



NEW MEXICO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR

Alisha Tafoya Lucero, Cabinet Secretary



NEW MEXICO
CORRECTIONS
DEPARTMENT

NEW MEXICO
HIGHER EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT



Fostering Student Success from Cradle to Career

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Incarcerated adult graduation rates surpass state benchmarks

High School Equivalency completions more than double from last year

SANTA FE – New Mexico has exceeded its goal for the number of incarcerated adults earning a high school equivalency credential thanks to a concerted effort by the New Mexico Corrections Department and Higher Education Department to help more inmates earn an adult diploma.

According to the latest numbers, 198 incarcerated New Mexicans completed a high school equivalency credential, exceeding the state target by more than 20 percent. The Legislative Finance Committee set a target this year for 165 incarcerated adults to attain a credential. This year's number of graduates is more than double last year's, with 87 inmates graduating in FY22. The Corrections Department not only met its goal set by the Legislative Finance Committee, but proudly has the highest number of High School Equivalency completers of any institute of adult education in the state.

"I could not be prouder of the people who work tirelessly in our facilities every day with the goal of creating an environment where our inmates can work towards a path of improvement – ultimately reducing recidivism occurrences. Our instructors encourage the inmates to take the educational tests, while our wardens and officers make sure to support them. Education for our inmates often allows them to see a path forward outside of prison. Our department's mission is to provide an environment for positive personal growth and self-development, and through our education and vocational programs, we're really trying to build a stronger and safer New Mexico," said **Alisha Tafoya Lucero**, Secretary of the New Mexico Corrections Department.

"Adult education is an important pathway for thousands of New Mexico adults to gain necessary skills, but this program is especially important for incarcerated New Mexicans who are working toward a fresh start as

contributing members of our communities and workforce. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Corrections Department and our Adult Education Division at the Higher Education Department, more New Mexicans can look toward a brighter future and we as a state can look forward to better, safer communities,” said **Stephanie M. Rodriguez**, Higher Education Secretary.

The spike in graduation rates is the result of the committed leadership of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Correction Department Secretary Alisha Tafoya Lucero, and the newly created Reentry Division at the NMCD, with the support of the Higher Education Department. Together, they are focused on empowering individuals to successfully transition out of incarceration and contribute in meaningful ways to New Mexico communities. The Corrections Department placed an increased focus on teacher instructional hours, more use of tablets, and a key partnership with the New Mexico Higher Education Department, Adult Education Division to provide training opportunities benefiting both staff and students.

The Higher Education Department awarded \$343,392 to the Corrections Department in FY23 to support adult education programs at correctional facilities statewide via federal funds granted from the U.S. Department of Education. These programs served 1,233 students between June of 2022 and July of 2023.

Education programs in correctional facilities are key to reducing recidivism and improving inmates’ ability to lawfully earn a living upon their release. National research has shown that for every 1,000 inmates served by prison education and later released, between 70 and 150 fewer will return to prison than otherwise would.

The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) is one of the largest State Departments in New Mexico. The department staff and volunteers are fully committed to integrating programs in its state-owned facilities for rehabilitation. It is through programs, like educational certificates, that the department aims to reduce the risk of recidivism and enhance public safety in communities. For more information, visit cd.nm.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) at @NMCDPIO.

The New Mexico Higher Education Department was established in 2005 and oversees the state’s public and tribal colleges, universities and special schools. It also oversees adult education and literacy programs statewide, manages state-funded financial aid programs and capital projects for higher education institutions, provides college readiness services via the GEAR UP program, and grants state authorization to private colleges operating within New Mexico. For more information, visit hed.nm.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at @NMHigherEd.

Commented [GH1]: My preference would be that the Adult Education Division is mentioned here as well, since Katya worked so hard with them. But I understand if it's not possible.



Caption: Inmates at the Penitentiary of New Mexico in Santa Fe, N.M. celebrate earning their High School Equivalency credential following a ceremony on Thursday, August 10, 2023.



In the news

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