



Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County

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Education Program Aims to Reach Justice-Involved and In-Need Adults

*Adult Probation recognizes education and literacy important in reducing recidivism,
increasing community wellbeing*

PHOENIX (Nov. 8, 2021) – Justice-involved individuals and in-need adults have a valuable resource to further their education, increase self-sufficiency and improve their overall quality of life by participating in the Adult Education Program facilitated through the Adult Probation Department, part of the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County.

The program’s state-certified teachers provide free GED test preparation, Adult Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL) classes year-round at probation offices in central Phoenix, Mesa and Glendale. Each Frank X. Gordon Adult Education Center has a student internet computer lab for online learning, job searching and resume building. The program also provides student access to the Arizona Career Readiness Credential, which is an industry-recognized workforce soft-skills program created by the State of Arizona.

“Education and increased computer and digital literacy are known to have pivotal roles in decreasing recidivism rates while increasing self-sufficiency, wage levels, probation rates and secondary education opportunities which, in turn, improves the quality of life for the students and their families,” said Kristi Wimmer, education program manager and certified adult education instructor.

The education program also offers an integrated education and training program for students who are interested in a career in customer service, sales and retail. The program has partnered with the National Retail Federation RISE UP program to provide industry-recognized credentials in retail and customer service for students who complete the program.

Many students receive the support and guidance needed to move forward with their life goals, like Ricardo, who initially enrolled in classes to improve his English language skills and then began studying for his GED. While studying for his GED exam, he completed the Arizona Career Readiness Credential and enrolled in the retail training program. After he earned his GED and his retail training credential, he was promoted to a manager at his job due to his new credentials and education.

“Pursue your dreams. Nothing is impossible. All we need is to want to do it and put the effort into it,” he said.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most in-person classes were moved to a virtual environment, utilizing the online interactive curriculum that was already in place. Now, the program uses a blended or hybrid learning model and each student participates in real-time, either in-person or live virtual, as well as completing online curriculum hours.

Many participants may not have computers or internet available at home. To bridge the digital divide for these students, the education program has created a laptop and internet hotspot lending library for enrolled students to expand access. All education services and materials are provided free of charge for participants thanks to funding by the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department, the Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts and the Arizona Department of Education.

The Adult Probation Department also continues to partner with the Smart Justice Program within Arizona@Work to provide specialized assistance to justice-involved individuals looking for employment or training opportunities. Their workforce staff is present at multiple probation centers, and they can work with participants in person or virtually.

According to the Adult Probation Department, during the last year, 274 Adult Basic Education and GED prep students and 77 ESL students participated in the Adult Education Program.

The Frank X. Gordon Education Center was named after the former Supreme Court Chief Justice who made adult education programs part of probation programs in Maricopa and Pima Counties in the 1990s, and both of those education programs are still serving justice-involved and community members at no cost.

The program is currently open to any interested member of the community. For more information call the Frank X. Gordon Education Center at (602) 506-0055, send an email to APDAdultEducation@jbazmc.maricopa.gov or visit fxgeducationcenter.com/

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