

WRVO - NY prison education programs team up to streamline college degrees

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8/17/2015

The education programs that serve New York's prison population are streamlining the path to a college degree. Private organizations offer college classes in 19 state facilities. Now several of the groups have formed a consortium to help students make it to graduation day.

In the past, transfer to a new prison often meant the end of an education for people working on their degrees. Many facilities don't offer college programs. And even if they do, there are uncertainties: Will credits transfer? Are spots in the program open?

"Those are questions that we get asked actually regularly," says Cornell University Prison Education Program director Rob Scott. "It's regular policy of prisons to start moving people around because they like to keep people on the move and not in groups that associate."

The Cornell program is in the new consortium. Scott says those questions are hard to answer because education programs in New York prisons are run by different groups. He hopes the partnership will let students continue their degrees no matter their location.

If the consortium can track participants across the prison system, Scott says it could also help educators measure their success.

"It's a much more robust sample size and would also give some way to compare effects across different types of facilities," he says.

The consortium launched late last month with nine members, and Scott says the list is growing. Their first meeting is set for October.