

RHODE ISLAND RECONNECT FACT SHEET 2025-2026

Introduction

The Rhode Island Reconnect Program, an initiative by the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, aims to support Rhode Island working-class adults in attaining a postsecondary credential by assisting with the removal of certain non-academic barriers that serve as obstacles to reaching their higher education goals. Students enrolled in the program are adult learners, generally over the age of 24, who typically balance education with work, family, or other life responsibilities. Reconnect effectively helps its participants change careers, increase their current earnings, learn a new trade or get on the path to a certificate or college degree. Since its inception in 2020, Reconnect has served over 6,000 students and removed 20,000+ unique student barriers enabling participants to complete college or workforce training. Reconnect is an effective model for supporting students to achieve postsecondary success.

Program Overview

Through the assignment of a dedicated navigator to each of its participants, Reconnect provides students with individualized support including personalized academic coaching and mentoring, as well as wrap-around services. Navigators support each of their students throughout their postsecondary journey beginning with a comprehensive needs assessment to determine what, if any, non-academic barriers exist for the students. All participants are required to attend bi-weekly meetings with their navigators during their participation in the program allowing navigators to provide critical social and emotional support and monitor new challenges.

In addition to providing academic coaching, mentoring, and emotional support, one of Reconnect's most important features is its ability to remove non-academic barriers, unique to each of its participants that are not addressed by traditional financial aid. These barriers often include food insecurity, reliable childcare, transportation issues, housing and utility costs, technology needs, and mental health challenges. They carry the potential to derail students' progression to a degree or credential and their removal is critical for students to successfully engage in postsecondary education.

Examples of how navigators address these challenges include purchasing a laptop computer, providing access to Wi-Fi or a mobile phone, and purchasing a bus pass that enables a student to get to class.

Key Achievements 2025-2026

Over the past year, Reconnect continued to assist students through its established partnerships with higher education institutions and community-based organizations. The program served 1,100 students in 2025 in meaningful ways that led to postsecondary success for many of its participants.

After the Rhode Island Legislature generously funded Reconnect in 2024, it was able to expand to include a College Program which has served 1,200 adult students ranging in age from 24-65, attending the Rhode Island college of their choice. For the first time, Reconnect worked with students in college at nearly every institution of higher education in Rhode Island. In 2025 alone, 163 students in this program graduated with an associate or bachelor's degree with another 200 students on track to graduate this spring, for an expected total of 363 graduates in just over one year.

Other 2025 highlights include collaborative work with various partners that removed barriers for students, allowing them to go forward with their education. Reconnect continued to assist students receiving the Rhode Island College Foster Care Scholarship. It partnered with five postsecondary institutions to forgive outstanding student balances which allowed students to return to those schools. Reconnect worked with EOHHS to provide wrap around support to students in the Ladders to Licensure program in which healthcare workers received further postsecondary education in this critical field. Finally, between 2024 and 2026, Reconnect assisted 1,294 students in short-term workforce training programs.

Conclusion

Reconnect's positive impact on Rhode Island's adult learners is clear. Some Reconnect students report to program staff about receiving an increase in earnings shortly after their

graduation and program completion, while others were able to begin new careers in different fields. Whatever the path, the unique support that Reconnect provides to its students is the result of a successful pairing of the removal of day-to-day obstacles with the one-on-one support of program navigators. This student-centric model has had impressive results for individual Reconnect students and their families, the Rhode Island workforce, and our state's economy as a whole.

[RI Reconnect \(https://rireconnect.org/\)](https://rireconnect.org/)

[Hear From Students in the Reconnect Overview Video](#)

<https://vimeo.com/1110032867?fl=pl&fe=shRECONNECT@>