

## Inmate Wages

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### Issue

What are the laws in Connecticut regarding inmate wages for work they perform while imprisoned and how do inmate pay rates in Connecticut compare to other states?

### Summary

In general, Connecticut inmates are paid a daily rate of \$.75 to \$1.75 for work assigned by the Department of Correction (DOC). The actual rate is based on the level of skill required to perform the task. A limited number of jobs are available working in the commissary or, at some facilities, for Correctional Enterprises (DOC-run production facilities that make license plates, plastic bags, signage, and other products). For these jobs, an inmate receives hourly wages of up to \$0.90 or \$1.50, respectively.

Below, we provide a summary of certain laws and DOC policies pertaining to inmate wages and compare basic inmate pay rates in Connecticut and some nearby states.

### State Law

The law requires the DOC commissioner, after consulting with the administrative services commissioner and the Office of Policy and Management secretary, to establish a compensation schedule for inmates performing work for the state in any DOC facility. The schedule must recognize degrees of merit, diligence, and skill in order to encourage inmate incentive and industry. The law requires any compensation earned to be deposited, under the DOC commissioner's direction, in a savings bank or state bank and trust company account or state treasurer-

administered account. (According to DOC, in practice, the funds are deposited into a non-interest bearing Bank of America account. A percentage of those funds is deposited into the Treasurer’s Short Term Investment Fund (STIF), and interest on that account is deposited into the Correctional General Welfare Fund.) The compensation must be paid to the inmate upon his or her release from incarceration, except that he or she may disburse the compensation while in prison in accordance with certain priorities, such as federal and state taxes due, court-ordered restitution or payment of a civil judgment to a crime victim, child support, and costs of incarceration ([CGS § 18-85](#)).

***STIF***

According to the State Treasurer’s [website](#), STIF “is an investment pool of high-quality, short-term money market instruments. Operated in a manner similar to money market mutual funds, STIF is rated AAAM by Standard & Poor’s, and has an average maturity of under 60 days.”

***Correctional General Welfare Fund***

This fund is used to purchase goods and services that would benefit inmates and that exceed those required for inmates’ basic care and custody (DOC Directive [3.5](#)).

The commissioner is authorized to permit inmates, on a voluntary basis, to be employed by state agencies, the federal government, a political subdivision, or private nonprofits and any inmate so employed must be paid the same compensation he or she would receive if he or she worked in the correctional institution where he or she is confined ([CGS § 18-90a](#)).

**DOC Policies**

According to DOC’s directive on inmate pay ([10.1](#)), the inmate’s wages are generally based upon a three level system as described in Table 1.

**Table 1: Assignments and Pay Rates**

Level	Assignment Description	Daily Pay Rate
1	Work that involves (1) routine, repetitive tasks with only minor variance in routine and (2) readily learned skills	\$0.75
2	Work that involves skills and abilities based on training, experience, and knowledge of established inmate assignments	\$1.25
3	Work that involves skills and abilities based on training (e.g., specialized technical training) and experience, which would normally require certification or licensure, or assignments that would normally be reimbursed from outside sources	\$1.75

Inmates who work in the prison commissary generally get paid hourly, at rates ranging from \$0.30 to \$0.90 per hour. Inmates who work for Correctional Enterprises also get paid hourly at rates ranging from \$0.30 to \$1.50 per hour.

## State Pay Rates

Table 2 compares the basic inmate pay rates in Connecticut to those in a sample of states. (The table does not include rates for state-run production facilities such as Correctional Enterprises.)

**Table 2: Inmate Basic Pay Rates Compared**

State	Pay Rate	Notes
Connecticut	\$0.75-\$1.75/day	Inmates who work in the prison commissary generally get paid hourly, at rates ranging from \$0.30 to \$0.90 per hour
Maryland	\$0.90-\$2.75/day	Managers may approve a bonus of up to 50% of the established daily pay rate for work assignments of a special nature, not to exceed 15% of the total annual inmate wage budget
Massachusetts	Generally, \$5.00-\$10.00/week (\$1.00-\$2.00/day, assuming a five-day workweek); certain positions requiring specialized skills pay up to \$35/week	Generally, at least 50% of earnings must automatically be credited to the inmate's savings account (as opposed to his or her personal account)
Pennsylvania	\$1.14-\$3.06/day	Inmates capable of working but not assigned to work due to lack of assignments may be paid \$0.72/day five days per week
Rhode Island	\$0.50-\$3.00/day	Pay rates generally range from \$1.00-\$3.00/day, but wardens may establish menial jobs that pay a flat rate of \$0.50/day

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