

California Parole Agent Fact Sheet

Community College

January 2021

Your local community college can be a valuable asset to you and to the men and women you supervise. Identifying potential students and guiding them to college can increase their reentry success and ultimately make your job easier.

Can Parolees Attend Community College?

- Anyone with a high school diploma, a high school equivalency, a GED, or is 18 years of age may enroll in a California community college, even those with prior convictions
- Approximately 70% of community college students in California struggle with college readiness; your local community college has strategies to help students who lack prior educational success.
- All California community colleges have a tuition fee waiver (called the California Promise waiver) for any low-income student, even those with prior convictions.
- Financial aid is available for students with prior convictions; there are narrow restrictions for those convicted of drug offenses while receiving student aid.

Why Should Parolees Attend Community College?

- California community colleges offer degrees and career-technical certificates in more than 175 fields, many of which are in industries that are friendly to applicants with criminal records.

- California community colleges are mandated to analyze their regional labor markets and to offer certificates in fields with local labor market availability.
- College classes can provide necessary and useful structure.
- College completion leads to better job prospects and higher incomes.
- College has been proven to reduce recidivism.
- Most community colleges have learning labs, libraries, student lounges, and other areas that provide a place for parolees to spend time in a positive environment.
- Connecting with faculty, staff and other students builds pro-social networks and a positive new identity.
- Being in college can help parolees become role models for their families.
- Since Proposition 57 incentivizes college programming, you should expect to see more parolees who took college classes while incarcerated and who can benefit from completing their certificate or degree.

How Does Community College Work?

California has 116 community colleges. Potential students can apply at any time, and classes can be started in fall, spring or summer. Many colleges have student groups or clubs for formerly incarcerated students, special support programs, or faculty or staff who are there to support formerly incarcerated students. In addition, all colleges have financial aid, student services, disability services, veterans services, and mental and physical health resources. Having a contact and support structure at the college will greatly increase your parolees' success. To find a contact at the college with a program for formerly incarcerated students, go to risingscholarsnetwork.org

How Can I Help More Parolees Enroll in Community College?

- Ask new parolees whether they have taken college classes. If so, encourage them to build on that education by enrolling in community college or, if they already have a number of college credits, encourage them to connect with a Project Rebound program at CSU to see if they are eligible to transfer. You can find Project Rebound here: calstate.edu
- If parolees are having trouble finding employment or lack career direction, encourage them to explore options at the local community college.
- If they have not yet taken any college classes, ask if they are interested.
- If you have transitional housing, consider a partnership with your local college to provide a structured academic or job training program for those in the housing.
- Invite representatives from your local community colleges to PAC meetings; invite them to hold an information and registration event in the parole office. Reach out to your District Administrator for contacts at local colleges.
- Ask your local college's Office of Student Services to make a presentation to the agents in your office, describing what the college offers.

How Can I Help Them Succeed in College?

- Accommodate your parolees' school schedules and be mindful of when they need to be on campus for class and exams when scheduling parole appointments if possible. Lengthy wait times in the parole office may compromise the ability to attend their classes. If other programming is required, see if those programming days are flexible.
- Celebrate their educational achievements. Attend ceremonies, welcome days, and other events that positively reinforce your parolees' continued education.
- If you, their teachers and other students let them know that they can succeed, parolees are more likely to stay in school and not re-offend.
- There are costs to attend college, even if tuition is waived. Refer your parolees to the campus financial aid and EOPS offices to see if they qualify for aid, book vouchers and other support. Extra support is available for parolee students who are veterans or former foster youth.
- Consider coming to campus, not in uniform and unarmed, to allow one or more students to check in with you while they are on campus.
- Ensure your parolees are aware of relevant exclusions before enrolling in CTE courses or job pathways in fields that are legally unavailable to those with criminal records, like nursing.
- Don't set a new student up to fail. Although they may be enthusiastic, caution your parolees about enrolling in too many classes.
- Require your parolees to meet with the counselors on campus to develop an educational plan, and ask them to share their plan with you.
- FRPA restrictions may prevent you from getting transcripts or school attendance records. Consider whether attendance verification is necessary. If so, try to find an alternative method that does not interfere with your parolees' pro-social process.
- Encourage your parolees to participate in campus events, join clubs, and attend activities to build their pro-social networks.
- Be aware of any registration requirements that might apply to 290 parolees