



Confined or Incarcerated Student Fact Sheet

Beginning on July 1, 2023, students serving a criminal sentence in juvenile justice facilities and local, state and federal correctional facilities (correctional facility) **may** have access to Federal Pell Grants (Pell Grants) to pursue postsecondary education (e.g., a college or university) when they are enrolled in an approved prison education program (PEP). This fact sheet provides more information for confined or incarcerated students about the Federal Pell Grant and PEPs.

What is a Pell Grant? Pell Grants are a form of need-based federal student aid. **You do not need to repay a Pell Grant.** Each year, the U.S. Department of Education announces the maximum Pell Grant amount for the upcoming school year. For the 2023-2024 school year, the maximum amount you can receive for a Pell Grant is \$7,395. You can receive the Pell Grant for no more than 12 terms or the equivalent (roughly six years).

How do I know if I'm eligible for a Pell Grant? You should start by working with the college offering a PEP in your facility to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Most FAFSA applicants submit the FAFSA online, however, you may find that you will be asked to provide a completed paper version of the FAFSA to the college operating a PEP in your correctional facility. That college will then submit it to the Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) on your behalf. Once your FAFSA is processed by FSA, your college will use the information on the FAFSA form to determine your eligibility for a Pell Grant, and if so, how much you are eligible to receive. You will have to fill out the FAFSA form every year you are in college in order to stay eligible for federal student aid, including Pell Grant awards. **Please note that students who are drawing on their Pell Grant while incarcerated are not eligible to receive a refund.**

If you currently have a loan in default, write to P.O. Box 5609, Greenville, TX 75403. In your letter, include your name, social security number, date of birth, and the following: "I am a confined or incarcerated individual. I would like to use Fresh Start to bring my loans back into good standing."

What is a prison education program? PEPs are programs that lead to a postsecondary credential such as a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree and are offered in a correctional facility by a college. Students enrolled in eligible PEPs can access Pell Grants to help cover their cost of enrolling in a postsecondary education program.

How can I enroll in a prison education program? If you are interested in enrolling in a PEP, you must contact the education staff at your specific correctional facility to see what postsecondary education opportunities exist. Generally, colleges who run PEPs determine their own admissions requirements as do the corrections departments they operate within. **Even if your correctional facility has an eligible PEP, you may not be eligible to apply.** Please consult with educational staff at your correctional facility for more information if you are not deemed eligible.

What can I do if my correctional facility does not have an eligible prison education program? Not every correctional facility will initially have a PEP as colleges often apply to specific correctional facilities they wish to serve. Potential students could contact colleges in their local area to propose the creation of a PEP.

What kind of programs do Pell Grants cover? A Pell Grant can be used for educational credentials like certificates, associate degrees, and a bachelor's degree. Generally, if you already received a bachelor's degree you cannot receive any additional Pell funds. Pell Grants for PEPs will only cover tuition, fees, books, course materials, supplies, equipment, and the cost of obtaining a license, certification, or a first professional credential.

If I have questions about prison education programs, who can I contact at the Department of Education? You can contact the Department of Education if you have questions by writing to the U.S. Department of Education, c/o of Prison Education Programs, 400 Maryland Ave SW, Washington DC 20202. If you have email access, you can also send questions to pep@ed.gov.