for self-control over thoughts and actions.
- **Thinking for a Change:** Cognitive behavior program designed to lead participants toward positive productive thinking by changing behavior and developing problem solving and social skills.
- **Moral Reconation Therapy:** The program is designed to enhance self-image, promote growth of a positive, productive identity, and facilitate the development of higher stages of moral reasoning.
- **Victim Awareness:** This program allows participant to address underlying issues of their crime and the aftermath from the victim's perspective.

Life Skills

MDOC's life skills training programs help inmates make decisions about everyday life experiences. Inmates are provided information to help them prepare for a successful transition into the community. Life skills can include programs that focus on financial literacy, health habits, parenting, and leadership skills. Examples of classes provided by MDOC facilities include:

- **Digital Skills:** teaches inmates how to interact with computers on a beginner friendly and fundamental level;
- **Fatherhood and Inside out Dads:** provides fathers with tools to help them connect with their children and become better fathers and parents;
- **Problem Solving/Decision Making:** helps inmates learn conflict resolution skills and make subsequent constructive decisions;
- **Personal Development:** develops critical skills in order to attain physical, mental, and emotional well-being through positive communication and health lifestyle choices; and,
- **Financial Responsibility:** provides inmates with the basics of budgeting and banking as it pertains to an inmate's personal finances.

Multi-Purpose Reentry and Rehabilitation Programs and Services

MDOC also offers several programs that have multiple components and offer a multitude of interventions as part of one program. One example, includes:

- **Recidivism Reduction Program (RRP)** is a program created by MDOC to replace the Regimented Inmate Discipline Program. RRP includes four components of programming designed to rehabilitate inmates through education, cognitive behavior therapy (mental and social), alcohol and drug, and pre-employment. The program is for a select population of inmates, usually those court-ordered to participate. A needs assessment will be administered to determine applicable programming for each individual.

Another example is the Reentry Academy, which provides education, vocational education, life skills, and programs aimed towards improving behavior. However, there were inconsistencies in the information reported for the program by the facilities. According to MDOC, variations for these types of programs will exist across the MDOC system due to staffing limitations, resource availability, and course availability. However, according to MDOC, the fundamental structure of these programs should operate the same across all facilities.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment at MDOC provides workbook-driven, teacher guided substance abuse education that teaches coping skills and recognizes that alcohol and drug addictions are lifelong problems. MDOC's goal is to help inmates understand the dangers of substance abuse and the implication of their actions. The type of classes and treatment provided varies by facility.

One of the main Alcohol and Drug programs offered is the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) program provided by Vital Core (i.e., MDOC's medical services provider). This program provides clinical treatment and rehabilitation services to individuals diagnosed with co-occurring mental health conditions or who have committed an alcohol- and/or drug-related crime. Curriculum is designed to address maladaptive behaviors and unhelpful thought patterns. This program can be short-term (12-weeks) or long-term (six to 12 months).

Religious Programs and Services

MDOC offers a wide range of religious programs and services through its chaplains and religious volunteers. Examples of programs include discipleship, salt and light, worship services, bible study, and prison fellowship. The goal of religious programs is to encourage inmates to become more disciplined in their daily lives by gaining knowledge of the scripture.

Miscellaneous Programs

MDOC has several miscellaneous programs. Examples of classes, programs, and activities included in this category are art class, creative writing, pickleball, boxing, book club, travel basketball, and advanced fitness.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of information and data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Appendix B: Overview of Alternative Supervision Options

Community Work Centers

Community Work Centers (CWC) are an alternative facility for inmates to finish serving their sentences. At a CWC, inmates routinely perform work for cities, counties, state agencies, and charitable organizations. This can include but is not limited to providing janitorial support, working as a mechanic, or helping to clean up Mississippi roads.

There are several criteria that must be met for an inmate to be assigned to a CWC. Inmates must:

- be within eight years of their earliest release date;
- pass a drug and alcohol test;
- be able to physically perform required work; and,
- be free of rule violations for three months.

There are several factors that automatically disqualify an inmate from CWC eligibility, such as sex crime convictions, escape attempts within five years, and convictions of any crime of violence.

Programs offered at CWCs vary by facility and can include but are not limited to:

- adult basic education;
- vocational training and workforce development;
- substance abuse support; and,
- cognitive behavior programs.

Technical Violation Centers

Technical Violation Centers (TVC) provide participants with a safe, secure, living environment and that offers programs designed to promote successful reentry. Referrals for the program are made by through the Circuit Court or Parole Board. TVCs offer individual and group counseling, as well as other programs, such as personal motivation, alcohol and drug treatment, and optional religious programs. Participants will be evaluated upon entry to create a program plan. All participants are expected to participate in the activities identified in their program plan.

Restitution Centers

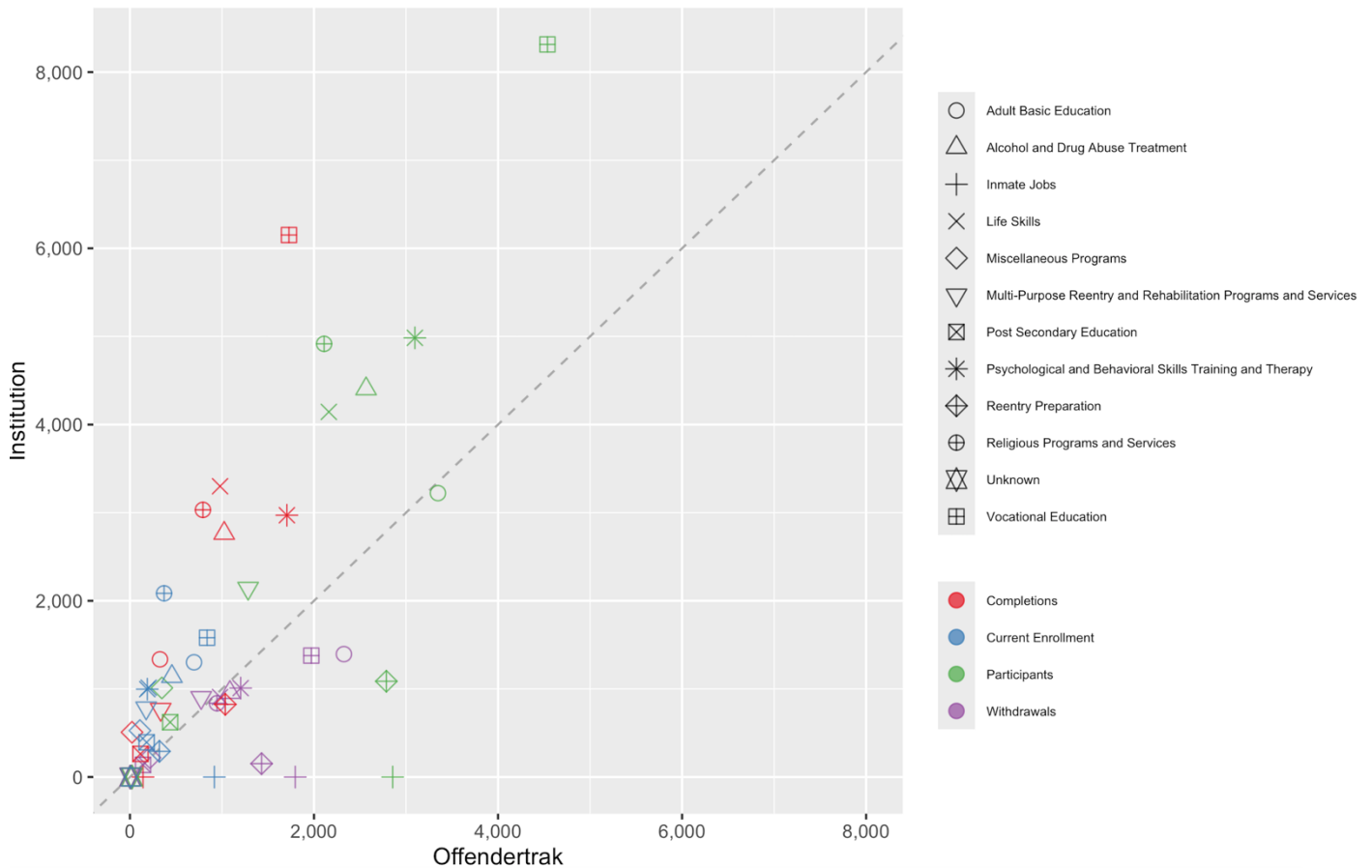
Restitution Centers are an alternative to incarceration for minimal risk inmates who need a more structured environment. Individuals who qualify for a Restitution Center are required to work and pay full or partial payments to crime victims, room and board, court fees, and establish a savings account. Candidates are screened for acceptance to the program prior to sentencing. There is criteria that must be met in order to participate, such as being a first-time offender.

Transitional Centers

Transitional Centers offer the Thinking for a Change Program. Three components of the Thinking for a Change Program include cognitive self-change, social skills, and problem-solving skills. The program includes 25 separate classes, with two classes offered each week. The classes offer homework assignments to help participants practice skills that are taught in class.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of information provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Appendix C: Differences between Data Reported by Correctional Facilities and in Offendertrak



SOURCE: PEER analysis of data provided by correctional facilities and reported in the Mississippi Department of Corrections' data management system.

Appendix D: Industries in Mississippi Based on Projected Job Growth from CY 2022 to CY 2032

Industry	Program(s) Offered by MDOC	Estimated Jobs	Projected Jobs	Projected Job Growth	Percentage Growth
Health Care and Social Assistance	None	160,040	177,468	17,428	11%
Construction	Construction/Carpentry	46,181	54,163	7,982	17%
Social Assistance	None	29,695	37,209	7,514	25%
Warehousing and Storage	Forklift	22,278	28,139	5,861	26%
Specialty Trade Contractors	HVAC/HVAR, Masonry, Pipefitting, Plumbing, Shipfitting, Tiling, Welding	25,749	31,120	5,371	21%
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	None	27,948	33,298	5,350	19%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	None	70,066	75,234	5,168	7%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	None	53,537	58,605	5,068	9%
Administrative and Support Services	Business Technology, Computer Class	66,070	70,933	4,863	7%
Educational Services	None	112,823	117,479	4,656	4%
Food Services and Drinking Places	ServSafe, Culinary Arts	98,010	102,318	4,308	4%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	None	41,553	45,695	4,142	10%
Hospitals	None	55,640	59,104	3,464	6%
Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	None	22,411	25,835	3,424	15%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	None	37,153	40,541	3,388	9%
Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing	Electrical, Electronic System Technician, Industrial Electricity	6,065	9,389	3,324	55%
Government, Excluding State & Local Education & Hospitals	None	52,958	55,605	2,647	5%
Wholesale Trade	Forklift	35,193	37,712	2,519	7%
Information	Business Technology	10,223	12,486	2,263	22%
Accommodation and Food Services	None	123,218	125,194	1,976	2%
Finance and Insurance	None	32,592	34,509	1,917	6%
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	Construction/Carpentry	11,440	13,218	1,778	16%
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	None	14,192	15,645	1,453	10%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	None	21,168	22,550	1,382	7%

Industry	Program(s) Offered by MDOC	Estimated Jobs	Projected Jobs	Projected Job Growth	Percentage Growth
Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services	Computer Programming, Computer Technology	1,057	2,417	1,360	129%
Food Manufacturing	None	23,910	25,046	1,136	5%
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	Marketing	19,335	20,397	1,062	5%
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	None	12,004	13,042	1,038	9%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, & Miscellaneous Retailers	None	10,518	11,553	1,035	10%
Publishing Industries	None	1,792	2,790	998	56%
Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	Computer Technology, Electronic System Technician, Industrial Electricity	2,287	3,155	868	38%
Truck Transportation	Commercial Driving License Class, Forklift	20,248	21,082	834	4%
Construction of Buildings	Construction/Carpentry, Masonry, Welding	8,992	9,825	833	9%
Couriers and Messengers	None	8,118	8,950	832	10%
Chemical Manufacturing	None	5,992	6,800	808	13%
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	None	19,056	19,852	796	4%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	None	11,465	12,176	711	6%
Repair and Maintenance	Plumbing, Small Engine Repair, Vehicle and Mobile Repair, Shipfitting	10,362	11,063	701	7%
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	Zero Turn	14,355	15,000	645	4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	None	9,259	9,859	600	6%
Animal Production and Aquaculture	Veterinary Medical Applications	3,728	4,303	575	15%
Real Estate	None	7,745	8,304	559	7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	Agriculture Basics, Horticulture, Zero Turn	17,060	17,611	551	3%
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	Tiling Class	3,211	3,760	549	17%
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	Culinary Arts, ServSafe	8,139	8,619	480	6%
Paper Manufacturing	None	4,189	4,651	462	11%
Utilities	None	7,891	8,305	414	5%
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	Automotive Body Repair, Automotive Mechanics	18,766	19,180	414	2%
General Merchandise Retailers	None	36,068	36,445	377	1%
Food and Beverage Retailers	Culinary Arts, ServSafe	18,505	18,880	375	2%

Industry	Program(s) Offered by MDOC	Estimated Jobs	Projected Jobs	Projected Job Growth	Percentage Growth
Primary Metal Manufacturing	Maritime Structural Fitting, Masonry, Pipefitting, Welding	4,197	4,504	307	7%
Waste Management and Remediation Services	None	3,996	4,301	305	8%
Support Activities for Mining	None	2,021	2,315	294	15%
Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	None	2,471	2,747	276	11%
Support Activities for Transportation	Upholstery	5,242	5,501	259	5%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	None	3,320	3,520	200	6%
Crop Production	Horticulture	5,267	5,432	165	3%
Rail Transportation	None	2,145	2,307	162	8%
Rental and Leasing Services	None	3,690	3,840	150	4%
Pipeline Transportation	None	801	922	121	15%
Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	Commercial Driving License (CDL) Class	1,495	1,608	113	8%
Water Transportation	None	976	1,088	112	11%
Machinery Manufacturing	Small Engine Repair, Vehicle Mobile Repair	14,815	14,926	111	.7%
Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry	Agriculture Basics, Horticulture, Zero Turn	4,776	4,872	96	2%
Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions	None	481	556	75	16%
Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other Financial Investments and Related Activities	None	1,298	1,351	53	4%
Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries	None	639	684	45	7%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	None	10,972	11,007	35	.4%
Personal and Laundry Services	Cosmetology, Barbering	6,481	6,516	35	.5%
Air Transportation	None	241	255	14	6%
Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries	None	905	918	13	1%
Fishing, Hunting and Trapping	None	312	320	8	3%
Broadcasting and Content Providers	Marketing	1,294	1,299	5	.4%
Other Information Services	None	45	50	5	11%
Wholesale Trade Agents and Brokers	None	1,666	1,670	4	.2%
Lessors of Nonfinancial Intangible Assets (except Copyrighted Works)	None	30	32	2	7%
Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation	None	33	35	2	6%
Apparel Manufacturing	Industrial Sewing	1,220	1,216	-4	-.3%

Industry	Program(s) Offered by MDOC	Estimated Jobs	Projected Jobs	Projected Job Growth	Percentage Growth
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	None	2,499	2,491	-8	-.3%
Oil and Gas Extraction	None	398	382	-16	-4%
Private Households	None	2,299	2,281	-18	-1%
Mining (except Oil and Gas)	Concrete Construction	901	823	-78	-9%
Textile Product Mills	Industrial Sewing	828	738	-90	-11%
Wood Product Manufacturing	None	9,397	9,293	-104	-1%
Textile Mills	None	1,146	1,029	-117	-10%
Telecommunications	None	5,130	5,012	-118	-2%
Health and Personal Care Retailers	None	10,294	10,141	-153	-1%
Printing and Related Support Activities	None	1,074	894	-180	-17%
Forestry and Logging	Agriculture Basics, Horticulture	2,977	2,684	-293	-10%
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	None	10,225	9,877	-348	-3%
Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	Tiling Class	8,755	8,285	-470	-5%
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliance Retailers	None	5,759	4,908	-851	-15%
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	Culinary Arts, ServSafe	15,249	14,347	-902	-6%
Public Administration	None	26,059	25,036	-1,023	-4%
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers	Industrial Sewing, Marketing	9,632	8,023	-1,609	-17%
Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	Industrial Sewing, Upholstery, Construction/Carpentry	16,798	14,785	-2,013	-12%
Accommodation	None	25,208	22,876	-2,332	-9%

Note: For industries highlighted in green, MDOC reported it has at least one program that aligns with jobs in the industry.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of long-term industry employment projections from CY 2022 to CY 2032 as reported by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security and program data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections in CY 2025.

Appendix E: Results of Multivariate Cox Regression

It is important to control for the effects of other relevant variables when assessing the effectiveness of correctional education programs. For instance, it is possible that individuals who are high-risk are also less prone to participate in educational programs, which means that any observed effect might be due to factors other than the educational programs themselves. It is also possible that participants are likely to participate in more than one program, and it is necessary to separate the effects of each distinct program. PEER used a Cox regression model to control for the effects of available variables whose effects have been considered relevant to recidivism, and to separate the effects of vocational and correctional education.

Variable	Hazard Ratio	95% Confidence Interval	P-value
Program Participation			
Nonparticipant	Default	-	-
Correctional Education	0.78	0.71, 0.85	<0.001
Vocational Education	0.82	0.75, 0.90	<0.001
Gender			
Female	Default	-	-
Male	1.31	1.20, 1.43	<0.001
Unknown	0	0.00, Inf	>0.9
Race			
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Default	-	-
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.6	0.27, 1.31	0.2
Black	0.7	0.45, 1.07	0.1
Spanish or Hispanic	0.65	0.39, 1.10	0.11
Unknown	0	0.00, Inf	>0.9
White	0.77	0.50, 1.18	0.2
Risk Level			
High Risk	Default	-	-
Low Risk	0.51	0.47, 0.54	<0.001
Moderate Risk	0.84	0.79, 0.90	<0.001

Controlling for assessed risk level, gender, race, and program participation, the effects of participation in an education program in general were statistically significant; the hazard ratio (i.e., likelihood of recidivating) of participants to nonparticipants was 0.78. The effects of participation in a vocational program were also significant, with a hazard ratio of 0.82. Gender was a statistically significant influence on recidivism, with males 1.31 times as likely to recidivate at any given time. Assessed risk was a statistically significant influence on recidivism, and in the expected direction; the hazard for low-risk individuals was 0.51 that of high-risk individuals, and that for moderate risk individuals was 0.84. Race was not a significant influence on recidivism. P-values in the chart are not multiple-hypothesis corrected, but Holm correction would not render any significant difference nonsignificant; observed p-values are so low that the multiple hypotheses are moot in context.

These results do not advance or test any causal hypothesis. MDOC's practice of aggregating a large number of different programs under broad headings means that the actual mechanisms of any possible improvement are opaque; this practice must change before progress can be made. Additionally, simple data inaccuracy can of course undermine these results. They are presented as suggestive, and as a guide to what is possible given the data improvements suggested in this report.

SOURCE: PEER analysis of data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Agency Response



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
BURL CAIN
COMMISSIONER

August 26, 2026

Mr. Ted Booth
Executive Director
Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review
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501 North West St.
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Mr. Booth,

The Mississippi Department of Corrections ("MDOC") appreciates the opportunity to respond to PEER's review of the Department's correctional education and training programs. MDOC acknowledges the report's concerns regarding the reliability, consistency, oversight, and measurement of program information and agrees that these areas require strengthened controls and accountability. At the same time, MDOC notes PEER's recognition that the Department maintains substantial education, career and technical education, reentry, and workforce-development programming and that program administration has improved in recent years.

MDOC also notes PEER's findings that the Department offers industry-recognized credentials, that many career and technical education programs align with Mississippi workforce needs, and that PEER's analysis suggests correctional education and vocational program participants appear less likely to recidivate than nonparticipants. MDOC recognizes PEER's caution that existing data limitations prevent definitive conclusions and views this finding as further reason to strengthen the data and outcome measures used to evaluate program performance.

To address PEER's concerns regarding program data reliability and the transition from Offendertrak, MDOC is proceeding with implementation of a new inmate data management system, with initial training anticipated to begin around December 2026. Prior to migration, MDOC will validate and reconcile existing Offendertrak program data against available source records to identify and correct incomplete, inconsistent, or inaccurate information before it is transferred into the new system.

MDOC will also address PEER's recommendations concerning inconsistent definitions, collection practices, and responsibility for data entry by revising applicable policies, procedures, and guidance before implementation of the new system. These revisions will establish standardized definitions, minimum data-entry requirements, collection timeframes, and clear roles for facility, case management, and program staff regarding entry, review, validation, reconciliation, and certification of program information. The procedures will also identify responsibility for follow-up and corrective action when data exceptions or noncompliance are identified.

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Regarding program oversight and accountability, MDOC will strengthen its statewide program inventory, program-cost and outcome reporting, program-fidelity reviews, and oversight of regional and private facilities. MDOC will work toward consistent reporting of program participation, completions, withdrawals, staffing, expenditures, credentials, and outcomes across facility types so that program performance can be more reliably evaluated and reported.

To strengthen continuity of educational delivery, MDOC will revise policies and procedures intended to limit avoidable disruption of active correctional education and post-secondary programs caused by inmate transfers. Necessary exceptions involving security, medical, court, classification, or population-management needs will continue to be addressed, with greater emphasis on documenting the reason for transfer and the effect on program participation.

Consistent with PEER's recommendations concerning workforce preparation and post-release outcomes, MDOC will continue evaluating career and technical education programs against labor-market demand, continue and expand partnerships with colleges, universities, employers, and national accreditation organizations, and pursue opportunities with federal and state agencies to strengthen program and outcome analysis. MDOC will also pursue opportunities to improve tracking of post-release employment outcomes, including collaboration with appropriate state partners where feasible and legally permissible.

To support PEER's recommendation for end-user training and ongoing monitoring, affected staff will receive role-based training before or in conjunction with production access to the new data management system. Training will address program participation and completion reporting, program discharges, data-quality expectations, and supervisory review responsibilities. Following implementation, MDOC will require regular reconciliations, exception reviews, and scheduled monitoring reports, and identified data exceptions, control deficiencies, or noncompliance will be assigned for resolution, tracked to completion, and subject to follow-up review.

MDOC believes these actions directly address the principal concerns and recommendations identified by PEER while building upon the Department's existing correctional education, training, reentry, and workforce-development efforts. The Department will continue refining its policies, controls, reporting, and outcome measures as the new data management system is implemented and will use the improved information to support management decisions, legislative accountability, and continued program improvement.

Sincerely,



Burl Cain
Commissioner

While MDOC states that PEER recognized "...that program administration has improved in recent years," PEER did not make this conclusion within its report. (See PEER's response to the agency response on page 69.)

PEER Response to Agency Response



Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review

PEER Committee

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Executive Director

James F. (Ted) Booth

September 1, 2026

In its formal agency response, MDOC stated the following:

PEER's recognition that the Department maintains substantial education, career and technical education, reentry, and workforce-development programming and that program administration has improved in recent years.

PEER did not make this conclusion within its report. Rather, MDOC interpreted comments by its own staff as PEER's recognition that program administration has improved in recent years. On page 34 of the PEER Report #734, PEER stated the following:

Some individuals interviewed by PEER, reported that the administration of programs at MDOC had improved over the last few years due to the work of the current Deputy Commissioner of Programs, who was hired in the role in CY 2022. Reliable data would help MDOC show such improvements over time. Its correctional education programs could be effective in reducing recidivism, as suggested in the research, but the data should not be used at this time to assess effectiveness.

Based on the unreliable data provided by MDOC for this review, there is no way that PEER could determine the quality of program administration by MDOC.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. C. McMahan".

Senator Chad McMahan, Chair

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