

*TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE*

*Mentoring Handbook*



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## Mentoring Resource Guide

The mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.

### I. Mentoring Policy AD 7.38

It is the policy of the TDCJ to permit approved volunteers to be matched with offenders to establish mentoring relationships, provided mentors receive training and scheduled debriefings in order to ensure compliance with Agency policies and procedures. The Agency shall not discriminate against any mentor based on gender, race, color, religious preference, national origin, disability, genetic information or age (21 or older). All approved mentors shall adhere to TDCJ policies, rules, and regulations relative to Agency volunteers.

### II. Mentoring Program Guidelines

A. Definition of a Mentor – A one-on-one (same gender) relationship that focuses on the rehabilitative needs of the mentored offender, fosters caring and support, encourages personal development, assists in personal visioning and assists in the transition to the community by developing active community partnerships. Programs utilizing husband and wife teams may be allowed to mentor individual offenders.

#### B. Qualifications

1. 21 years of age and same gender
2. Must be an approved volunteer

#### C. Policy

1. Completed Application/Agreement
2. Participate in mentor training
3. Attend mentoring session at least one time per month
4. Attend scheduled debriefings
5. Employee volunteer shall not serve as mentors
6. Mentors may correspond with offenders
  - a. Return address to an incarcerated offender must have “Volunteer” and program area
  - b. Mentors may use the address of the organization/church which they represent
7. Mentors may contact offender’s family once written consent is obtained
8. TDCJ may modify or terminate the mentoring relationship if the nature of the relationship is believed to present a potential threat to the mentor, staff, unit or office
9. Mentors will receive a handbook that outlines policy and topics to be discussed
10. Mentors must report information that is revealed and is criminal in nature
11. Mentor may terminate the relationship at any time
12. Mentors may not give gifts/money to incarcerated offenders
13. Mentors and released offenders may exchange phone numbers
14. Mentors may transport released offenders for rehabilitative purposes (job interview, housing arrangements, support group, church)
15. Mentors may assist in finding housing but released offenders may not reside in a mentor’s private residence or on the mentor’s personal property
16. Gifts may be given/exchanged, to released offenders that foster aftercare objectives
17. Mentors may serve as a volunteer and mentor simultaneously

#### D. Responsibilities and Duties

1. Comply with TDCJ policy
2. Provide a positive role model
3. Assist released offenders in accessing community resources
4. Communication must promote rehabilitation and continuum of care

### III. Importance of a Mentor

- Mentor services are essential for effective reentry and rehabilitation of offenders
- Provide experience that would otherwise not be available
- Offer rehabilitative opportunities for offenders

#### A. Keys for Success

1. Learn and understand your role as a mentor
2. Be aware of manipulation
3. Remember that you are a guest on the unit/office
4. Be aware of your surroundings - do not become complacent
5. Safety is of extreme importance - do not put yourself in a position that could put you in harms way

#### B. Learning to Listen

1. Non-Verbal Listening
  - a. Make eye contact.
  - b. Keep your body posture open
  - c. Make appropriate gestures (nod, smile, etc.)
2. Active Listening
  - a. Provide non-verbal cues of attentiveness
  - b. Provide verbal encouragement that is not intrusive
  - c. Ask questions that allow you to clarify what you are hearing without probing or redirecting the speaker
  - d. Maintain a degree of separateness (this minimizes the possibility of having your "buttons" pushed)
3. Understand Thinking Errors-- It is how we think that determines how we behave. When dealing with offenders, there are criminal thinking patterns or thinking errors that must be acknowledged and changed before significant, long lasting change can be made.
  - a. I am the victim of others (redirect their thinking).
  - b. I want it fast and I want it easy
4. Watch for Relapse
  - a. Recovery involves more than not using alcohol and or drugs.
  - b. Relapse occurs before addictive use begins
  - c. Sobriety based problems
5. Relapse Prevention
  - a. Maintain stability
  - b. Join a support group/have a daily reflection period.
  - c. Take responsibility for your life
  - d. Make sobriety a priority
6. Triggers for Relapse
  - a. Frustration

- b. Dishonesty
- c. Impatience
- d. Cockiness
- e. Complacency
- f. Self Pity
- g. Depression

C. Rules of Conduct

- 1. Know and follow TDCJ policies and operational procedures
- 2. Ask TDCJ staff when questions arise
- 3. Maintain a professional relationship with offenders
- 4. Don't get over-involved or over-identify with an offender
- 5. Don't fall in love
- 6. Dress professionally
- 7. Don't bring into a unit/office or take out anything without approval
- 8. You and your vehicle are subject to search or inspection when on TDCJ property
- 9. Do not have weapons, alcohol or anything that could be contraband in your vehicle and leave your vehicle locked at all times
- 10. Follow TDCJ policy concerning possession of a prescribed medication on the unit/office
- 11. Follow instructions given by staff, ask questions later
- 12. Don't give legal advice
- 13. Don't reveal confidential information to unauthorized persons
- 14. Don't visit an incarcerated offender during regular unit visitation- mentoring sessions are to be scheduled through volunteer staff

D. Situations to be Aware of:

- 1. Safety is of the utmost concern
- 2. Hostile offender
- 3. Offender fight/riot on unit
- 4. Fire escape route while in unit/office
- 5. Hostage situation
- 6. Contraband on TDCJ unit
  - a. *Definition* – Any item in the possession of an offender which violates the Texas Penal Code. Any item that is prohibited by the rules and regulations of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Any item in the possession of an offender not allowed upon entering TDCJ and which 1) was not purchased in a TDCJ unit commissary; or 2) was not issued to the offender by the TDCJ; or 3) was not otherwise permitted by the Warden or the particular unit.
  - b. *Dangerous contraband* is any item that can be used as a weapon or can aid in an escape – guns, gun parts, ammunition, gang material, cell phones, tobacco, explosives, knives, cutting instruments, razor blades, wire, any tools, flammable or reactive chemicals, drugs, alcohol or other intoxicants, and magnets.
  - c. *Nuisance contraband* is any item that has been altered, damaged, in excess of authorized amounts, out of place, can cause clutter, create fire or hygiene hazards, make maintenance and cell searches difficult, or can be used to hide plans for an escape. Examples include excess personal clothing, property, paper, mail, newspaper, personal hygiene items, food items, or gum. Altered items such as a fan, radio, or lamp, and items that are out of place by being in a cell, such as cleaning chemicals, broom, mop, rubber gloves.
  - d. *Documentary contraband* is documents not received through authorized channels, to include legal material.

E. Games Criminals Play

1. Definition of Manipulation – “To manage or control artfully or by shrewd use of influence, often in an unfair or fraudulent way”.
2. Why do offenders manipulate?
  - a. To make themselves more comfortable, they live in a deprived environment.
  - b. People are objects to be used to obtain what they want.
  - c. They feel that they gain power and respect in the eyes of other offenders when they are successful.
  - d. It’s what many have done in their life to get what they want.
  - e. It’s a game or means of entertainment

#### F. Helpful Hints

1. Learn to say “NO”
2. Be firm, fair and consistent
3. Keep everything above board or out in the open
4. Offenders often see themselves as victims
5. An answer of “MAYBE” is often taken as a “YES”
6. Be aware of making promises
7. Remind the offender that not everything is a crisis, some problems cannot be solved quickly

#### G. Danger Signs

1. You feel anger toward the system
2. You begin to see yourself as an advocate for offenders
3. You become irritated because of delays, (count, missed appointments)
4. You favor one offender over another
5. You share personal information
6. You enjoy hearing and start believing that you are the only one who understands them and can help them
7. You want to “rescue” them from the consequences of their actions
8. You get caught up in the “We/They” syndrome
9. You will get tested and fail to report “minor” incidences
10. You try to help a friend or church member who has a family member in prison by violating policy instead of following policy
11. You put money in an offender’s account
12. You “fall in love” with an offender

#### H. Guidelines

1. Be yourself
2. Mean what you say
3. Be supportive and encouraging
4. Show respect and earn respect
5. Accept them as they are
6. Be patient
7. Don’t over-identify
8. Don’t put money in the offender’s account
9. Don’t fall in love

**Goal:** To establish a trusting relationship with accountability and responsibility from both the mentor and the offender.

**Focus:** Is on the rehabilitative needs of the offender using a continuum of care creating a growing, healthy relationship rather than a dependent/co-dependent relationship.

#### **IV. Characteristics of an Effective Mentor**

- A. Mature, responsible member of the community
- B. Accountable, and understands authority and responsibilities.
- C. Family life is in order
- D. Available and committed to the required time needed.
- E. Willing to learn (training)
- F. Knows that establishing a mentoring relationship will take time/Is patient
- G. Aware of possible risks involved serving as a TDCJ mentor
- H. Accepts the offender and allows him to own his own problems
- I. Not afraid to confront offender regarding bad decisions/choices
- J. Understands that growth will take place in both parties
- K. Inspires the offender to meet and exceed goals
- L. Suggests tactics and strategies for accomplishing goal
- M. Counsels the whole person – values, integrity, ethical conduct (when appropriate)
- N. Recognizes that some issues should be handled by a professional counselor
- O. Be willing to be a good listener and provide leadership and encouragement
- P. Willing to cooperate with community resources and family, if consent is given
- Q. Knows how to assist offender with financial planning/budget.
- R. Will be discreet and non-judgmental regarding information that is exchanged during mentoring sessions
- S. Recruit potential new mentors.

#### **V. Talking Points**

- A. Release Plan / Parole Plan
  - 1. Will offender be on supervision
  - 2. Does he have special conditions imposed by the Parole Board
  - 3. If on supervision what county is he required to return to
  - 4. Does he have a family/home or will he be dependant upon a half-way house
  - 5. Does he have outstanding warrants or other charges
  - 6. Does he have additional fines or fees to pay including supervision fees
- B. Family and personal relationships
  - 1. What relationship does he have with his family
  - 2. Is he married/was there ever domestic violence
  - 3. Does he have children that he supports
  - 4. Who makes up his personal “support” group
  - 5. Has he participated in parenting training or anger management or any classes that will make him better able to cope with his family upon release
- C. Education level / Work History
  - 1. Does he have a GED, High School or College
  - 2. Did he complete any vocational training or have job skills that will help with future employment
  - 3. What accomplishments while incarcerated will benefit him upon release (educational, vocational, spiritual, or support group)
- D. Drug and Alcohol issues
  - 1. Past abuse
  - 2. Current incarceration was due to use/sales/distribution
  - 3. Participation in support group/past or present

#### **VI. During Your Mentor Visits**

- A. Develop a relationship of trust and open communication
- B. Don't criticize or preach/think of ways to solve problems together
- C. Discover his needs, strengths and respect his uniqueness
- D. Review issues that occurred since last visit
- E. Make a commitment to be dependable
- F. Help set realistic short and long term personal and financial goals
- G. Stress the importance of accountability and responsibility/remember to encourage not demand
- H. Identify community resources that are available
- I. Discuss victim awareness

**VII. Additional Training May Be Available**

TDCJ encourages you to further your mentoring education and skill by taking additional training. If you are interested in knowing if there is an outside organization or agency that is providing mentoring training, please contact your unit/office volunteer staff or call the Central Volunteer Coordination Office within the Rehabilitation and Reentry Programs Division at (936) 437-2880.

**NOTES**