



Rodriguez

“The sociology program has been really good because you can be reflective on your social background, where you come from, and how it relates to the system. Once I was mentally stimulated in there, it was like somebody giving you a key to freedom.”

- Brandon Rodriguez '24

CONTACT

For more information or to indicate interest in the program, contact your Education Supervisor or send a letter to:

Education Supervisor
Riverview Correctional Facility
1110 Tibbits Drive
Ogdensburg, NY 13669

potsdamrcf@potsdam.edu

www.potsdam.edu

The Bachelor's Degree in Applied Sociology Potsdam@RCF



Potsdam

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Potsdam@RCF

A Brief History of Potsdam@RCF

In Fall 2021, SUNY Potsdam partnered with NY-DOCCS Riverview Correctional Facility to offer a bachelor's degree program within the prison. We began with three instructors, teaching four courses to 19 students. As of Spring 2026 the program has 83 students, and we are offering 21 unique courses. In October 2025, Potsdam@RCF celebrated the commencement of 24 students who will soon complete their bachelor's degree.

Key Aspects of Our Program

Potsdam@RCF offers students a strong academic experience leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Applied Sociology. Students acquire the communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills that employers value. Students can pursue a minor in Human Services, further improving employment possibilities.

Drawing from Potsdam's excellent liberal arts programs, we provide a diverse set of courses from a variety of departments and instructors to students at RCF. SUNY Potsdam's strength in applied learning creates opportunities that prepare students for careers following release.

Students with substance abuse experience can complete course work leading to Certification as a Recovery Peer Advocate (CRPA). Our partnership with local addiction service programs facilitates the CRPA curriculum and public health courses.

What is Sociology?

Sociology is a social science that seeks to understand how our social world is organized and how it influences the actions and beliefs of individuals, families, and communities. This knowledge creates opportunities for social change in social interaction and organization.



What Can You Do with the Degree?

A bachelor's degree with a major in applied sociology prepares students to work in a vast array of employment positions including direct service to peers who need assistance post-release, policy and program development, and project management roles. Former Potsdam@RCF students work in health care delivery, provide services to formerly incarcerated peers and develop their own businesses. One student is in law school; other students are completing their degrees at SUNY Potsdam's main campus and other SUNYs. Some students will continue their education in graduate schools across the state.



"One thing this program has done is help my parents and friends to see the growth in me, to stop seeing me as the young man who threw his life away. Now, I have the blessing of another chance." - Jake Winters '24

Will Our Program Be A Good Fit for You?

We welcome students who have completed an associate's degree and students who have earned college credits while incarcerated. Those degrees and other completed course credits count toward the bachelor's program at SUNY Potsdam.

Students in the college program live in one of two academic dorms within RCF. The strong partnership of RCF leadership has contributed to a strong academic culture within the prison as the college represents almost **15%** of the incarcerated prison population and is growing each semester.