



Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable Newsletter

December/End of 2013 Round-up

Greetings!

We are nearing the end of 2013 and the start of another promising year at the A/TCRRT. We would like to share the latest reentry news at the local, state, and national levels as well as the primary initiatives our committees are undertaking.

Second Chance Reauthorization Act

Congress has introduced a reauthorization bill for the Second Chance Act. The Second Chance Act (SCA) authorizes federal grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide support strategies and services designed to reduce recidivism by improving outcomes for people returning from incarceration. The reauthorization bill expands the number of grant programs available and promotes increased accountability and outcomes from grantees.

Texas senator, Senator John Cornyn, sits on the Judiciary Committee and is part of ensuring the reauthorization to be considered by the full Senate. For more information, read the National Reentry Resource Center's publication "[Reentry Matters](#)".

Thanks Voters! Keep Austin Affordable Campaign was a success.

On November 5th, Austinites voted in favor of a \$65 million affordable housing bond proposal, with funds to be used to build new rental houses and apartments for families whose total income is 50% or less of median family income. With rising rents and occupancy rates at roughly 98%, it remains important to use all strategies available to help develop affordable housing, including permanent supportive housing. For more information, see the Keep Austin Affordable [website](#) and [Facebook page](#), as well as A/TCRRT's [monthly housing reports](#).

To participate in the A/TCRRT's housing network, join us at the ECHO Housing Work Group meetings the third Wednesday's of each month, 9 am-11 am, at 1000 E. 11th Street.

Criminal Records in the Digital Age: A Report

[Criminal Records in the Digital Age: A Review of Current Practices and Recommendations for Reform in Texas](#) is a report issued by the William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law at the University of Texas at Austin. It addresses the increasing use of criminal records in Texas for purposes unrelated to criminal justice. The report offers recommendations for reform and encourages Texas to undertake a comprehensive review of how criminal records are accessed, disseminated, and utilized.

Annual Statewide Reentry Council Coalition Conference

In 2009, the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable hosted the first Reentry Council Coalition Conference. The original participants in this event recognized the strength of statewide partners sharing their achievements (and battles) as well as advocating with a unified voice. This year, the 4th Annual Conference is being hosted by the Bexar County Reentry Council in San Antonio. As you can see from the conference flyer ([click here](#)), the A/TCRRT will provide an update on our initiatives, and our XOffenders' Council will host a panel presentation. This conference is open to the public and free of charge. If you are interested in hearing what others are doing across the State, feel free to join us!

6th Annual National Prisoner's Family Conference

The goal of this conference is to strengthen the prison family and promote successful reentry and reunification, ultimately reducing the recidivism rate in the country. **Hosted in Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas February 19-21 of 2014**, the National Prisoner's Family Conference aims to provide a forum to improve the quality of life for the prison family through increased awareness, education, and networking promoting positive relationships that reduce risks created by the incarceration of a loved one. For more information, please visit <http://prisonersfamilyconference.org/>, email info@prisonersfamilyconference.org, or call (915) 861-7733.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Update

As reported in our September Newsletter, the EEOC updated their [enforcement guidance](#) in April 2012 regarding use of criminal backgrounds in hiring. Many public and private entities have adopted "Ban the Box" policies similar to the ones Travis County and the City of Austin adopted in 2008. As of November 2013, over 50 cities and counties across the nation have adopted "Ban the Box", as well as the following ten States: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, Rhode Island. Further information on specific cities, counties and states can be found on the National Employment Law Project [website](#). In October, the Target Corporation, one of the nation's largest employers, joined the growing number of cities and states to Ban the Box. It should be noted that Texas has filed a complaint against the EEOC to stop enforcement of the EEOC's guidance on hiring persons with criminal records. (<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/newspubs/releases/2013/2013-11-04-EEOC-Complaint-FM.pdf>)

As you can see, 2013 has been a busy and invigorating year, and we have even more exciting and things in store for 2014. The Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable wants, needs, and IS you!

Find out more about how you can [get involved](#).

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Save the Dates!

Support Systems Committee

Date: December 17, 2013/
January 21, 2014
Time: 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Evidence-Based Practice Committee

Date: January 6, 2014
Time: 11:30 am -12:45 pm

XOffenders' Council

Date: January 6, 2014
Time: 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Planning Council

Date: December 9, 2013/
January 13, 2014
Time: 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

More Information on Reentry

Interest in reentry is rapidly expanding around the country. The Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable has a page on its website where you can find resources for keeping up with nationwide trends in reentry. To see it, click [here](#).