



Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable Newsletter

March 2014

Greetings!

Happy 2014! As we enter a new and promising year here at 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.

EDITORIAL: "Let punishment fit the crime" by Bill Hammond

"Since the beginning of 2013, the Texas Association of Business has been involved in the movement to reform our criminal justice system. Some might wonder why the business community cares about this issue. There are three main reasons..."

To find out these three reasons and read the rest of this article from the Star-Telegram (15 January 2014), click [here](#).

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Update

In November 2013, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott [filed a lawsuit](#) against the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the federal agency responsible for enforcing employment anti-discrimination laws. The suit challenges the EEOC guidelines that limit the use of criminal records during the hiring process and claims that EEOC's "enforcement guidance" unlawfully limits the ability of employers to exclude convicted felons from the workforce. Attorney General Abbott's petition seeks an injunction on the EEOC rules and bans them from enforcing the guidelines against Texas businesses and institutions. A ruling from the U.S. District Court in Lubbock is expected in April.

U.S. Attorney General Calls for Reform on Voting Restrictions on Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

In a speech at the Georgetown University Law Center on February 11, 2014, Attorney General Eric Holder called upon leaders to reconsider policies that restrict the basic civil rights, particularly voting rights, of formerly incarcerated individuals. "The history of felony disenfranchisement dates to a time when these policies were employed not to improve public safety, but purely as punitive measures," said Attorney General Holder. The Attorney General also highlighted recent policy reforms in Nebraska, Nevada, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. To read the Attorney General's speech, click [here](#). To read the New York Times article on the speech, which features commentary from governors and the Sentencing Project, click [here](#).

Social Impact Bonds: Financing Social Service Programs Through Public-Private Partnerships

In collaboration with the University of Texas School of Social Work and Travis County Criminal Justice Planning, the A/TCRRT researched and reported on the potential of social impact bonds (SIBs) as a financing mechanism for services to individuals experiencing criminal justice reentry barriers. Social impact bonds, also known as Pay for Success or Pay for Performance, are an innovative financing mechanism implemented to address current social issues through public and private partnerships. An SIB is an arrangement among one or more public/government entities and a private/external organization, in which the government specifies an outcome to be achieved by the external organization and commits to pay for improved social outcomes that result in public sector savings. [This report](#) provides a brief history of the SIB concept and documents current SIB initiatives and legislative efforts within the United States. The report also presents the advantages and disadvantages of SIBs and offers recommendations based on the current knowledge that is available.

Annual Statewide Reentry Council Coalition Conference

The 4th Annual Statewide Reentry Council Coalition was held on December 13th and hosted by the San Antonio Reentry Council. The purpose of this event was to provide a forum for statewide reentry councils to share their initiatives and advocate in a unified voice for state and national reentry-related issues. Among the presentations, Travis County Criminal Justice Planning informed the audience on their department's current programs. Representatives of the A/TCRRT XOffenders' Council shared their experience in the formation of this consumer driven committee as well as their initiatives for the first year. Finally, the A/TCRRT staff gave an update on the coalition's FY 2014 Action Plan objectives. As always, it was a great time to network with our reentry collaborators. Travis County will be hosting the next statewide conference, date to be announced.

Statewide Ban the Box: Reducing Unfair Barriers to Employment of People with Criminal Records

The National Employment Law Project's February 2014 report details the 10 states that currently have adopted ban-the-box policies and the justifications behind them. The report asserts that, "[i]n an era of extreme mass incarceration, ban-the-box campaigns provide a platform to educate the public about the stigma of a criminal record and the real consequences to our society of depriving millions of Americans with past convictions of economic stability." To read the full report, click [here](#).

A/TCRRT Organizational News

- The A/TCRRT Planning Council has begun the process of developing a Three Year Strategic Plan. Kris Donley, Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Center, will be facilitating the process. Surveys are currently being analyzed in preparation for the primary work session, which is set for April 4, 2014.
- The A/TCRRT Policy Reform Committee is gearing up for next year's legislative session. Jana Sturdivant will be chairing the Committee and is currently getting input from advocacy partners on the 83rd Legislature Interim Charges ([click here](#)). For your convenience, Jana has pulled out the charges that are specific to reentry in the Abridged List of Interim Charges ([click here](#)). Jana wants to start assembling the committee members so this group can get into action! If you have any interest in joining this important committee, please call Jana at 512-848-6223 or [email](#) her.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR - March 20th & 21st

The Second Annual Amplify Austin is this month. Amplify Austin is a 24-hour online giving day from 6pm Thursday, March 20, to 6pm Friday, March 21, 2014. Over 490 nonprofits, including several of our reentry partners, have already committed to participate. Amplify Austin aims to raise at least \$4 million in 24 hours for those nonprofits. For more information, go to <https://amplifyatx.ilivehereigivehere.org/>.

As you can see, 2014 is shaping up to be a busy and promising year for us at A/TCRRT on every level of reentry. Look for more developments as the year goes on! And as always, the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable wants, needs, and IS you!

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

Jeri Houchins
Administrative Director

Email: jeri jeanw@gmail.com
Landline: (512) 873-4959
Cell: (512) 662-2005

www.reentryroundtable.net

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Save the Dates!

Planning Council

Date: March 10, 2014
Time: 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

Support Systems Committee

Date: March 18, 2014
Time: 2:00-4:30 pm

Evidence-Based Practice Committee

Date: April 7, 2014
Time: 11:30 am -12:45 pm

Evidence-Based Practice Committee

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XOffenders' Council

Date: April 7, 2014
Time: 5:30 - 8:00 pm

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](#).