

# THE FUTURE OF JOB TRAINING



This feature is the last in a series from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Look for more BOP features in previous issues of Corrections Today.

**T**he Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) (Bureau) has long recognized the importance of equipping inmates with the skills they need to be successful as they re-enter the workforce. However, the skills needed in the workforce 10 years ago are quickly becoming obsolete. In order to equip inmates with the knowledge and skills employers need now and for the future, the Bureau has launched innovative work programs for inmates to supplement training in more traditional trades.

As a nationwide correctional system with facilities located in many different states, credentialing federal inmates with certifications that work in all jurisdictions was a necessity. The agency collaborated with the U.S. Department of Labor to standardize all apprenticeships across the Bureau and to provide a nationally recognized certificate. Standardizing the apprenticeship program also means if an inmate transfers between facilities, he or she can complete their training and achieve certification.

As in many correctional systems, apprenticeships in HVAC, plumbing or electrical are available to inmates. However the Bureau recognizes each BOP facility is different and affords inmates opportunities to participate in unique apprenticeship programs. For example, at the United States Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri, an inmate can enroll in an 8,000-hour Prosthetic Technician program to learn to fabricate, fit, maintain and repair artificial limbs, cosmetic device appliances and other prosthetic devices.

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The BOP is also working diligently to keep abreast of skill gaps in the current marketplace and new and emerging needs of employers. Recently, BOP staff at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Pekin, Illinois, made the bold decision to replace an existing program with an innovative micro-soldering program where inmates learn to solder microscopic electrical components. The program offers a specialty in Interconnecting & Packaging Electronic Circuits Micro Soldering Program certified by the Institute for Interconnecting and Packaging Electronic Circuits (ICP). The ICP is an association that was founded in 1957 as an international guiding body for the manufacturing of electronic assemblies. IPC gathers “best practices” from more than 5,000 companies to



*Apprentice in the Prosthetic/Orthotic Department (left) and Prosthetic device repair under guidance of Prostetist (right).*

Photo opposite page courtesy Nancy Ayers, Federal Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Department of Justice

Photos courtesy Nancy Ayers, Federal Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Department of Justice



develop standards of production, inspection and repair of electronic assemblies. The program is taught in four parts and students earn three primary IPC certifications: The IPC J-Standard-001G, Requirements for Soldered Electrical and Electronic Assemblies, IPC A-610, Acceptability of Electronics Assemblies and IPC 7711/21, Rework, Modification, and Repair of Electronic Assemblies. Program graduates can generally expect a starting wage of \$15 to \$25 hourly with a rapid increase in earnings from that point. Since the program's inception in November 2019, there have been 33 certifications issued in the program's inaugural year.

In the summer of 2021, the Bureau will launch an Industrial Maintenance Technician program at FCI Englewood. This innovative program will help fill the gap in the wake of the well-documented needs of many factories. FCI Englewood is well suited to activate this forward-thinking program to address the existing skill gap due to its ability to collaborate with UNICOR, also known as Federal Prison Industries. UNICOR is first and foremost a Bureau correctional program with a mission to

protect society and reduce crime by preparing inmates for successful reentry through job training.

Many of the machines the students will learn to install, repair and maintain are already located in the Unicor factory there. Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and earn credentials from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills. Staff and inmates are eagerly awaiting this opportunity as the new state-of-the-art training equipment arrives and the training lab is set up. The Bureau remains committed to programs that provide real-world experience to inmates and the investment in Career and Technical Education programs is a significant part of the pathway to success.

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*Prosthetic device evaluation and repair.*

Photo courtesy Nancy Ayers, Federal Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Department of Justice