

## Correctional Education Association International Conference Review

Submitted by Chrissie Klinger, Workforce Development Specialist at Penn State

Chrissie Klinger, Workforce Development Specialist at the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy at Penn State University attended and presented at the 76th annual Correctional Education Association International Conference and Training Event in Tampa, FL from August 20-31, 2022. During the conference, keynote speaker, Jeff Abramowitz, spoke about the importance of helping individuals not just find a job but also about helping them develop a career pathway that keeps them employed when workforce shifts occur. The COVID19 pandemic is one workforce shift that affected many individuals in entry-level positions across multiple industry sectors. Through training and education some of those individuals have been able to return to the workforce, while others are still struggling to find their way. Jeff highlighted the recent passing of the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) as an opportunity for men and women with justice involvement to find new career pathway options in the construction and information technology industry sectors. He encouraged adult education practitioners to work with their local Workforce Development Area Boards to see how funding from the new law might be allocated in local areas and what new training options might be available to adult learners, including apprenticeship opportunities.

Chrissie presented a session titled “Collaborative Career Coaching.” The session helped participants explore how correctional education and community organization staff can work together to provide career coaching to individuals behind and beyond the walls. Concrete examples of collaborative career-related reentry service approaches were shared, including Integrated Education and Training ideas. Participants left the session with materials and resources that could be used to help individuals touched by the justice system explore, enter, and progress along career pathways that align with their skills, interests, and abilities.

A common thread in many of the sessions was the importance of having a way for individuals to define and visualize success. Some ideas that were mentioned included career pathway maps and using volunteer mentors who are able to share stories and describe their paths. Presenters also shared how to create sample “blueprints” that adults could use to help develop their own personal goal plans and how to use short, online asynchronous modules to help learners explore career pathways. Some of the ideas shared at sessions will be incorporated into a new Career Exploration Fair Toolkit that is being developed by the Workforce Development System Liaison project. More information about the toolkit will be released later this year.