

Get Your Stuff Together

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At Ramsey County Correctional Facility (RCCF) a program called Get Your Stuff Together (G.Y.S.T.) is used to help learners in their academic and employment pursuits. It creates an environment where inmates use practical skills that can be applied immediately, while preparing them for transition out of the correctional system.

There are opportunities through the various activities to acquire all of the necessary records, skills and information needed to take the GED test, to find apprenticeship programs and to enroll in college. Students learn the steps necessary to complete certain tasks; for example, an individual must have registered for Selective Service before he can file for federal student aid. The teacher assists the learner with filing for Selective Service in order to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Learning the steps of certain application processes essentially eliminates barriers that limit the successful pursuit of student goals. Other “stuff” that may be gathered includes:

- Birth certificates
- Social security cards
- Tax forms and completed filings
- Study sheets for the driving license test
- Financial aid information for vo-techs and college
- Housing information
- ESL and bilingual resources
- Legal Aid Society information
- Resumes
- Credit report
- Information on buying a home
- Information on borrowing money
- Free publications

The resources used vary from web sites to books to people. There are phone numbers and addresses that teachers can use to acquire information. Financial education materials can be obtained from VISA by calling 1-800-VISA-511. The VISA program covers many topics of personal finances. The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's Division of Apprenticeships provides materials promoting apprenticeship programs. Representatives from colleges and apprenticeship programs introduce educational opportunities to the inmates. Computer literacy materials have been collected for the students to use. Students practice writing skills by sending letters to publishing companies requesting complimentary copies of magazines and/or books. Bilingual and foreign language materials are available to assist learners with job, financial, and personal issues.

The main benefit of GYST is that inmates learn practical skills and information that will help ensure a smoother transition outside of the correctional facility as they are literally “getting their stuff together.”

Essentially most of the materials and services used are free and others are available for small fees. RCCF has developed a simple overview of the services and programs used in G.Y.S.T. A copy of the overview can be obtained by contacting Scott Helland.

G.Y.S.T. (Get Your Stuff Together)

Social Security Cards-

(1-800-772-1213 to order more forms) Forms may be copied and will be accepted by the SS administration. Inmates also need an original (not a copy) identifying piece of information to receive the card. At the Ramsey County Correctional Facility, we use the commitment papers to the jail for sending information to Social Security Administration.

You can find the address for your local office by calling 1-800-772-1213 or also 651-290-0304. Local office phone numbers and addresses can also be found by searching through the social security administration's website at www.ssa.gov or go directly to the local site locator at <http://s3abaca.ssa.gov/pro/fo/fo-home.html>

The application process takes 2-4 weeks and there is no charge. Learners who do not have social security numbers are still eligible for GED testing. Talk with your local test administrator about this issue. If a person is a legal resident, but not a citizen, they also can get a social security number, but if they are illegally in the United States or not documented, then they cannot get a social security number.

Birth Certificates -

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm>

The inmate just needs to know his birth information and to pay the fee. Fees vary from state to state. Let the inmate know many states may take 4 – 9 weeks to return a birth certificate so they should have it mailed to a trustworthy address on the outside. This site also has a phone number from which you can order a book (Where to write for Vital Records Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Divorces) can be ordered for free and the title is pretty self-explanatory.

Transition–

Utilize *First Call for Help* which is a free phone service which gives referral information about organizations which can help for a wide variety of topics which affect inmates upon their release including housing. The phone # for the state is 1-800-543-7709 and they can give you your local First Call for Help #. The book 9 to 5 beats Ten to Life was what we utilized to generate many of the ideas in this presentation. It has excellent information about getting together key pieces of information and resources for both the ex-inmate and for many ABE students who are with classes in the community who are having difficulties holding down jobs, places of residence and many of the basic concerns ABE students have with finding jobs and planning careers. Minnesota Workforce Employment centers are located all around Minnesota (1-888-GET JOBS) and we have also included a local charitable organization (Wilder Foundation) that offers workforce and job information. These along with organizations such as AMICUS and the local Salvation Army are all very helpful to inmates transitioning back to their neighborhoods.

For transitioning ESL students:

Public libraries also have great resources and can help you find both native language material and also ESL material.

Minnesota Literacy Council 1-800-222-1990.

Centro Legal 651-642-1890 and Legal Aid 651-222-5863 both do state wide outreach. Chicanos Latinos Unidos En Servicios (CLUES) is a Twin Cities metro based organization that has services available to help students. Their phone number is 612-871-0200.

Center for Victims of Torture 612-626-1400.

Chicano Latino Affairs Council Bilingual Directory. Written in Spanish and English. Includes a ton of support service information, especially legal help. 1-888-234-1291 www.clac.state.mn.us

“Bienvenido a Minnesota.” A bilingual guide to understanding Minnesota Codes, Rules & Laws. Available through Community Action in Freeborn County (507) 373-1329.

GED

Actual GED testing is contracted at RCCF through the local Adult Education GED Testing site. The GED class preparation services are free to the jail and the local adult education program (at least one in every school district). The adult education programs are funded at least in part by the hours of student contact. Jails are a good place to get a lot of contact hours so the adult education programs in the jail more than pay for themselves. RCCF also receives a grant from a local community organization to help inmates who do not have any money in their canteen accounts pay for their GED. The two smaller jails are looking into splitting the cost of offering the GED test three ways. The inmate will pay for their test and the adult education program and the jails will each pay half of the GED tester's hourly salary. The old JTPA offices (Workforce Centers) have been very willing to work with potential candidates and pay for their GED testing if they show practice test scores which are passing scores. The Salvation Army has an education fund that may be tapped for funds in some areas. Students who do not have social security numbers still can take the GED tests

GED Records

Many students come to classes who have either previously started a GED or have finished their GED in the past and need to find their partial or complete records of their GED testing. Many students are confused about whether they took pre-GED tests or actual GED tests. A good question to help them differentiate is whether they paid to take their GED tests. Here is the address for official transcripts for vo-tech or college when the student graduated in Minnesota. There is no charge, however duplicate diplomas for framing are not available. For both complete and partial scores, the student will need to send a written request with when they tested, their name, birthdate, SS #, and where they want the official test scores mailed to:

Mary Solum / GED Office
Room 1454
1500 Hwy 36 W
Roseville, MN 55113
Fax (651) 634-5154

The web site for every Minnesota GED test sites' addresses and phone numbers for partial test scores is <http://cfl.state.mn.us/ged/ged.html> and then go to GED Testing Center Directory at this site.

The website for State Ged Offices in all 50 states for completed and incomplete GED scores <http://www.acenet.edu/calec/ged/gedadmin1-A.html>

Free Magazine addresses and Free Books –

The Ramsey County Friends of the Library is a strong organization in our community which collects used books and has supplied our library with over 10,000 books. Other communities might have a similar organization or a used book store that gets too many of certain types of books which would be willing to donate them to the jail library. Hazelden donated many of their mental health and addiction texts for one simple letter requesting them. They can be reached at 1-800-257-7810 or via the internet at www.hazelden.org The Stillwater Prison generously donated the book It's Never too Late which is in your bag. They can be reached at Pauline Geraci, MCF Stillwater, 970 Pickett Street North, Bayport, MN, 55003. This book is authored by inmates at the Prison.

List ESL Publications

Newspapers. Depending on where you are in the state, you can often get free newspapers. In greater Minnesota, often grocery stores, public libraries and laundromats will have newspapers.

Places of worship. May have free material in other languages. Our chaplains have been great at getting Spanish (and other language) Bibles. We have monthly Protestant and Roman Catholic services here in Spanish. Also, the prayer books here are in Spanish and English.

Apprenticeship

Building Minnesota's Workforce Through Apprenticeship. This handout is free from the Division of Apprenticeship within the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry and can be ordered from their phone number (651) 296-2371.

Vo-tech and College

Many jails could have the five or ten colleges and vo-techs in your surrounding area on hand to interest inmates in their own future. Addresses can be obtained from the Go Places book which can be ordered from www.mnscu.edu or 1-888-mnscu-4-u.

Unions, Colleges, and Vo-techs who visit our Correctional Facility

St. Paul Technical College, Metro State University, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, National American University, Minnesota Workforce Employment Centers, 49'ers Union, Electrical Apprenticeship Union, National Guards Recruiters, DNR, KRS Computer School, Jeane Thorne, NTI (a drafting and CAD school), Minneapolis Community College, Carpenter's Union, Construction Laborer's Union, and the St. Paul Urban League.

Financial aid forms

When Inmates are thinking about Vo-tech and colleges, one of the steps that takes time is to fill out financial aid forms. You can obtain financial aid forms from your local post secondary or high schools (the easiest way) or fax a request to (202)-205-0657 (be prepared for red tape) "Financial Aid: The Student Guide" and "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" forms and other financial aid publications from 1-800-4-Fed-Aid.

Selective Service

One barrier that often comes up when filling out the "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" is whether the inmate applied for the Selective Service. They are not eligible for F.A.F.S.A. if they have not registered. In order to register for the draft, you can use the website www.sss.gov to register an inmate. There is also a box on the form that can be checked to register the inmate for the draft. Some WIA programs will also not allow anyone to participate who is not registered with Selective Service and **you cannot register with selective service if you are over 26 years old or within 30 days of release from prison if they are over 26 years old.** So it is an important hoop to jump through for men who are young enough to do so and want to remain eligible to participate in government programs.

Taxes

Another barrier on the F.A.F.S.A. form is that they need to have financial information for the form. For taxes on the FAFSA and in general, we have a fantastic volunteer from AccountAbility Minnesota (phone # (651) 287-0187) who comes to the jail bi-weekly and meets with inmates to file anywhere from 1 year to 4 years worth of taxes. Anyone can get their tax information by calling the toll free IRS # 1-800-829-1040 and asking for a W-2 printout of their tax information for any years other than the current tax year. For the current tax year, ask them to contact their last tax year employers to get their W-2 information or have family and/or friends do so if they are a jail inmate and cannot make a phone call to do so. The service of tax assistance has been very popular and does show students that playing by the rules often works in their favor because the only reason Uncle Sam has not bothered them about taxes is because the government owed the student money. Within the community, many of these same tax needs can be met at VITA sites which are often at a local library or you can find out more about local VITA sites by contacting Carol Smith at the IRS at (651) 312-7633.

Resumes

The first step which is extremely useful is a resume information worksheet which inmates fill out before a discussion of their resume. Jobworks software is used to initially input the resume information into a workable format. We have always double-checked the resumes and have the inmate check the resume for mistakes before we print more than one copy. We often tell them to take the resume overnight and let us know if there are any mistakes.

ESL Teaching and Materials

Correctional Learning Network. They have a federal grant to provide distance learning to correctional facilities across the US. Correctional Facilities are required to install the dish, demonstrate in kind cost and to do some record keeping. In addition to ESL, they provide GED, job seeking and keeping classes, ABE and correctional officer development. Grants will be available after June 14, 2001. Their address is: Corrections Learning Network, 1717 West Broadway, Suite #2, Spokane, WA 99201
<http://stepstar.esd101.net/cln/>

Newcomers and the Environment Available from Multi-Cultural Educational Services 763-767-7786 or www.mcedservices.com Intermediate and Advanced ESL textbooks; includes vocabulary from Bosnian, Spanish, Somali, Russian and Vietnamese. Free as long as supplies last. (Get there first and stock up before the hoarders get it all!) Focuses on immigrants working on environmental issues and fields. (The above site does translation services; offers free pamphlet downloading about obtaining childcare, and sells brochures with health information.)

ESL Recycling Textbook Written by Charles LaRue (co-author of "Newcomers and the Environment.") Available free by calling the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance at 651-296-3417. There are different versions of the book with different languages, so they will ask when you call. (Supplies limited.)

American Lung Association has several brochures, including two excellent ones about tuberculosis, available in Spanish. Orders for less than five are free. 1-800-586-4872

Driver's Licenses

Even if the testing is not available at your jail, many inmates would benefit from having the driver's manual to study once they do get out and possibly a list in the cells of nearby driver's testing facilities. In ABE programs, the driver's manual contains reading material which learners are often highly motivated to use and learn. The testing is free. There is no money needed to take the tests. The inmate takes care of any money issues with their local driver's station in the community upon their release.

A list of all written and road test exam stations for your county or area can be found at:
<http://www.dps.state.mn.us/dvs/driverlicense/dvsexams.html>

Manuals are free from any driving station and our local driver's station even drops off a box of 100 driver's manuals for us at the door of the jail.

The Spanish Driver's Manual and the other manuals can also be downloaded from
<http://www.dps.state.mn.us/dvs/DLTraining/DLManual/ManualLangChoice.html>

Minnesota Easy-To-Read Driver's Manual \$10 and there are copying rights included, you can order it through:

Fred Schreiber
1932 E. Nevada Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55119
Checks made payable to MDTSEA
website www.stcloud.msus.edu/~mhsc/mdtsea.html

The easy to read driver's manual is a 1998 version that does not correspond exactly with the same chapters as in the new driver's manual, however we have been assured that it still fits the study needs for the driving test. We have also had an inmate read the entire manual onto three tapes and use those in conjunction with the book to help low reading ability students pass their driving test. If you would like a copy of this tape or of our study materials, feel free to call one of us at 651-266-1416.

Practical Money Skills

This is a free instructional package proved by VISA. It is available to all teachers and can be obtained by calling 1-800-VISA-511. The instruction package includes reproducible masters for over heads and student activities. It also includes masters for overheads. It has both computer software and videotape.

Borrowing Basics

Fannie Mae Foundation makes available several information brochures on credit, borrowing and home buying. The booklets are available in quantity and can be ordered several times during the year. The how to buy a home books come with a teachers manual.

<u>Borrowing Basics</u>	1-800-605-7100
<u>Borrowing Basics What You Don't Know Can Hurt You</u> (English)	1-800-366-2968
<u>Knowing and Understanding Your Credit</u> (Spanish)	1-800-541-6300
English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese	1-800-605-5200
<u>Opening the Door to a Home of Your Own</u> (Spanish)	1-800-782-2729
English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Russian, Haitian, Creole, Polish, Portuguese	1-800-688-4663
<u>Choose the Mortgage That's Right for You</u> (English)	1-800-688-4663
Spanish	1-800-782-2729
<u>How to Buy Your One Home</u> (English)	1-800-539-4051
<u>ESL Curriculum: How to Buy a Home in the US</u>	1-800-544-9224

Fannie Mae Foundation Web Site: <http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org>

Consumer Information

Minnesota Attorney General's Office Consumer Information Booklets

This is a collection of 14 booklets covering lifeskills and consumer skills. Some of the booklets are also available in Spanish.

Fact Sheets and Brochures

Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis--Community Legal Education Program

These are not free but the cost is minimal. The master set of fact sheets costs \$20 but in can be copied to use with education programs. The also offer an excellent videotape on "How to Find Housing" it costs \$5. The also offer booklets on a variety of topics at minimal cost.

Credit Reports

These are free to people who are unemployed and/or incarcerated. This form includes three addresses that they can write to for information of their financial status. Require a note from the correctional facility on letterhead stating that the inmate is incarcerated there and Trans-Union may require a letter on letterhead.

Absentee Ballot

General application form: www.lwvmn.org/voting.html

Twin Cities Community Voice Mail

This service provides voice mail to people who need phone service. The number to call about this service is 651-643-0883.