

# Dyslexia in Corrections settings

“Dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader. It is commonly caused by a difficulty in the phonological processing (the appreciation of the individual sounds) of spoken language, which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, and spell.” (First Step Act, 2018)

## Do dyslexia and other reading difficulties exist in Corrections?

- Nearly 50% of adults who reside in prison/detention facilities are dyslexic and 85% of youth in the juvenile justice system have a disability that qualify them for services under IDEA (Cherie Takemoto, 2016).
- A vast majority of individuals who reside in a US prison/detention facility do not have a high school diploma. They tend to lack basic writing and math skills (Prison Studies Project, 2022).

## How might professionals discover an individual's dyslexia or risk status?

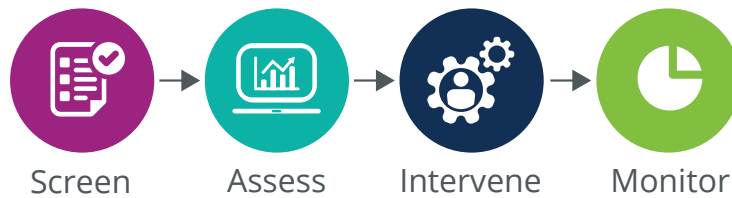
- Self-report
- Screening (pre-diagnosis/identification)
- Clinical or neuropsychological evaluation
- Educational evaluation in a K-12 context (dyslexia may also be referred to as a Specific Learning Disability in Reading/Writing)
- Other records and data requests

## Real Facts & Real Opportunities

Fact	Opportunity
Nearly 7 in 10 of those who have been incarcerated will commit a new crime, and half will end up back in prison within three years.	Education programs effectively reduce recidivism by 29-46%.
About 95 out of every 100 people who have been incarcerated eventually rejoin society.	The odds of obtaining employment post-release among incarcerated individuals who participated in education programs was 13% higher than for those who did not participate in education.

Sources: Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2005, 2011; Hill, 2015; Prison Studies Project, 2020; Steurer, Smith, and Tracy, 2001

# A recipe for success: Build on your existing work!



You may already be doing many things that support those with dyslexia. However, seeing dyslexia as a true barrier to educational achievement offers an important frame to decision-making and resource allocation in your programs and for your population in general. Consider these options and opportunities for an even stronger support system.

## Screen

Dyslexia screening is intended to be quick and efficient and result in a status of “at risk” or “not at risk.” Reliable and valid tools that have been tested with individuals in corrections settings are imperative at this step.

GED partnered with Pearson Clinical Assessment and Dr. Sally Shaywitz to provide a dyslexia screener for Corrections.

### What's next?

Once individuals are identified as “at risk,” you have more options:

- 1. Diagnosis:** Further assessment through a clinical process to establish the presence of a disability and to understand the individual's unique learning profile
- 2. Instruction/Intervention:** Direct or indirect teaching to change the individual's performance or skills
- 3. Accommodations:** Direct or indirect strategies that change the environment or provide tools to help the individual access any part of their work more easily



## Assess/Diagnose

For undiagnosed individuals who show risk for dyslexia, a diagnosis can be helpful to:

- Apply for testing accommodations for the GED
- Help remove barriers to further education or work upon release

### Once you've decided to pursue assessment and a potential diagnosis, how should this be done, and by whom?

Consider assessment measures in the **Pearson Dyslexia Toolkit**

- The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT®-4) and the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA™-3) — comprehensive achievement tests
- The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (WRMT-III) — a comprehensive reading test
- Other measures to rule out additional concerns or conditions

Engage a qualified professional to administer and interpret assessment measures, such as a(n):

- Psychologist
- Special Education Teacher
- Educational Diagnostician



Read  
Pearson's  
Dyslexia  
Toolkit  
white paper

# Intervene

Reading ability lives on a continuum and the best interventions support ALL students! Ask yourself:

- What are you already doing?
- What resources do you need specifically for at risk students?
- What should you stop doing that isn't working?
  - How can you reallocate those resources?

## Tool choice

Many tools exist for teaching reading. As you build your resources, consider free options as well as fee-based choices for your toolkit. You also have great options that may be self-guided tools versus those that require a teacher-leader. Think about a layered approach to customize and fully support learning for each individual.

	Free (No money, just time!)	Fee-based (One-time purchase or subscription)
<b>Student-Led</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft Tools (e.g., Immersive Reader, Reading Coach)</li> <li>• Bookshare (supported reading)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IXL</li> <li>• Typing Pal</li> <li>• WordUp! app</li> <li>• Other offline apps</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher-Led</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Homegrown" materials for decoding, phonics</li> <li>• Read alouds, discussion-based learning about language rules and the value of literacy</li> <li>• Library books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPELL-Links to Reading and Writing</li> <li>• Professional development for reading/dyslexia for all staff</li> </ul>



## The keys to making measurable change on reading outcomes

1. Doing the right things in instruction
2. Spending enough time on instruction each day
3. Measuring reading progress at regular intervals

# Monitor

Everyone is working hard at learning, but how do you know that work is making a real difference? Measure change in skills over time! Tracking growth can take different forms, so designing the best monitoring schedule requires careful planning and collaboration across your facility and organization.

Elements of a progress monitoring plan in Corrections may include:

- Reading/Writing skill tracking (see our **Dyslexia Toolkit white paper** or our **Writing Tools flyer** for ideas)
- Accommodations tracking (type, frequency of use, outcome)
- GED pass rates
- Participation levels in meetings

As you monitor within your team, make sure to plan for ways to share your success across your facility—with your leadership teams, across your peers, and especially with individuals who have dyslexia or who may be at risk. Success breeds success!



*Your ideas for progress monitoring:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Getting started on supporting dyslexia

## Training ideas:

- Reach out to the qualified assessment clinicians in your institution—ask for a brown bag lunch or virtual training.
- Create a professional learning group to work on building dyslexia awareness and systems at your location.
- Share what you learn with your students so everyone learns more about dyslexia.

## Funding ideas:

- Consider one-time versus ongoing needs
  - One-time=tools, resources, infrastructure
  - Ongoing=subscriptions, consumable programs
- Reallocate education funds to supports that meet all students' needs

## Accommodation ideas:

- Offer extra time for all reading and writing requirements
- Provide a reader for documentation
- Install a screen reader on all devices (e.g. Microsoft Immersive Reader)
- Provide writing dictation support for all writing requirements (e.g., Microsoft Dictate)
- Emphasize conversation/oral communication instead of written communication
- Highlight key words in written text & say out loud
- Present content visually using graphs, charts, or images
- Experiment with video lessons



## We're here to support you!

Pearson Clinical Assessment Consultants and GED State Relationship Managers are here to help.

### Clinical Assessment Team:

Patrick Moran; [patrick.moran@pearson.com](mailto:patrick.moran@pearson.com)

### GED Team:

Jonna Forsyth; [jonna.mcdonough@ged.com](mailto:jonna.mcdonough@ged.com)