

What About Community College?

Fact Sheet for Individuals on Parole in California

July 2021

Your local community college can help you gain skills, find a better job, and succeed.

Can I Go to 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 can help you with tutoring and other services.
- California has a statewide tuition fee waiver (called the California Promise waiver) for any low-income student in community college, even those with prior convictions.
- Federal financial aid is available for students with prior convictions; there are narrow restrictions for those convicted of drug offenses while receiving student aid.
- Be aware of any registration requirements that might apply to individuals subject to 290 registration.

Why Should I Go to College?

- California community colleges offer degrees and job training certificates in more than 175 fields, many of which are in industries that will hire employees with criminal records.
- California community colleges are required to analyze their regional labor markets and to offer certificates in fields that have job openings now and into the future.
- Completing college can give you better job options and opportunities to earn a higher wage or salary.
- Most community colleges have tutoring centers, learning labs, libraries, student lounges, and other areas where you can study and receive help.
- Many community colleges have evening and weekend classes that can accommodate your work schedule and programming requirements.
- Achieving a college certificate or degree can make you a positive role model for your family.

How Does Community College Work?

California has 116 community colleges. You can find your closest college(s) and search for a particular program here: cccco.edu/students/find-a-college

Applications can generally be submitted anytime and classes can be started in fall, spring or summer. Be mindful of application deadlines.

Each college has its own website, but you can apply for any of them, here: home.cccapply.org

You will be more successful if you go through an orientation, complete an assessment, and plan your educational pathway and career goals. The community colleges can provide these services for you.

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. You can find a statewide directory of those colleges and programs here: risingscholarsnetwork.org/program-directory

Federal financial aid restrictions are minimal and primarily apply if you were convicted of a drug offense while you were receiving student aid. If you are low income, you are eligible for a tuition waiver (the California College Promise Grant). Information and applications for financial aid can be found here: icanaffordcollege.com

Ask your parole agent for a referral if you do not yet have a high school diploma, equivalency, or GED. Free or low-cost courses may be available at your local college, and your local adult school will also offer GED or equivalency, sometimes for a fee. caladulted.org/Students

If you have some college credits and are interested in completing a four-year degree, reach out to a California State University (CSU) campus with the Project Rebound program. You can find one of the programs, here: calstate.edu