



Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable

*Building Successful Strategies for
Reentry and Reintegration in Austin/Travis County, Texas*

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Fact Sheet 2018

Reentry is the process by which incarcerated persons return to the community. The reentry process begins at arrest and continues through community reintegration. Ninety-five percent of incarcerated persons will eventually return to the community.

Reentry impacts our entire community.

*Securing **housing** is the most immediate challenge that persons with criminal histories face upon release from prison, state jail, or county jail.*

- There are immense barriers to securing safe and decent housing, including the lack of affordable housing, high occupancy rates, stringent admissions criteria for public and private housing, and lack of income.
- The quality of living arrangements and the characteristics of the neighborhood of residence for a person with a criminal history can often be strong predictors of if he or she will recidivate.
- In Travis County, the barriers to housing have contributed to the migration and suburbanization of persons with criminal histories to the eastern outskirts of Travis County, as well as adjacent counties to the east and north.
- With social services concentrated in central Austin, the migration of persons with criminal histories to communities farther away from the center of the city means that it is more challenging for them to access the services necessary for effective reintegration.

*Research has shown that stable **employment** is an important predictor of reentry success. However, the stigma of a criminal record represents a significant barrier to employment.*

- Texas currently has more than 200 laws that restrict persons with criminal histories from finding jobs and more than 1,900 separate licensing and statutory restrictions that bar or limit employment.
- Formal and informal barriers to employment do not just affect a select subset of formerly incarcerated individuals. In the US, 70 million Americans are living with a criminal background, and 12 million individuals have criminal records in Texas.
- The stigma of a criminal record creates a significant barrier to successful reintegration back into the community.

*Adequate resources and treatment for **behavioral health services**—for the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness as well as substance use disorders - presents a major barrier to the effective reintegration of the formerly incarcerated in Texas.*

- An estimated 500,000 Texans have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness and more than two million have substance abuse issues. Among the population of persons with criminal histories, the percentage of those with mental illness and substance abuse issues is much higher.
- Fifteen percent of men and 35 percent of women returning to the community from incarceration reported being diagnosed with a mental illness; however, this is a conservative estimate of the actual number of persons with mental illness returning to the community.
- More than half of state prisoners and almost two-thirds of the jail population have had mental health issues in their lives.