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Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable Newsletter

July 2019

July Planning Council Meeting



We will be briefing the Planning Council on recent discussions with our Roundtable funders (City of Austin, Integral Care and Travis County) about joint deliverables for the next fiscal year.

Don't miss this conversation as we need your input on proposed new areas of focus for our annual work plan. We hope to see you there!

When: Monday, July 8th from 12:30-2 PM

Where: Goodwill Community Center

[1015 Norwood Park Blvd Austin, TX 78753](#)

Highlights from the 86th Legislative Session

The 2019 Legislative session has wrapped up with Governor Abbott signing in to law [1,229 of the 1,429 bills](#) that were sent to him. Of these, several are directly related to and impact those

with lived experience in the criminal justice system.

A few highlights include:

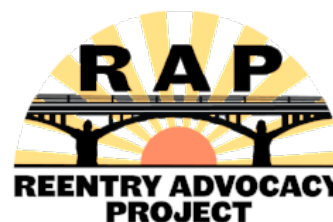
- [HB 3227](#) - Expands the use of reentry peer support and increases access to programs for currently incarcerated women
- [HB 1342](#) – Eliminates certain grounds for disqualification for an occupational license and enhances opportunities for persons to obtain employment upon reentering the community
- [HB 374](#) – Requires a community supervision and corrections department to adopt a policy that takes in to consideration the work, treatment, or community service schedule when scheduling any required meetings or visits



We're working on a full update of bills that impact the reentry community and will provide that later this month.

Reentry Advocacy Project

Who: Are you or is someone you are close to directly impacted by the criminal justice system? If so, please join the [Reentry Advocacy Project](#) (RAP) for a monthly conversation with other folks with lived experience with incarceration and reentry.



What: A project of the Roundtable, RAP engages formerly incarcerated men and women to advocate for the development and implementation of policies and practices that directly and positively impact the reentry population and their families, as well as provide guidance to the Roundtable. RAP is a place where you can get support and advice to address reentry challenges and barriers.

When: RAP generally meets on the first Wednesday of the month from 6–7:30 p.m. with pizza and informal networking starting at 5:30 p.m.

Where: Mt. Zion Baptist Church Zion Action Recovery Center at [2951 E 14th St.](#)

You can stay up-to-date with RAP meeting times and other events by following them on [Facebook](#).

Upcoming Events & Opportunities

Central Texas Expanding Opportunity Summit 2019



Date: Friday, October 25th

Time: 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos ([1001 E McCarty Ln San Marcos, TX 78666](#))

Cost: FREE! *Registration includes free lunch.*

Please join [Community Advancement Network \(CAN\)](#) for the **Central Texas Regional Summit** focused on expanding economic opportunity in the five-county metropolitan area (Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis & Williamson Counties). This year, they are holding a regional dialogue on the subject of "expanding workforce opportunity."

Join in a conversation with representatives of the private sector, educational institutions, area workforce boards and community leaders to gain a better collective understanding of our region's workforce needs and identify steps that we can take to ensure workers have the skills they need to succeed and employers are able to connect with local talent in filling available job opportunities.

[Register Now](#)

Empowering Women of Purpose (EWOP) Seeks Executive Director

Empowering Women of Purpose (EWOP) is currently seeking an Executive Director to oversee all aspects of their program, including in-prison programming, post-release support, and development.

EWOP serves women in the TDCJ Lockhart Correctional Facility for women and is affiliated with the [Prison Entrepreneurship Program \(PEP\)](#), a separate nonprofit serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men. EWOP's goal is not only to reduce repeat crime and recidivism, but to transform participants into ambassadors of hope who strengthen the communities to which they return after prison.



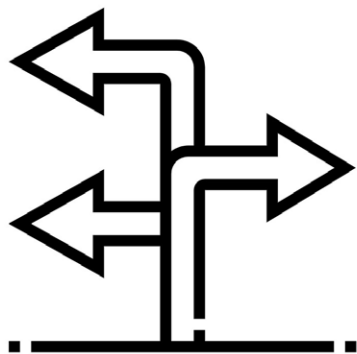
Through EWOP's programming, women learn essential fundamentals of entrepreneurship, small business start-up, and business plan development. Graduates are empowered to lead productive lives by quickly obtaining legal employment and beginning the family reintegration process. Long term, the goal is that the families are strengthened and that children of *Empowered Women of Purpose* graduates benefit academically and behaviorally, thereby breaking the cycle of generational incarceration.

[Learn More](#)

Want to learn about additional events and training opportunities around the country? We recommend looking up the [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#) and [Vera Institute of Justice](#).

News & Resources

Local Employment Navigation Manual



Do you or your organization focus on reentry and employment? [ECHO \(Ending Community Homelessness Coalition\)](#) has put together a manual to help service providers navigate the local employment service system and aid clients in achieving those goals.

To learn more or provide feedback, please email ECHO's Employment Navigation Specialist Dylan Juza at dylanjuza@austinecho.org.

[Check out the Manual](#)

Report Released: *Collateral Consequences: The Crossroads of Punishment, Redemption and the Effects on Communities*

In June, the [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#) released its report, [Collateral Consequences: The Crossroads of Punishment, Redemption and the Effects on Communities](#). *Collateral Consequences* is based on expert and



public input, extensive research and analysis, and testimony, findings, and recommendations from Commission State Advisory Committees in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Chair Catherine E. Lhamon is quoted as saying, "These collateral consequences impose heavy burdens on formerly incarcerated persons' ability successfully to reintegrate into free society and in so doing render all of us less equal and less safe. Congress, and local communities, should heed the call documented in these pages to lift unnecessary restrictions and speed effective reentry for formerly incarcerated people."

[Read the Full Report & Recommendations](#)

Congress Considers Making College More Accessible To People In Prison

According to [a recent article from NPR](#), a new bipartisan bill in Congress would allow incarcerated people to use federal Pell Grants — designed for low-income students — to pay for higher education, including college classes and workforce training.



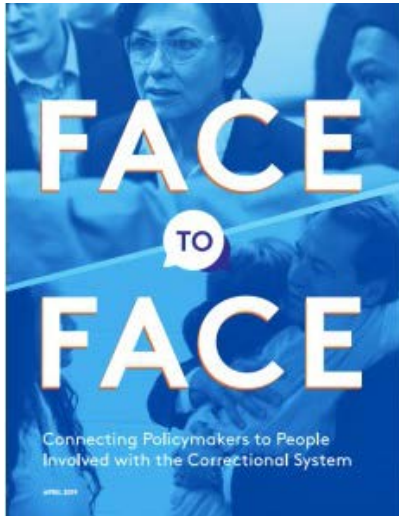
"When we give people in prison an opportunity to earn an education, our communities are safer, taxpayers save money, and we can end the cycle of recidivism," U.S. Senator Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, a sponsor of the bill, [said in a statement](#). The bill would "give people a real chance to rebuild their lives," Schatz said.

If passed, the Restoring Education and Learning Act, known as the REAL Act, would reverse a more than two-decade ban on inmates using Pell.

[Read the Full Article](#)

Face to Face: Connecting Policymakers to People Involved

with the Correctional System



Over the past decade, efforts to use research and data to analyze trends and design bipartisan criminal justice policies have made communities safer and saved taxpayer dollars. However, these efforts sometimes obscure the individual realities of the people closest to the system: the person whose untreated mental illness is worsened by time in prison, the child of an incarcerated parent, the corrections officer battling the stresses of each workday, the father denied job after job because of his criminal record.

The [Face to Face initiative](#) calls on policymakers from across the political spectrum to publicly engage with people who have firsthand experience with the criminal justice system. [This collection of stories](#) from the [National Reentry Resource Center](#) highlights participation in Face to Face by a number of governors and features the voices of those who stand to benefit from criminal justice policy that is developed with personal experiences in mind.

[Read the Report](#)



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