

I.G.N.I.T.E. INSIGHT





National Sheriffs' Association I.G.N.I.T.E. Mission Statement

I.G.N.I.T.E.'s dedicated mission is to transform the lives of those incarcerated in county jails by providing education and life skills, as well as instilling hope. We aim to cultivate a positive self-perception and reshape societal views, fostering a mindset shift. Prioritizing measurable results, I.G.N.I.T.E. is committed to disrupting the cycle of recidivism and empowering individuals within the system to envision a future of positive societal contribution. Concurrently, our goal is to enhance the safety of jails, communities, and correctional staff by creating an environment conducive to rehabilitation and personal growth.

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Eliminating generational incarceration through education, by restoring value, hope, and purpose to our incarcerated population.

*Sheriff Christopher R. Swanson,
Genesee County, Michigan
Founder of I.G.N.I.T.E.*

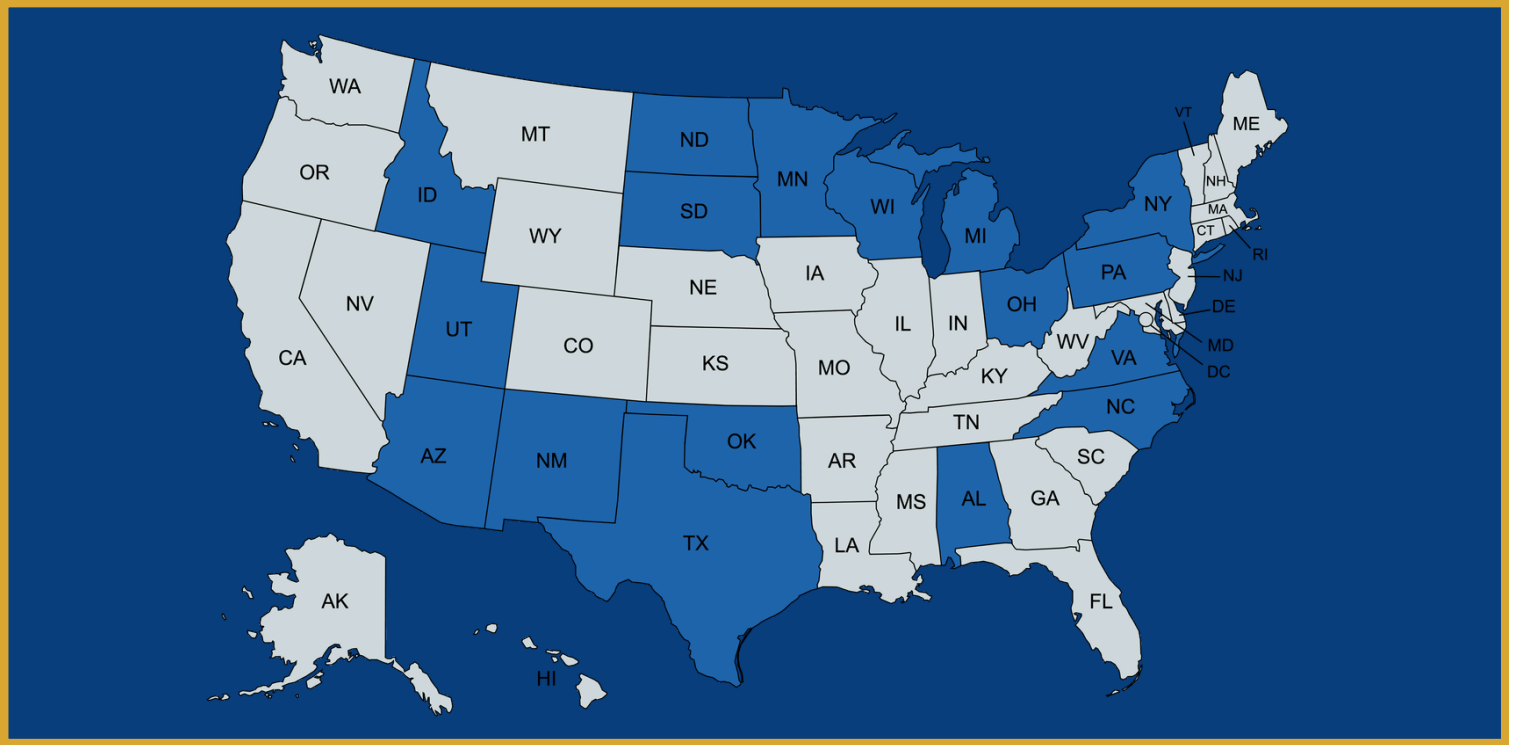
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MEET OUR SITES



GENESEE COUNTY, MI SHERIFF CHRISTOPHER R. SWANSON LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 2020	HENNEPIN COUNTY, MN SHERIFF DAWANNA WITT LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 2021	CASS COUNTY, ND SHERIFF JESSE JAHNER LAUNCHED MAY 2022	MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NC SHERIFF GARRY MCFADDEN LAUNCHED JULY 2022	ROANOKE CITY, VA SHERIFF ANTONIO HASH LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 2022	COLLIN COUNTY, TX SHERIFF JIM SKINNER LAUNCHED APRIL 2023	PENNINGTON COUNTY, SD SHERIFF BRIAN MUELLER LAUNCHED MAY 2023
SANDUSKY COUNTY, OH SHERIFF CHRIS HILTON LAUNCHED JULY 2023	BONNEVILLE COUNTY, ID SHERIFF SAM HULSE LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 2023	CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY, NY SHERIFF JAMES QUATTRONE LAUNCHED OCTOBER 2023	ULSTER COUNTY, NY SHERIFF JUAN FIGUEROA LAUNCHED DECEMBER 2023	IRON COUNTY, UT SHERIFF KEN CARPENTER LAUNCHED JANUARY 2024	STEARNS COUNTY, MN SHERIFF STEVE SOYKA LAUNCHED MARCH 2024	FAYETTE COUNTY, PA SHERIFF JAMES CUSTER LAUNCHED MARCH 2024
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, AL SHERIFF DERRICK CUNNINGHAM LAUNCHED APRIL 2024	KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MI SHERIFF RICHARD FULLER III LAUNCHED APRIL 2024	BLOUNT COUNTY, AL SHERIFF MARK MOON LAUNCHED MAY 2024	GRAYSON COUNTY, TX SHERIFF TOM WATT LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 2024	ALPENA COUNTY, MI SHERIFF ERIK SMITH LAUNCHED DECEMBER 2024	EDDY COUNTY, NM SHERIFF MATTHEW HUTCHINSON LAUNCHED DECEMBER 2024	WAYNE COUNTY, PA SHERIFF CHRIS ROSLER LAUNCHED JANUARY 2025
WILKIN COUNTY, MN SHERIFF TONY HARRIS LAUNCHED JANUARY 2025	RICHLAND COUNTY, ND SHERIFF GARY RUHL LAUNCHED JANUARY 2025	RUSSELL COUNTY, AL SHERIFF HEATH TAYLOR LAUNCHED APRIL 2025	JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL SHERIFF MARK PETTWAY LAUNCHED APRIL 2025	FAYETTE COUNTY, OH SHERIFF VERNON STANFORTH LAUNCHED MAY 2025	WASHINGTON COUNTY, OH SHERIFF MARK WARDEN LAUNCHED MAY 2025	BUTLER COUNTY, PA SHERIFF MICHAEL SLUPE LAUNCHED MAY 2025
SHELBY COUNTY, AL SHERIFF JOHN SAMANIEGO LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 2025	WOOD COUNTY, OH SHERIFF MARK WASLYSHYN LAUNCHED NOVEMBER 2025	ROGERS COUNTY, OK SHERIFF SCOTT WALTON LAUNCHED NOVEMBER 2025	BINGHAM COUNTY, ID SHERIFF JEFF GARDNER LAUNCHED NOVEMBER 2025	WASHINGTON COUNTY, OK SHERIFF SCOTT OWEN LAUNCHED NOVEMBER 2025	SUMMIT COUNTY, OH SHERIFF KANDY FATHEREE LAUNCHED JANUARY 2026	ADA COUNTY, ID SHERIFF MATT CLIFFORD LAUNCHED FEBRUARY 2026
YAVAPAI COUNTY, AZ SHERIFF DAVID RHODES LAUNCHED MAY 2026	TRUMBULL COUNTY, OH SHERIFF MICHAEL WILSON LAUNCHED MAY 2026	MILWAUKEE COUNTY, WI SHERIFF DENITA BALL LAUNCHED JULY 2026	HENRY COUNTY, AL SHERIFF ERIC BLANKENSHIP LAUNCHED JULY 2026			

A SHERIFF'S JOURNEY

YAVAPAI COUNTY, ARIZONA: SHERIFF DAVID RHODES



Sheriff David Rhodes has spent more than a decade leading county jails, and he believes the time people spend behind bars should help them grow rather than be wasted. What that time becomes depends on the opportunities a sheriff chooses to provide.

Sheriff Rhodes, who leads the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office, recently made his county the first in Arizona to launch I.G.N.I.T.E., joining a growing network of sheriffs across the country using jail time to create change.

"I was inspired to bring I.G.N.I.T.E. to our facility when I saw the support of the program by the National Sheriffs' Association and the demonstrated outcomes," Sheriff Rhodes said. "We are very aggressive in our jail programming and recidivism reduction. I.G.N.I.T.E. was a natural fit."

That commitment is not new for Sheriff Rhodes. Before becoming sheriff, he spent 13 years serving in jail leadership roles, including jail commander and chief deputy, all with one goal in mind: finding better ways to serve those in his care.

"While people are incarcerated, time is going to pass, and it's how we use that time that will determine what life looks like for them, and thereby their families and community, when they're released," he said. "I believe I.G.N.I.T.E. is another incredibly valuable opportunity to continue advancing those goals."

That impact inside the jail was immediate and noticeable — both among staff and the individuals in custody.

"Our staff and our community have responded overwhelmingly positively, with numerous comments, ideas, and media attention around the program," he said. "I.G.N.I.T.E. has dramatically influenced morale among our staff and inmates, particularly our younger inmates. They are looking for opportunities to improve and learn. The staff in the facilities love being part of something more than just the incarceration of people. They love actually impacting the community."

For Sheriff Rhodes, a jail should be more than a place to serve time — it should be a place where people can learn, grow, and prepare for a better future. In that view, I.G.N.I.T.E. is a natural extension of that mission.

"I.G.N.I.T.E. aligns perfectly with my goals and vision for reentry and rehabilitation using the county jail system," he said. "Incarceration is a perfect opportunity to pair life-changing skills with those who are incarcerated, so that when they are released, they are less likely to reoffend."

Yavapai County's existing infrastructure made the launch easier than it might have been elsewhere.

"We already had a very robust criminal justice and mental health coalition, and those partners have embraced I.G.N.I.T.E., adding really interesting and cool ideas to the program," he said.

As the first Arizona site, Yavapai County represents an important step for I.G.N.I.T.E. in a new part of the country — led by a sheriff who believes jail time can be used as an opportunity for change.

A SHERIFF'S JOURNEY

TRUMBULL COUNTY, OHIO: SHERIFF MICHAEL WILSON



Sheriff Michael Wilson doesn't talk about his jail the way most people expect. Ask him what the facility is for, and the answer goes beyond holding people until release.

"As Sheriff, I have always believed that our responsibility extends beyond simply incarcerating individuals," he said. "We have an opportunity to help people address the underlying issues that led them into the criminal justice system."

That belief now has a name inside his facility: I.G.N.I.T.E.

He discovered the initiative not through a policy brief but through other sheriffs. What stood out was its scope. Rather than isolating a single problem, I.G.N.I.T.E. addresses education, workforce readiness, cognitive-behavioral programming, and life skills at once, while building partnerships that extend beyond release.

Getting it off the ground took as much coordination as commitment.

"Launching I.G.N.I.T.E. required a collaborative effort between our corrections staff, administrative team, instructors, and community partners," Sheriff Wilson said.

Classroom space had to be found, schedules built, security maintained — all without pausing the jail's daily operations.

"Both staff and inmates embraced the initiative once they began seeing the positive changes in participant behavior and attitude," he said.

"Initially, there were questions about how the initiative would operate and whether it would be effective," he acknowledged.

But as results became visible in day-to-day behavior, doubt gave way to pride.

"I.G.N.I.T.E. has become a source of pride for our office because it demonstrates our commitment to public safety through both accountability and rehabilitation."

The mission is simple: help fewer people come back to jail.

"Our primary goal was to reduce recidivism by equipping individuals with the education, skills, and

resources necessary to become productive members of society upon release," Sheriff Wilson said.

"Our hope is that fewer people return to jail, more families remain intact, and our community becomes safer."

He measures leadership by impact, not just authority.

"We have an opportunity to positively influence lives by providing resources that encourage personal growth and accountability," he said. "If we can help even one person break the cycle of incarceration, we have made our community safer."

Still, he is careful not to let rehabilitation overshadow the fundamentals.

"Safety and security will always be the foundation of jail operations," he said. "Initiatives like I.G.N.I.T.E. complement — not replace — our security mission."

It is a lesson he returns to often. Reform succeeds or fails on the culture it's built around.

"Rehabilitation and public safety are not competing priorities," Sheriff Wilson said. "They work together to build stronger communities."

NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION SHERIFF OF THE YEAR

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, ALABAMA: SHERIFF DERRICK CUNNINGHAM



Congratulations to one of our own, Sheriff Derrick Cunningham, for being named Sheriff of the Year!

"Sheriff Cunningham is a fine example of a Sheriff doing all the right things in his community. He represents his fellow Alabama sheriffs and all the nation's Sheriffs in an exemplary way. He's very deserving of this recognition."

Sheriff Chris Hilton, Sandusky County, Ohio

"Sheriff Cunningham is a great leader and mentor for those who know him. Each time I have had an opportunity to be around Sheriff Cunningham, I leave feeling like I've just talked with an old friend who is truly concerned about what is going on with me. He has exemplified a selfless attitude each time I get to communicate with him. My most recent experience was having the opportunity to watch him interact with my two-year-old grandson, which was very heartwarming."

Sheriff James Quattrone, Chautauqua County, New York

"I met Sheriff Cunningham through Sheriff Heath Taylor, another Sheriff of Alabama, my mentor Sheriff at the new sheriff's school in Colorado. Sheriff Cunningham is articulate, even-keeled, and gives great advice to any sheriff who asks. He leads by example. He's a great leader who cares about the institution of Sheriff. Congratulations, Sheriff Cunningham, you truly deserve this honor."

Sheriff Juan Figueroa, Ulster County, NY

"Sheriff Cunningham is truly dedicated to our profession. He's always eager to learn and lead in the same moment, especially when it comes to his community, all while quietly making a difference. He is a man whose values are deeply ingrained within him, evident in the eyes and faces of his community. As a member of his fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Incorporated, I expected nothing less of him."

Sheriff Garry McFadden, Mecklenburg County, NC

"First, let me congratulate Sheriff Cunningham on his selection as Sheriff of the Year! Well deserved! Sheriff Cunningham epitomizes what you envision as a true leader! As a fellow sheriff, he is someone that I follow and look up to. He truly cares about the people of his county, and it shows in what he has done with the I.G.N.I.T.E. programming in his jail! Sheriff Cunningham, keep doing what you're doing!"

Sheriff James Custer, Fayette County, PA

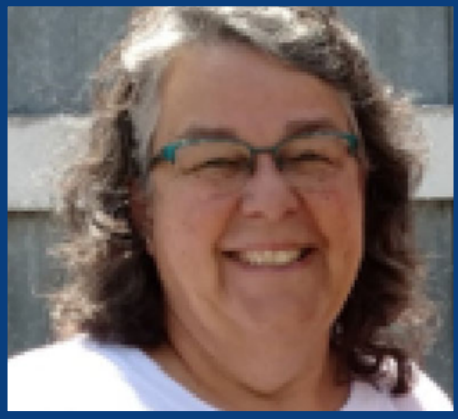
"Sheriff Cunningham is a great leader. He works hard for his office and employees to provide the best he can, both with salaries and equipment."

Sheriff Cunningham is a close friend who has been there for me as a fellow Sheriff for the past 16 years. Through ups and downs, he has always answered the phone. Sometimes to just listen and sometimes to give advice! But he always answers the phone. You can't ask for much more!"

Sheriff Heath Taylor, Russell County, AL

RECOGNIZING THE DEDICATION OF STAFF

BONNEVILLE COUNTY, IDAHO: ANNE JOHNSON



By the time Anne Johnson walks into the jail of Bonneville County, Idaho, each morning, she already knows who needs encouragement, who has a release date fast approaching, and who is quietly convinced they will fail.

Johnson, the GED Program Administrator for Bonneville County Jail in southeastern Idaho, has spent more than 25 years guiding students toward their high school equivalency diplomas — first in the community and now inside a correctional facility.

"Most inmates think they can't possibly get a GED," she said. "And I encourage them and work on their confidence."

Sheriff Sam Hulse recruited Johnson because her reputation preceded her. She had spent over two decades running a regional GED program, and he believed her expertise could meet a specific and

urgent need. The majority of people cycling through his jail, he recognized, were struggling with addiction — and addiction, Johnson will tell you, is inseparable from the educational and economic deficits that feed the cycle of reincarceration.

"You cannot incarcerate addiction out of people," she said. "I have known from the beginning of my career that trauma and addiction have to be addressed so that inmates can stop the criminal mentality."

It is a perspective shaped not only by her work in GED instruction but by roughly 30 years in the addiction and recovery field. Johnson does not see the jail's population as a monolith of poor choices. She sees people who, as she puts it, are "all smart but lack common sense" — individuals whose circumstances never gave them the tools to make different decisions.

Johnson spends four to six hours each day inside the facility. She rotates through dormitories, tracks release timelines, and determines how much academic support each person needs. The work is as much logistics as teaching, and she navigates it with the matter-of-fact efficiency of someone who has long since made peace with the

unglamorous mechanics of the job.

"Watching someone pass their first test — all of a sudden, they have a tiny bit of hope that they can do this," she said.

Family members attend in person or connect over video, visibly overcome. They never thought their son or daughter would achieve this milestone.

One story stays with her. A man with a long history of incarceration — gang ties, family members caught in the same cycle — told Johnson flatly on their first meeting that he was not coming back. She gave him a real assessment anyway. He passed. He came back. He graduated. Jail staff, she recalled, were stunned. He has not returned to the facility since.



"Once it starts moving smoothly and the results start coming in," Johnson said, "it makes it all worthwhile."

She has watched reluctant staff — those who weren't sure the whole enterprise was worth it — quietly

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RECOGNIZING THE DEDICATION OF STAFF CONTINUED

change their minds when they began seeing the evidence in front of them. They started encouraging the students themselves.

For Johnson, that cultural shift matters as much as the diplomas. She believes, with a forcefulness borne of experience, that correctional staff must hold a foundational conviction: that the people in their facility are human beings who have value, who have made mistakes, and who are capable of something different.

"Staff must believe that inmates are human beings just like them," she said. "Yes, there are inmates that are bad and are a danger to others. I don't lose sight of that. But not the majority."

Something else she has noticed: students are starting to encourage each other. In the dormitories, peers who have found their footing academically pull others in — students who never would have raised their hands on their own.

What she ultimately hopes for is scale. More programs like I.G.N.I.T.E. More facilities that treat education and recovery as the core of their mission rather than an afterthought. She wants a "mindset in the jails," as she described it, that the work of rehabilitation is not idealism — it is the most practical thing a sheriff's office can do.



"The program is helping good people get back on track after making poor choices," she said.

After 30 years, Anne Johnson still "The program is helping good people get back on track after making poor choices," she said. comes to work every day believing that it is possible. In Bonneville County, Idaho, she is proving it.



CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS

ULSTER COUNTY, NEW YORK: AUSTIN ANDREW



When Austin Andrew walked through the doors of the Ulster County Jail in New York, it wasn't because he had been arrested. He chose to come in himself, knowing he needed help and that the decision would change his life. Today, at 32, he is a father, a GED graduate, and a resident of the I.G.N.I.T.E. Housing Unit at the Ulster County Jail. This is the story of how one difficult decision became the first step toward rebuilding his future.

Andrew's journey to incarceration did not begin with a single bad decision, but with a series of losses.

"The losses of my grandmother, grandfather, sister, and uncle brought me down a dark path, which led me to drinking more often than not," he said. "I ended up making poor judgment decisions and getting multiple DWIs."

The turning point came not in a courtroom but in a hospital bed. About a year ago, Andrew went in for a routine appendix surgery.

"While getting closed up, I was nicked in my intestine, which the doctors and I were unaware of until about a week later," he recalled. "I noticed insane bruising on my side, but come to find out, I was actually internally bleeding. I ended up going septic and jaundiced. I was in the hospital for about a month, fighting for my life."

The combination of his daughter's birth and that near-death experience gave Andrew a new perspective on the choices he was making.

"I made the decision to turn myself in and deal with the consequences of my actions."

It was inside the jail — in a pod he had briefly passed through before his current placement — that he first encountered the initiative that would define his incarceration.

"I noticed an info paper in the previous pod I was in. It was for I.G.N.I.T.E.," he said. "I knew what they were offering was for me, and I knew I had to get into the initiative."

For Andrew, I.G.N.I.T.E. offered exactly what he was looking for.

"I.G.N.I.T.E. was another chance to continue my journey of growing and becoming this person I always wanted to be, and it allowed me to educate myself as much as possible," he said of his decision to join.

The initiative gave him a clear path to keep moving forward.

Since entering I.G.N.I.T.E., he has joined moral recognition therapy, dialectical behavior therapy, process group, art/writing, financial literacy, CPR, and AA.

The effect on his day-to-day life inside the facility, he said, has been total.

When asked how I.G.N.I.T.E. has changed the way he spends his time, Andrew responded, "Drastically! I.G.N.I.T.E. has given me endless tools for outside incarceration. It allows you to grow and strive to be someone you've always wished to be, where being down in a normal pod, there's a lot of egos clashing and people just skating by to get out and continue to do the same as they were."

Instead of just serving his time, Andrew decided to use it as an opportunity to grow.

"Since being a part of the initiative, I knew I had good intentions and great achievable goals, but never

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CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS CONTINUED

knew how to fix myself or stay on the right path to make them a reality," he said, "but because of the amount of work I've put in these last few months, I think I've just about got it figured out."

Ask Andrew who made the difference, and the answer comes quickly and by name.

"Sergeant Ferri for always doing whatever she can for me and I.G.N.I.T.E. — she truly cares so much about all of us and this initiative," he said. "Ali for taking care of everything I've asked of her and so much more. Officer Towns for being an open, honest ear. And Kate from AA, who's always listened to me and my rambling."

The success of I.G.N.I.T.E. depends not only on the curriculum but also on the dedicated staff and volunteers who consistently show up to support participants.

Of everything I.G.N.I.T.E. has given him, Andrew points to one accomplishment above the rest.

"Getting my G.E.D. diploma has been one of my biggest achievements in I.G.N.I.T.E. and in life," he said. "It's something I've always wished to have. I never realized how much that piece of paper truly means."

The diploma has become, for Andrew, a kind of proof of concept — evidence that the version of

himself he has been working toward is attainable.

"I.G.N.I.T.E. has influenced me by seeing the side of me I've always wished to see," he said of the initiative's effect on how he thinks about his future. "It's given me structure, hope, and determination to make the business I own into something like never before."

None of it, Andrew is careful to note, has been easy.

“Our past doesn't determine our future. It is possible to change, but it's up to you to determine how bad you want it. I've learned this from I.G.N.I.T.E.”
Austin Andrew

"Some of the challenges I've faced are not feeling good enough, worthy, or deserving," he said. "I've overcome these by digging into the roots of my problems and facing them head on. Having my daughter and family by my side has been extremely positive and has helped me with this tremendously."

For many students in reentry programming, the hardest ground to recover is relational. Andrew describes the ground as largely repaired.

"I.G.N.I.T.E. has affected my relationships in many positive ways," he said. "My family knows I'm coming out of incarceration

stronger than ever. My girlfriend knows I'm a positive, inspiring person who will achieve whatever I put my mind to. My daughter knows I'm going to be a present dad and there for the rest of her life."

Andrew has clear goals for life after custody.

"After incarceration, I plan on taking my master electrical license exam, buying real estate down south, creating generational wealth for my family, and hopefully becoming a Certified Recovery Peer Advocate (CRPA)," he said.

He credits I.G.N.I.T.E. not just with the goals themselves, but with the mindset he says he will need to reach them.

"Through I.G.N.I.T.E., I learned how to be positive even in negative situations," he said. "I've learned failing is a part of life, but it's not about how many times you fall — it's about how many times you get back up."

When asked to sum up I.G.N.I.T.E. in a single word or phrase, Andrew did not hesitate.

"Opportunity," he said, "because that is what I.G.N.I.T.E. is all about. If you want change, there is no excuse because you have nothing but time while incarcerated, so why not be the best you can be."

CURRICULUM IN ACTION

FAYETTE COUNTY, OHIO: S.T.A.N.D. — SKILLS, TOOLS, AND NEW DIRECTIVES



Inside the Fayette County, Ohio, Jail, a 90-day program is changing how addiction is treated behind bars.

The program is called S.T.A.N.D., Skills, Tools, and New Directives, and it brings a structured recovery model inside a county correctional facility in rural Ohio. Built on the Matrix Model, a research-validated framework for substance use treatment, it runs in separate men's and women's cohorts of up to 24 participants each, led by Chemical Dependency Counseling Assistants from Pickaway Area Recovery Services over a 90-day cycle.

The program was not handed down from a state agency or mandated by a court order. It was developed from within, by Sheriff Vernon Stanforth, past president of the National Sheriffs' Association, alongside a small group of staff who saw a need in their community and decided the jail had to be part of the solution.

Funded through Ohio's State Opioid and Stimulant Response grant, S.T.A.N.D. gives participants tools that extend well beyond abstinence: coping strategies, identification of personal triggers, budgeting and life-management skills, and a grounded understanding of what addiction does to the brain and body, and how both heal. For many participants, incarceration becomes one of the few enforced pauses in a cycle that otherwise offers little room for reflection or intervention.



"Our favorite thing about facilitating the S.T.A.N.D. groups is the moment you see the light come back on in their eyes," one facilitator said. "They start to understand that it isn't something broken within them, but something that has an explanation, and there are people who want to help them. You can always tell when someone in the group starts to understand and come out of their shell because it's like a different person is sitting across from you."

Both groups run consistently at or near capacity. Notably, the applications do not come only from newly booked individuals, current participants actively advocate for fellow individuals awaiting admission. That peer-driven momentum shows the program has earned credibility among the population it serves.

Staff connect graduates with inpatient and outpatient treatment and maintain communication through the reentry transition.

The vision for what comes next is broader: tiered programming for longer-stay individuals, job application training, financial literacy, family reconnection curricula, and ultimately a step-down residential component, a stable landing place for graduates navigating the fragile early days of life after incarceration.

Staff's advice to other agencies: patience comes first.

"Have compassion and patience. It can take time for the people in groups to open up to you. Perseverance when numbers are low, patience when you are met with resistance, and understanding when meeting people where they are."

UTILIZING MERITOCRACY

SHELBY COUNTY, ALABAMA



Meritocracy works when it's documented and consistent, built on clear criteria rather than good intentions alone. That's the case Shelby County, Alabama makes plainly. In I.G.N.I.T.E. at the Shelby County Sheriff's Office, nothing is handed out. Every privilege participants earn is tracked, documented and awarded the same way for everyone — no exceptions, no favorites.

Under Sheriff John Samaniego, the jail-based education program has built a merit system participants can see and understand: meet expectations, log consistent attendance, finish coursework and maintain good behavior, and the rewards follow. Movie time. Games. Radio access. Occasional celebrations, like cake or pizza, tied to specific milestones.

What sets Shelby County's system apart isn't the rewards — it's the record-keeping behind them. Staff review each participant's attendance, certificates,

coursework and overall progress on an ongoing basis, rather than relying on subjective impressions of who's doing well.

"I track participant progress using a spreadsheet that documents their attendance, course completions, behavior, certificates and other I.G.N.I.T.E.-related activities," program staff said. "Maintaining these records allows me to consistently monitor each participant's progress and ensure that recognition and earned incentives are awarded fairly and based on the same criteria for everyone."

Two incentives have stood out above the rest: radio access and game time.

"These rewards are highly valued and consistently encourage positive behavior and engagement," staff said.

Staff credit the structure itself for the shift they've seen — when participants know exactly what's expected and see a direct link between effort and outcome, behavior tends to follow.

"There have been a reduction of write-ups and disciplinary actions, and participants are generally more engaged and mindful of expectations," staff said.

One shift caught staff by surprise: participants' willingness to show up.

"I have noticed several unexpected benefits from using a merit-based approach," staff said. "Participants are more willing to attend class regularly, complete their courses and demonstrate a more positive overall attitude in the facility."



Staff also play a direct role in reinforcing the system, applying the rules evenly and reminding participants of expectations.

"Staff also provide ongoing support and guidance, which helps maintain structure and accountability within the facility," staff said.

For a program built on incremental, earned progress, that voluntary buy-in points to something bigger than individual behavior change — a shift in the facility's baseline expectation, from simply avoiding trouble to actively working toward something.

I.G.N.I.T.E. SITE UPDATES



Alpena County, MI

Alpena County, guided by the mission of making time served into time invested, exceeded its goals just a year after launching, with 165 participants enrolled. The county has logged more than eight thousand instructional hours of combined classroom and digital learning, with 1,388 industry-recognized certifications earned. Through dedicated instructors and the strength of Alpena's local network, the county offers classes in essential life skills such as financial empowerment, parenting, anger management, and nutrition, along with specialized counseling and case management, GED classes, and advanced vocational training in HVAC, engineering, plumbing, and electrical trades.

Wayne County, PA

Wayne County, with the help of the Penn State Extension Master Gardener Program, expanded its garden to allow more students to volunteer. Johnson College educates students on OSHA 10, Basic Electric, Electrical Board, and Customer Service Training, and Wayne County's partnership with the Wayne/Pike Workforce Alliance ensures job placement for students completing the Johnson College classes.



Jefferson County, AL

Jefferson County launched a fully operational GED testing site in the jail to accelerate timelines and position students for success. Through its "Skills for Success" initiative, students immerse themselves in real work environments to practice technical and interpersonal skills before stepping into a job after release.

Kalamazoo County, MI

Kalamazoo County celebrated its sixth cohort graduation on May 7, with eleven graduates. The next cohort has already begun, introducing exciting new components such as yoga and meditation in partnership with a local wellness center, along with financial literacy instruction led by educators from Kalsee Credit Union.



I.G.N.I.T.E. SITE UPDATES



Bingham County, ID

Bingham County hosted its second I.G.N.I.T.E. graduation on May 29, where students made chunky knit yarn blankets for their children or loved ones and gifted them during the ceremony. The first group of graduates had made additional blankets to donate to the Village Center for local foster children, and giving back meant a great deal to the students. The new group of graduates went on to create handmade pet beds to donate to the local animal shelter.

Wood County, OH

Wood County rolled out several new courses and certifications, including the Bowling Green State University Program, the Veterans Reentry Program, NAMI Connections, Parenting Under the Influence, Making a Change, Intro to Trades, Mental Health First Aid, Parenting, Pathways to Civic Participation, ServSafe, Adult Education, and GED classes. At a graduation held on May 18, two students received certificates for completing the Parenting Under the Influence course, eight received certificates for completing the BGSU Reentry Program, ten received certificates for the Trades Program, five received certificates for the ServSafe course, and one student earned a GED.



Pennington County, SD

Pennington County introduced two new offerings for I.G.N.I.T.E. students. The Within My Reach Program focuses on communication, conflict management, affect regulation, commitment, expectations, intimacy enhancement, emotional safety, and physical safety, with the opportunity to continue education services post-release for those who choose to do so; twenty-one students have completed the course. Call to Freedom provides a safe support group for individuals impacted by human trafficking, focusing on emotional safety, reclaiming self-definition, reducing self-blame, normalizing asking for help, and building routines that support healing, among other goals. Beyond GED completions, Pennington County's I.G.N.I.T.E. Sheriff's Work Program received the Blue Ribbon Award for 2026 from the Central States Fair for its service to fair staff, providing tasks that build participants' job skills, work ethic, and teamwork while offering employment at the Central States Fairgrounds post-incarceration.



I.G.N.I.T.E. SITE UPDATES

Genesee County, MI

Genesee County, facing high demand from students wanting to join I.G.N.I.T.E. University, expanded into a double pod, now able to house 118 students. To celebrate, the county held a concert featuring country music star Randy Houser along with a ribbon cutting led by Sheriff Swanson. Genesee County plans to partner with Virage Simulation to bring in a CDL simulator, giving students the opportunity to learn how to drive semi-trucks, snowplows, and garbage trucks.



Ulster County, NY

Ulster County held a graduation on March 24 for nine students who completed a combination of educational, workforce readiness, and personal development courses to prepare them for a successful return to the community. Students engaged in several offerings, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), workforce readiness training through the Foundations for Work initiative in partnership with the Ulster County Office of Employment and Training, and GED instruction in partnership with Ulster Literacy. Three graduates earned their GEDs, and one received an I.G.N.I.T.E. Achievement Award for exemplifying growth, bravery, and authenticity, and for demonstrating personal progress throughout his time in the initiative. Families, neighbors, businesses, and the broader community were also recognized for their encouraging presence, which made a meaningful difference in the graduates' success.

Roanoke City, VA

Roanoke City Sheriff's Office recently celebrated a graduation ceremony recognizing students who completed Male and Female Alpha, Healing Trauma, Hustle 2.0, 3D for Life: Your Place, Your Purpose, Inmates to Entrepreneur, Church Alive Freedom, Therapeutic Pod, Women's Music Therapy, and GED preparation. The Sheriff's Office also recognized its top Edovo learners and celebrated another resident who earned a GED.

Collin County, TX

Collin County expanded its vocational offerings through a new partnership with Escape the Odds, giving individuals more opportunities to build career skills and prepare for successful reentry. New offerings include a Box Truck and Financial Empowerment Course, which teaches students how to operate a business using a box truck with a non-CDL license while building entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills; a Commercial Cleaning Course, where students can earn a state-recognized certificate; and a House Hacking Course, which introduces participants to real estate investment strategies. Together, these courses equip students with practical skills, industry-recognized credentials, and pathways toward greater economic self-sufficiency upon release.



I.G.N.I.T.E. SITE UPDATES



Yavapai County, AZ

Yavapai County launched I.G.N.I.T.E. on May 18 with the opening of its reentry Connections Center. Staff have discussed program expectations with local Superior Court judges and public defenders, emphasizing that students will report their progress in I.G.N.I.T.E. Staff are currently developing learning tracks that include both tablet/Edovo classes and in-person classes, along with ideas for a rewards system.

Ada County, ID

Ada County has maintained a full weekly schedule of outside volunteers sharing reentry resources since launching its Community Presentations in April. Volunteers from the Idaho Department of Labor, Northpoint Recovery, Access Behavioral Health, St. Vincent de Paul, and others have reached about 162 students to date. Ada County's numbers continue to grow, with 607 individuals receiving case management services, participants logging more than 20,000 hours on Edovo, and two students earning their GEDs.



Bonneville County, ID

Bonneville County held a GED graduation on July 2, bringing its total number of graduates to 81. A Solutions Program graduation is also scheduled, with nine students expected to graduate. The College of Eastern Idaho is using part of a grant to update an I.G.N.I.T.E. classroom, and Bonneville County has applied for an opioid settlement grant to help cover program costs.

Cass County, ND

Cass County continues to offer a robust lineup of weekly programming, with sessions running smoothly and consistently drawing strong participation.

Rogers County, OK

Rogers County is in the process of installing Edovo on its tablets and plans to roll out I.G.N.I.T.E. to students soon.

Trumbull County, OH

Trumbull County has built momentum since its May 20 launch, recently completing its Life Skills, Decision Points, and Parenting Skills group classes, with 36 students successfully completing the courses and receiving certificates. Many participants in the Parenting Skills group follow up after release to continue engaging in parenting support services. Programming includes substance use recovery support, peer support, GED testing, Bible study, AA, and other reentry-focused services.

I.G.N.I.T.E. SITE UPDATES

Sandusky County, OH

Sandusky County held its first I, COMIC class with instructor Luisa, welcoming 26 male and female students to a Zoom session on developing their own comic book stories. Through grant funding, the county purchased 150 of Luisa's books to support mental health through arts and creative expression.

Eddy County, NM

Eddy County has 96 active learners spending four to eight hours a day on assignments and completing five or more each session. Many of the applications in use focus on jobs, finance, and academic coursework, helping set students up for successful reentry.

Stearns County, MN

Stearns County continues to run several successful programs, including The Solutions Program, Hustle 2.0, The Competency Program, and Edovo. Monday through Friday, twenty-one students consistently attend the two-hour Solutions Program sessions. The Hustle 2.0 Program, while still in its early phases, has eight motivated students working through five comprehensive books and completing all required materials. Following the recent launch of the Competency Program, one student has already completed the workbook. Made possible by the qualified medical and educational staff at Stearns County Jail, the program includes ten lessons covering the entire court process, including an explanation of each courtroom role. This month alone, Stearns County logged 1,000 completed items, 100 completed courses, and 761 hours of engagement through Edovo.

Shelby County, AL

Shelby County continues to make significant progress and plans to expand programming to reach a larger portion of its population. One I.G.N.I.T.E. student earned a 60-month sentence reduction through his dedication to completing classes and meeting program expectations, an outcome that reflects the program's impact on students' rehabilitation and reinforces the value of evidence-based educational and personal development opportunities within a correctional setting.

Chautauqua County, NY

Chautauqua County is working on updating its GED program and addressing classroom space between classes.

Hennepin County, MN

Hennepin County started a new program called Apprenticeship Exploration with a team of volunteers. One volunteer shares with students the many second-chance employment opportunities available in the trades and unions, drawing on connections across dozens of trade fields and knowledge of the pathways to landing a paid apprenticeship.

Washington County, OH

Washington County continues to expand its workforce development through its Virtual Reality Career Exploration Lab, offered in partnership with the Appalachian Ohio Manufacturers' Coalition, which allows students to earn micro-credentials while exploring different careers. One student was accepted into the Edwins Leadership and Restaurant Institute after completing an online program while incarcerated. Washington County also continues to find great success with its Peer-to-Peer Recovery Program, which provides mentorship, accountability, and encouragement from individuals with lived experience.

Mecklenburg County, NC

Mecklenburg County celebrated six HISET graduates in June, five male and one female, bringing the total to sixteen graduates since the start of the year. The Sheriff's House, a reentry residential program, now supports four participants, all of whom are substance-free, with three currently employed. New class offerings include Trauma 101 and DBT Skills Training. Trauma 101 builds participants' understanding of trauma and its impact on behavior, increasing awareness of personal and environmental triggers so individuals can recognize patterns without shame or blame while strengthening their ability to respond with intention rather than reaction.



I.G.N.I.T.E. SITE UPDATES

Fayette County, OH

Fayette County celebrated its first I.G.N.I.T.E. GED graduate in current staff and administration's recollection. The next cohort, Session Eight, is scheduled to graduate during the last week of July. Fayette County also launched S.T.A.N.D. (Skills, Tools, and New Directives), a 24-person, 90-day substance use recovery program funded by the State Opioid and Stimulant Response grant. Using the Matrix Model, the program teaches practical coping skills, how to identify compulsive behaviors and personal triggers, budgeting and life-management skills, and an understanding of the stages of recovery through education on the physical and neurological effects of addiction, including how the body and brain heal in recovery. Support continues post-incarceration through connections to inpatient and outpatient treatment services. Staff have noticed the light come back into students' eyes as they discover there isn't something wrong with them and that people genuinely want to help them.

Grayson County, TX

Grayson County has graduated twenty-one more students from the Solutions Program since March, holding monthly graduations as participants complete the program. The county is working on adding local content to the Edovo platform to highlight resources and organizations that can assist residents with reentry into the community.

INTRODUCING I.G.N.I.T.E.'S 38TH AND 39TH SITES



Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
Sheriff Denita Ball



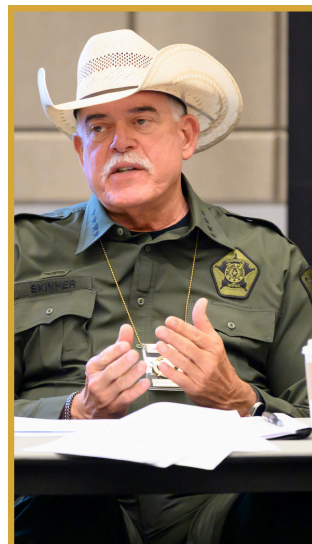
Henry County, Alabama
Sheriff Eric Blankenship

SHERIFF'S COMMITMENT GUITAR

At the NSA Winter Conference, The Solution program founder Scott Wisenbaker presented Sheriff Heath Taylor of Russell County, Alabama, with a guitar he hand-built himself — a tribute to Sheriff Taylor's dedication to recovery and reentry. Wisenbaker designed and constructed the instrument from scratch, turning it into a lasting symbol of the partnership between The Solution and Russell County's work to change lives behind bars.



I.G.N.I.T.E. PAPARAZZI: NSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

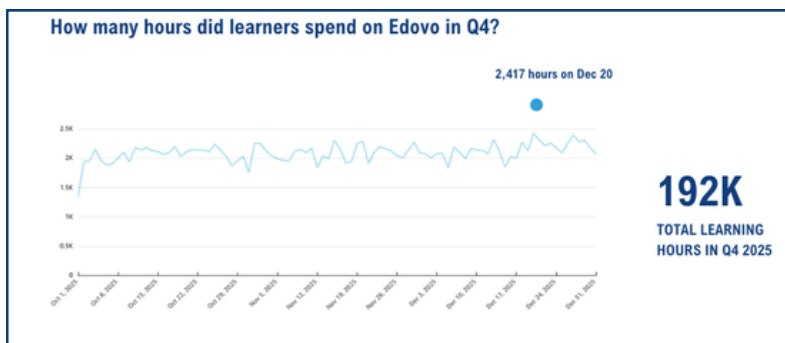


EDOVO QUARTERLY REPORT

Edovo, a leading corrections programming application, offers an unmatched reputation and programming catalog, built specifically for incarcerated individuals. Partnering with major tablet providers, Edovo delivers over 25,000 hours of content, directly supporting I.G.N.I.T.E.'s mission of providing comprehensive education, job certification, and post-incarceration opportunities.

This report showcases Edovo learner engagement data from I.G.N.I.T.E. facilities, demonstrating significant progress by incarcerated individuals towards achieving their full potential through active platform participation.

Hours Spent Learning in Edovo in Q4



I.G.N.I.T.E. SITES USING

edovo

Roanoke City, VA
Iron County, UT
Grayson County, TX
Wayne County, PA
Fayette County, PA
Sandusky County, OH
Cass County, ND
Chautauqua County, NY
Kalamazoo County, MI
Genesee County, MI
Bonneville County, ID
Montgomery County, AL
Eddy County, NM
Ulster County, NY
Collin County, TX
Mecklenburg County, NC
Washington County, OH
Richland County, ND
Summit County, OH
Bingham County, ID
Stearns County, MN

TOP 10 COURSES

1. Critical Thinking
2. Rising Strong: A Substance Use Recovery Course
3. Michael G. Santos: Straight-A Guide
4. Brandon McMillan Teaches Dog Training
5. Bill Nye Teaches Science & Problem-Solving
6. Parenting While Incarcerated
7. CEWD Energy Industry Fundamentals 2.0
8. Healing Through Creative Practice: Creation Story
9. Thinking for the Future - CBT
10. Learn Your Strengths from Shining Light

TOTAL NUMBERS



7,201
ACTIVE LEARNERS



26.74
HOURS PER LEARNER



17,438
COURSE COMPLETIONS



191,910
TOTAL LEARNING HOURS

These figures represent the combined efforts of learners across all 21 I.G.N.I.T.E. Edovo sites since the program's inception. If you're interested in joining this impactful mission and bringing Edovo's transformative learning opportunities to your facility, we invite you to connect with our technology partner for a conversation.

“Great course. I really learned a lot in this course, and will continue to review in the future. I will be continually using this to advance myself. Thank you so much

Christopher at Washington County, OH
on Building Resilience

MEET I.G.N.I.T.E. PARTNERS



I, COMIC is a non-profit organization with the mission of fostering engagement with comics, art, literacy, mastery, and emotional regulation skills among incarcerated and other justice-impacted individuals. The first volume of the I, COMIC book was published in May 2025 and features original art contributed by various artists, including those formerly and currently incarcerated; art tutorials; drawing prompts; blank and paneled pages; tips for developing emotional regulation skills; art and comic history; and more. I, COMIC now has a presence in correctional facilities all over the U.S., and the second volume will be published in May 2026.



The Solution Program is a robust reentry program to reintegrate men and women recovering from addiction back into the community. For over 20 years, Founder Scott Wisenbaker ran Solutions of North Texas, a nonprofit substance abuse treatment center, accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), licensed as a Chemical Dependency Treatment Center by the State of Texas, and partnered with I.G.N.I.T.E. to provide nationwide addiction and reintegration programming. As of 2025, SONTX has provided direction and/or directly worked with over 20,000 individuals. You can watch the Solution Documentary, *The Grip*, [here](#).



Vehicles for Change-VR (VFC-VR) was founded with the goal of expanding the success of the Full Circle Auto Repair and Training Center's internship program to a wider audience. This program has helped many individuals facing multiple barriers to employment find jobs in the auto industry. VFC-VR uses virtual reality technology to train individuals on entry-level auto technician basics so they can enter the workforce as tire and lube technicians. By doing so, VFC-VR is helping to create opportunities for individuals who may not have had them otherwise.



America's Credit Union is excited to collaborate with I.G.N.I.T.E. to expand to more counties nationwide. As a national partner, we look forward to collaborating with sheriffs and their staff to connect them with credit unions in their local areas to provide financial literacy education as part of I.G.N.I.T.E. The credit union philosophy is "people helping people" and creating financial well-being for all Americans regardless of their background.



The National Association of Counties (NACo) represents the interests of America's counties, serving as a powerful voice in federal policymaking and a vital part of our nation's intergovernmental system. With a membership of thousands of county elected and professional officials, NACo brings together leaders from across the country to shape national policies, share best practices and strengthen counties for a stronger America.



American Red Cross Training Services empowers individuals by delivering comprehensive First Aid/CPR/AED training that equips people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to respond quickly and effectively during emergencies. Through exceptional service and innovative educational models delivered by our dedicated training providers, employees, and volunteers, we work to build a safer, more resilient society. Our commitment is to ensure lifesaving education is accessible to all, helping communities become better prepared and more capable of protecting one another when it matters most.

THANK YOU SPONSORS!

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We are grateful to the sponsors who make I.G.N.I.T.E. possible. As a fully sponsor-funded initiative, every class, site, and success story exists because of their belief in the power of education and rehabilitation.

Their support extends beyond funding. Many sponsors travel to join us at sites across the country, standing alongside sheriffs and staff on the ground. This commitment reflects a genuine investment in the communities we serve — not just in the mission, but in the people behind it.

NEWS, WEBINARS, & LINKS

I.G.N.I.T.E. IN THE NEWS

- “NSA I.G.N.I.T.E. Hosts I.G.N.I.T.E. Day at Annual Conference; Securus Technologies Helps Power National Expansion Across 37 Counties” ... [read more](#)
- “Henry County joins Alabama jail education program aimed at cutting recidivism” ... [read more](#)
- “Milwaukee County Jail launches I.G.N.I.T.E. program to reduce repeat offenses” ... [read more](#)
- “Wood County Jail inmates graduate from I.G.N.I.T.E. education program” ... [read more](#)
- “Genesee County Jail’s I.G.N.I.T.E. Program adds CDL simulator” ... [read more](#)
- “I.G.N.I.T.E. program at Washington County Jail aims to reduce recidivism through education and reentry support” ... [read more](#)
- “County inmates planting more rain gardens to spruce up Rapid City” ... [read more](#)
- “Country Music Star visits Genesee County Jail for I.G.N.I.T.E. University expansion” ... [read more](#)

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[I, COMIC](#)

[The Red Cross](#)