



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

REGULAR CALENDAR ITEM: VI.

MEETING DATE: January 25, 2024
SUBJECT: Reconnect Re-Entry Program
ITEM TYPE: Informational
ACTION RECOMMENDATION: N/A

SUMMARY

Navigate Reconnect is the regionally-based arm of the Tennessee Reconnect initiative, which provides institution-neutral college navigation services to adult Tennesseans who want to return to or enroll in postsecondary education for the first time. Navigate Reconnect also serves as the hub of local resources, including childcare options and affordable transportation for adult learners. Navigate Reconnect Regional Directors and Navigators are supported by state-level staff at the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to meet Reconnectors' needs, while also maximizing the capacity of local Tennessee Reconnect Navigators to provide tailored one-on-one support to Reconnectors.

RE-ENTRY RECONNECT NAVIGATORS

In 2019, Governor Lee announced the Correction Education Investment (CEI) Initiative with the goal of providing a full landscape of educational opportunities to those incarcerated in Tennessee prisons—ranging from the opportunity to complete a high school credential all the way through the completion of a postsecondary credential. Navigators who specialize in working with incarcerated Reconnectors are a large part of that initiative. Six Reconnect Re-Entry Navigators work in nine state prisons with individuals who have not earned a postsecondary credential to connect them with an institution in the community where they can begin or continue their progress towards a degree. They also work with incarcerated learners to connect them to postsecondary opportunities available inside the prisons through the CEI Initiative. In addition to specialized services geared to this student population, Re-Entry Navigators provide the same services traditional Reconnectors receive. Re-Entry Navigators serve as a bridge between postsecondary programming in the prison and the community. Financial aid applications, institution applications, and course selection are all supported by a Re-Entry Navigator. They also partner with many state and nonprofit organizations in the free world and can connect previously incarcerated students with services in their community.

Incarcerated Reconnectors access services through requests to corrections officers at the prisons in which they are housed. Navigators present to various classes within the prison, at town hall meetings, and through closed circuit video commercials for the purpose of informing potential Reconnectors of the services they provide.

DATA ON RECONNECTORS SERVED

- Currently, six Re-Entry Navigators provide high quality, in person college navigation services to 2,685 Active justice involved Reconnectors at nine (9) prison facilities across the state.
- Since July 2023, Re-Entry Navigators engaged in communication 2,715 times with justice involved Reconnectors this year, primarily in-person, but also via email and text.
- Sixty-eight percent of justice-impacted Reconnectors are male.

- Fifty-nine percent of justice impacted Reconnectors are interested in community college, thirty-six percent in Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology, and four percent in four-year universities.
- Sixty-one Reconnectors have graduated with support from a Re-Entry Navigator since program inception.