



Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable Newsletter

September 2012

Greetings!

With the approach of fall comes new projects and opportunities for participation with the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable (A/TCRRT). We formed two new committees, which you can read more about below. We hope you will want to join in these new ventures and make a difference in our community. At the state level, the sunset review of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and other criminal justice agencies continues in preparation for the 83rd Legislature in January. Nationally, the spotlight shines on what works in reentry as two highly respected public policy research organizations published new studies on the topic, which are included below.

ExOffenders' Council Launches

The A/TCRRT would like to introduce its ExOffenders' Council (EOC), a new group of reentry individuals made up of men and women that have experienced incarceration and successful reentry. The EOC is a member-driven group that engages formerly incarcerated men and women to effectively communicate the possibility of rehabilitation and self-sufficiency by taking an active role in advocating for the development and implementation of policies and practices that directly and positively affect the reentry population and their families. In their first meeting on August 20th, they established their Core Values, the "5 Rs": Reentry, Reintegration, Resources, Responsibility, and Reform. They are now in the process of developing a recruitment flyer, securing a permanent meeting location, getting refreshment donations, confirming radio interviews, and partnering with the University of Texas on researching other Ex-Offender Council/Speakers' Bureau initiatives. A survey was disseminated and consensus set monthly meetings to be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. For more information, contact Jeri Houchins by email at jeri jeanw@gmail.com or call 512-873-4959.

New Employment Committee

The A/TCRRT is in the process of forming an Employment Committee. In addition to future initiatives determined by the Committee, they will be working to advocate hiring former offenders through outreach and making presentations to community private employers, business coalitions, employment conferences, and/or other employer related forums in order to raise awareness. Another goal will be to design a model employment "pool" for employers-- this will hopefully make it easier for them to seek those former offender employees that have already been screened, trained, and are ready to hire. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Jeri Houchins by email at jeri jeanw@gmail.com or call 512-873-4959.

Sunset Review in the News

Reentry is a hot topic in the current sunset review of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). On September 5th, the Sunset Advisory Commission convened a decision hearing on its [staff recommendations](#). The *San Antonio Express-News* covered the hearing, highlighting the fragmented reentry system in Texas and the recommendation that TDCJ develop a written plan for reentry. You can read the full article [here](#).

New Research on Reentry

The Urban Institute recently published new studies on the [impact of supportive housing on recidivism](#) and the [relationship between family support and former offenders' success](#) after incarceration. The MDRC, formerly incorporated as the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, is a research organization that evaluates social policy. They have published evaluations of transitional jobs programs for former offenders. A [multi-site evaluation](#) showed that while participants in transitional jobs programs had better employment outcomes during the program, the results were not sustained after the program ended. Recidivism after two years was about the same between program participants and a control group. About half of each group were arrested, and a similar number returned to prison. Most of the prison admissions were for violations of parole rules, not new crimes. On the other hand, in an [evaluation](#) of a single site, New York City's Center for Employment Opportunities, similar employment outcomes were shown with significant improvements in recidivism.

The Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable wants, needs, and IS you! Find out more about how you can [get involved](#).

Sincerely,

Jeri Houchins
Administrative Director
(512) 873-4959

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In This Issue

Quick Links

[Travis County Reentry Guide](#)
[A/TCRRT Planning Council Membership Calendar](#)
[More About Us](#)

Save the Dates!

Evidence Based Practice Committee

Date: October 5, 2012
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

ExOffenders' Council

Date: October 16, 2012
Time: 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Support Systems Committee

Date: October 16, 2012
Time: 3:00 to 5:00 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](#).