

## Program Overview

*HSE Connect*, managed by the John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity (the “Institute”), connects individuals who have been involved in the criminal legal system and who lack a high school credential to supported adult basic education, High School Equivalency (HSE) test preparation, and workforce development programming through a collaboration with the State University of New York (SUNY) Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC). The Institute and MEOC work together to recruit, assess, and support participants to enroll in HSE and other programming, and to access the career or college support program of their choice to further their academic and/or career goals. The program is one of five initiatives launched through NYC Opportunity’s 2019 Collaborative Innovation competition, which sought to improve government services by promoting greater collaboration within and between City agencies.

## Quick Stats

Agency	Start Date	FY21 Number Served	FY21 Budget	FY22 Target Served	FY22 Budget
CUNY, w/ SUNY	July 2019	60	\$423,198	60	\$447,138

## Context

*HSE Connect* targets justice system-involved adults ages 25 years and older who lack their high school or HSE diploma. These individuals are often released from prison or jail without essential credentials for workforce success<sup>i</sup>, and much of the existing programming options serve young adults ages 24 and under. The Institute recruits for its college access programming in New York prisons and jails, and often interfaces with individuals who are ineligible because they don’t yet have an HSE diploma.

Further, although the NYC Department of Education offers HSE classes at Rikers Island, its capacity is limited and HSE services are not mandated for individuals over age 21. In addition, the average length of stay at Rikers Island (72 days in the first six months of Fiscal Year 2019) does not always allow for the completion of HSE preparation services.

Existing community-based, educational services often focus their limited resources on out-of-school youth and leave out older, justice-involved people who need support for HSE attainment and postsecondary enrollment. *HSE Connect* aims to address this gap by providing essential pathways to HSE attainment and subsequent college and career opportunities as well as services designed to support individuals with criminal justice system involvement.

## Research & Evidence

For people who have not completed high school, a HSE diploma is needed before higher academic credentials (e.g., Associate or Bachelor’s degrees) can be attained. Research suggests that HSE diploma attainment positively impacts labor market and other outcomes.<sup>ii</sup>

A 2011 Mathematica Policy Research study focused on organizations providing services to help formerly incarcerated individuals successfully enter and remain in the workforce and stay free of crime. The study found that participants who received education and training services, such as HSE test preparation, earned an average of approximately \$2 more per hour in initial job placement than those who did not, a statistically significant difference. They were also less likely to be arrested for a new crime or re-incarcerated within 12 months of release.<sup>iii</sup>

Since Fiscal Year 2018, MEOC has achieved at least an 80 percent HSE Diploma attainment rate among students enrolled in the HSE program. In FY 2018, MEOC supported the college matriculation of over 250 participants; and MEOC’s financial aid services helped students to secure \$1.08 million in need-based federal and New York State aid.

HSE Connect has four main components: 1) state- and city-wide outreach, 2) intake and case management, 3) academic program delivery, 4) college access/acculturation and career training.

The HSE Connect Intake Specialist at the Institute engages in jail, prison, and community-based outreach and recruitment, and provides students with ongoing case management to address non-academic needs and immediate barriers to program participation (e.g., securing vital documents such as state-issued ID and connecting individuals to housing providers). The Intake Specialist then completes a facilitated handoff to the MEOC HSE Connect Coordinator for academic assessment, enrollment in the appropriate classes, and connection to appropriate supports to ensure retention and successful attainment of their HSE diploma. The Coordinator and the Intake Specialist regularly case conference to ensure that students are receiving coordinated support while enrolled in their HSE programming.

Upon earning their HSE diploma, students receive support in exploring college and career training options. Students will have the opportunity to return to the Institute's College Initiative for college access support, including ongoing case management, academic counseling, CUNY and financial aid application assistance, tutoring, mentoring, and community events. Students can also access MEOC's College Preparation Program and other supports, including college application and FAFSA assistance.<sup>iv</sup> Students who earn their HSE diploma and who are interested in career training can apply for credentialed career training programs at no cost, including, but not limited to: Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Electronic Health Records, Certified Phlebotomy Training, Certified EKG Training, Microsoft® certifications, Hospitality Training, Security Officer Training, OSHA, and Civil Service Exam Preparation.

## Target Population

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The HSE Connect target population is legal system-involved adults (25 years and older) who lack their HSE credential.

## Expected Outcomes

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- 80% of participants enrolled in HSE Preparation will attain their HSE diploma<sup>v</sup>
- Career training programs enrollment
- Career training programs completion

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<sup>i</sup> In 2018, 36 percent of individuals in New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) custody did not have a high school diploma. New York City's Department of Corrections (DOC) does not release corresponding data, but the Institute has identified large numbers of individuals without a high school diploma.

<sup>ii</sup> Richard Caputo, "The GED as a Predictor of Mid-Life Health and Economic Well-Being," *Journal of Poverty* 9, no. 4 (December 2005): 73-97.

<sup>iii</sup> Bellotti, J., Derr, M., & Berk, J. (2011). *Examining a New Model for Prisoner Re-Entry Services: The Evaluation Of Beneficiary Choice*. US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.

<sup>iv</sup> These are made possible through TRIO EOC grant funding, which targets first-generation students age 19 and older.

<sup>v</sup> HSE Connect students can be enrolled in developmental programs focused on building literacy and/or numeracy skills prior to placement into HSE Preparation programming. We expect that 80% of students enrolled in HSE Preparation programming will earn their HSE Diploma.