

**Quick Stats**

Agency	Start Date	Number Served Annually	Annual Budget
Department of Probation	February, 2012	146	\$1,000,000

**Problem Statement**

GED programs generally serve participants reading at the eighth grade level or above and very little is available for young people with fourth to eighth grade reading skills. The Commission for Economic Opportunity identified basic literacy services as a crucial need for young adults and the working poor – CEO's primary target populations. In New York State, approximately 30% of young adults between the ages of 16 and 18 and 22% of young adults between the ages of 19 and 24 have "below basic" literacy skills.<sup>i</sup>

Court involved young adults face even more challenges when they return to their communities, frequently confronting the same issues that led them to an arrest. In the absence of intervention, these young people are likely to recidivate, particularly if they return to neighborhoods entrenched in poverty, crime, and record levels of unemployment. Many of these young adults have poor literacy skills and low educational attainment.

The Vera Institute of Justice reports that up to 60% of adolescents ages 16-18 in New York City jails read below a fifth grade reading level.<sup>ii</sup> A research study by Public Private Ventures has demonstrated that two-thirds of young adults returning from New York State prisons never return to school.<sup>iii</sup> Of the 27,000 people on probation citywide, approximately 8,000—or almost one third—are teens and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24. Of these 8,000, 84% are male; almost half are Black and nearly one-third Latino.<sup>iv</sup> Evidence indicates that post-release education has a significant impact on reducing recidivism.

**Research and Evidence**

Community Education Pathways for Success (CEPS) is a lifelong learning model that uses evidence-based practices to increase the literacy and math levels for young adults. It was created by the Youth Development Institute in 2005 to reconnect at-risk young adults to learning and get them on the path to education and productive employment.

According to the 2009 Final Evaluation Report of CEPS by Campbell-Kibler Associates, Inc., the program has been effective in helping youth move toward self sufficiency.<sup>v</sup> Even though students came into CEPS with 6th grade reading levels, during the 2008-09 school year, 30% of them were able to move on to GED programs and 7.5% went from entering a pre-GED program to getting a GED in one academic year. And, in a little more than four months time, students achieved literacy gains of 1.7 grade equivalents and math gains of 1.2 grade equivalents. While students were developing skills and credentials, they were also developing habits of responsibility. Over 60% of students who came into CEPS stayed with it.

**Program Description**

The Department of Probation (DOP) is partnering with a variety of other City agencies, community-based organizations and foundations on a number of innovative projects to be launched in conjunction with YMI and DOP's Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NeONs). The NeONs will join or work to

<b>Implementation Timeline</b>	<p>develop effective networks of community organizations, government agencies, local businesses and residents in order to expand clients' access to the kinds of quality opportunities, resources, and services that build on their strengths and reduce their involvement with the criminal justice system. DOP is developing NeONs in communities where large numbers of people on probation live. One of the programs for young probationers being launched in the NeONs is CEPS.</p> <p>The CEPS program uses a highly structured approach for youth services. It focuses on those youth who are ineligible for GED preparation due to low academic skills, and builds the capacity of organizations to serve them effectively. Additionally, CEPS develops partnerships with colleges so that young people with GEDs or those who were marginalized in high school—but completed through a special program—can enter and remain in college.</p> <p>To implement the program, DOP will identify young adults who are on probation and in need of literacy instruction and help them assess and clarify what the CEPS program can do for them. These young adults will be from the NeON neighborhoods. DOP contracts with community-based organizations to deliver the program to DOP referred clients. Young adults will make an informed and active choice to enroll. CEPS programs use rolling admissions and have new cohorts every few months.</p>
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<b>Target Population</b>	Existing CEPS and Young Adult Literacy providers began integrating probationers into classes starting in February, 2012.
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<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	<p>The program targets 17.5 to 24 year olds on probation with reading skills between the fourth and eighth grade level, with a particular focus on those who read between the fourth and sixth grade level. CEPS targets the following NeONs: Brownsville, East New York, Harlem, Jamaica, and South Bronx.</p>
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<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved attendance and persistence</li> <li>• Literacy and numeracy gains</li> <li>• Successful transition of participants into GED programs, employment, or employment training</li> </ul>
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<sup>i</sup> "Highlights from the 2003 New York State Assessment of Adult Literacy 13." (2007) Washington D.C.: American Institutes for Research: [http://www.air.org/publications/documents/SAAL\\_NY\\_web.pdf](http://www.air.org/publications/documents/SAAL_NY_web.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, *Just 'Cause*, Vol. 15, No. 3, fall (2008).

<sup>iii</sup> Public Private Ventures. (2008). *Disconnected Young People in New York*. Philadelphia, PA: Wyckoff, Cooney, S.M., Djakovic, D.K., McClanahan, W.S.

<sup>iv</sup> NYC Department of Probation.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell-Kibler Associates, Inc., October (2009). *Youth Development Institute: Community Education Pathways to Success (CEPS) Final Evaluation Report*, Groton, MA, Campbell, Patricia B., Kibler, Tom R., & Weisman, Jennifer L.