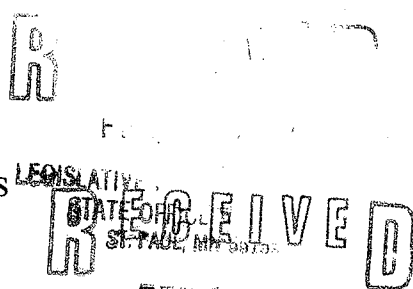


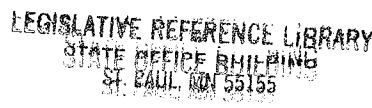
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State of Minnesota
Minnesota Department of Corrections
Office of the Commissioner



January 10, 2000



- Honorable Allan Spear, Chair – Senate Crime Prevention Committee
- Honorable Rich Stanek, Chair – House Crime Prevention Committee
- Honorable Randy Kelly, Chair – Senate Crime Prevention & Judiciary Budget Division
- Honorable Sherry Broecker, Chair – House Judiciary Finance Committee
- Ranking Minority Members:
 - Honorable Tom Neuville – Senate Crime Prevention Committee & Judiciary Budget Division
 - Honorable Mary Murphy – House Judiciary Finance Committee
 - Honorable Wes Skoglund – House Crime Prevention Committee

Dear Committee Chairs and Ranking Minority Members:

This report is provided as mandated by Minn. Stat. §241.85. The legislation requires the commissioner of corrections to submit a report on development of an educational assessment to determine the educational status and needs of adults and juveniles in Department of Corrections' facilities. The report is to include assurances that assessments are conducted on all individuals, both upon their admittance and prior to their discharge from a facility. Also, a programming plan shall be created for individuals for whom an admission assessment was conducted if the individual is admitted to an educational program. The plan must address special needs identified by the assessment and determine methods to measure the educational progress of individuals during their stay at a facility.

During the past two years, DOC staff have worked to identify proper assessment tools and develop a departmental database system allowing for electronic transfer, storage and analysis of assessment information. To identify proper assessment tools, DOC staff consulted and worked closely with Adult Basic Education staff from the Department of Children, Families, and Learning. The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is currently being used by both agencies as an assessment tool; however, both departments are in the process of converting to the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) as the primary educational assessment tool. This conversion is occurring because the CASAS assesses adult basic skills within a functional context. In addition, it has been approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Education in the area of adult literacy. In juvenile facilities, CASAS test results related to life skill instruction are given to the teachers to better target individual deficits. An assessment of learning styles is also reported to these teachers to individualize instruction.

All adult and juvenile offenders are assessed as part of the intake process when they are first admitted to a DOC facility. The initial assessments measure current academic level, review past educational accomplishments and verify previously earned diplomas or General Educational Development (GED) certificates. In addition a screening for special needs is done by self-report, with follow-up to the last school of record for copies of the individual's educational record (done for every juvenile), including their Individualized Education Plan. Finally, those adults who express an interest can receive a vocational interest and aptitude assessment; and vocational interest assessments for juveniles are done in

connection with career counseling. Results of this vocational assessment are used to identify facility programs that will best aid the offender in gaining employment upon release. The DOC is coordinating efforts with the Department of Economic Security (DES) to prepare offenders for employment prior to release and to assist them in finding employment once released.

Based on the results of the assessments and information received from outside sources, an educational plan is developed for the offender. This plan could range from studying basic reading to vocational or secondary and post-secondary education. The plan is developed jointly by educational professionals and the offender, taking into consideration length of incarceration, custody level, education and treatment needs, as well as individual interest. Every juvenile is required to participate in educational programming. All juveniles with reading deficiencies are scheduled to receive Title I remedial reading assistance. Adult offenders with identified educational needs are encouraged to participate in the appropriate programs. All adults identified as being in the literacy target group because their reading skill level is below the 10th grade are strongly encouraged to attend education programming to improve their functional level.

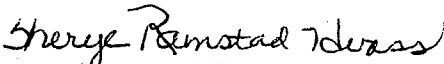
Statute calls for an assessment upon discharge from a facility to the community. The assessment instrument used for the exit assessment is the same one used to evaluate offenders at intake, and the scores are compared to measure changes in the individual's skill level. All juvenile offenders are tested within one month prior to release. Adult offenders are assessed ninety days prior to release. An exit assessment pilot project is being conducted at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Lino Lakes. This pilot project will soon be expanded departmentwide. All adults being released on or after January 1, 2000, will be assessed prior to release.

Statute also calls for the commissioner to determine methods to measure the educational progress of individuals. Some of the measures being used include: number of GEDs or diplomas earned, number of secondary and post-secondary credits completed, and length of enrollment in and completion of specific educational programs. In addition, the DOC's literacy target is for all adult offenders to be able to read at the 10th grade level. To measure progress, individuals in the target group will be given additional academic assessments after receiving educational instruction to determine gains made. This is in addition to the exit assessment, and may happen anytime based on the instructor's recommendation.

In summary, the DOC has developed an educational assessment system designed to assist the offender both during incarceration and in transition back to society. Measures have been instituted that will help ensure progress by measuring overall gains during incarceration.

If there are questions or concerns regarding this report, please contact me.

Sincerely,


Sheryl Ramstad Hvass
Commissioner

SRH:sb

cc: Secretary of State
Chief Clerk of the House
Legislative Reference Library