

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

83RD LEGISLATURE
GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, ARTICLE V, RIDER 61

STUDY OF THE TDCJ OFFENDER VISITATION POLICIES



AUGUST 2014

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SUBMITTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD & THE GOVERNOR

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I. INTRODUCTION

The General Appropriations Act, Article V, Rider 61, enacted in the 83rd legislative session requires the TDCJ, using appropriated funds, to perform or commission a study that seeks ways to improve TDCJ's visitation policies. The study may result in policies implemented by TDCJ that strengthen family ties, including expanding areas that are child-friendly during visitation periods, while also notifying individuals who are eligible to visit incarcerated offenders that visitation has been cancelled or rescheduled, if that occurs.

The Visitation Committee was formed, August 1, 2013 and included TDCJ employees from various departments and divisions. This committee's responsibility was to seek ways to improve the TDCJ visitation policy and, if necessary, revise policies implemented by TDCJ that strengthen family ties, including expanding areas that are child-friendly during visitation periods, while also notifying individuals who are eligible to visit incarcerated offenders that visitation has been cancelled or rescheduled if that occurs.

The rider requires the agency to report its findings to the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor no later than September 1, 2014.

II. VISITATION OVERVIEW

The mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ or agency) is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime. This mission is accomplished through collaboration with multiple divisions and agencies that work to provide a safe and rehabilitative environment for offenders, to determine appropriate release dates, establish conditions of parole and mandatory supervision, and to transition offenders to parole supervision.

It is the policy of the TDCJ and a requirement of state law, to encourage and enable offenders, consistent with security and classification guidelines, to have visits with family members and friends. It should be noted that while the TDCJ is aware of the important role visitation serves in maintaining communication between offenders, family, and friends, the assignment of offenders to particular units within the TDCJ cannot be based solely on convenience of visitation. The agency considers access to visitation when determining an offender's unit of assignment; however, placement is based on multiple factors, with offender safety, security, and medical needs being of primary importance. In addition, many TDCJ facilities have specific missions which preclude assignment of certain offenders.

The TDCJ *Offender Visitation Plan* establishes a uniform offender visitation policy for TDCJ facilities. The TDCJ Board Policy (BP)-03.85, "Offender Visitation," directs the agency to develop an offender visitation plan which governs visitation on TDCJ facilities.

In general, offenders are eligible for one two-hour general or contact visit each week. Extended and special visits may be permitted. Contact visit eligibility is based on the offender's custody, which is primarily determined by the offender's behavior. Visitation usually occurs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

In order to visit an offender, the individual must be listed as an approved visitor on the offender's Visitors List, excluding children. Each offender is allowed to have a maximum of ten names on the offender's Visitors List.

Each eligible offender is allowed to have two adults, 18 and older per visit. The number of children, ages 17 and younger, allowed per visit are based on the amount of space available and the visitor's ability to manage and control the children.

Offender visitation in TDCJ units is conducted in an accommodating manner, in keeping with the need to maintain order, safety of persons, and security of the unit; however, visitation is a privilege and may be temporarily restricted for an offender or a visitor if rule violations occur or security concerns exist. In an effort to support the agency's mission and maintain the morale of the offenders, visitation is encouraged between offenders, family members, and friends. The duty warden and family liaison officer are encouraged to make accommodations using reasonable discretion when authorizing visitation requests. Offender visitation is recognized as an integral component of the rehabilitation process and, as such, the process established in the plan follows the least restrictive protocol possible, facilitating a positive and meaningful environment for visitation.

III. ENHANCEMENTS TO VISITATION POLICIES

A. STRENGTHEN FAMILY TIES

Pursuant to Rider 61, the study considered policy changes that strengthen family ties, including expanding areas that are child-friendly during visitation periods.

A temporary online survey was conducted from November 2013 to March 2014 to obtain feedback from the public regarding their past visitation experiences. Flyers were posted at all units announcing the visitation survey, and business sized cards that provided the website address were handed out to visitors. Information announcing the survey was also published in the ECHO, a news publication for offenders. Hard copies of the survey were also made available on each unit. Both the online and hard copies were available in English and Spanish versions.

The survey was comprised of questions concerning: distance traveled; duration and frequency of visits; declined visits; visitors with children; helpfulness of visitor resources; contact made prior to visits; and staff facilitation of visitation. TDCJ received 2,997 responses to the survey which included online and hard copy submissions. The information was analyzed and the results are available in section IV of this report. Information obtained was used to make policy decisions which are focused on facilitating offender interaction with children during visitation.

The overall suggestions from the survey comment field included many positive expressions regarding TDCJ staff. Suggestions included healthier options in the vending machines; ensuring that vending machines were working properly; suggestions for occupying children; shelter in the outside waiting areas in the event of inclement weather; shorter wait times, especially during inclement weather; more space and chairs in the visitation rooms; and more contact with the offenders.

Many of these items have been addressed in the current revision of the TDCJ *Offender Visitation Plan*. For example, during May 2014, the agency enhanced activities in the visitation areas in an effort to strengthen family ties and occupy children. Activities for families were expanded by providing children's books for children to read and/or parents to read to children during visits, as well as activity sheets with crayons on each unit. All children's books will remain in the visitation area; however, children are allowed to take the activity sheet and crayons when leaving the visitation area, after the sheet has been inspected for written contraband.

Suggestions regarding more space and chairs in the visitation rooms and more opportunities for contact visits with offenders have also been addressed. The remaining suggestions are currently being reviewed by Correctional Institutions Division management.

Other changes regarding offender visitation, to include updating the agency website to allow friends and family members to verify an offender's eligibility for visitation, have also been implemented.

The agency continues to search for areas to enhance the experience for families during visitation on all TDCJ units.

B. NOTIFICATION PROCESS

During April 2014, the agency developed and implemented an online process in which family and friends are able to verify an individual offender's eligibility status to receive visits.

Between April 21 and June 27, 2014, the offender "Lookup" site received approximately 134,956 hits.

The online offender "Lookup" provides visitors with more than the offender's eligibility status to receive visits. Additionally, this site provides links to other locations, specifically offender visitation information. This online page consists of information concerning what a visitor should do before traveling to a unit for a visit: unit visitation schedules; and a location to check for any temporary unit or system wide visitation cancellations due to security-related incidents.

The offender visitation page also provides guidelines to help determine if a visitor is approved to visit the offender, as well as information regarding types of appropriate photo identifications, dress code, items allowed and not allowed, and examples of special visits and special accommodations, including links to English and Spanish versions of the *Offender Rules and Regulations for Visitation* booklet.

The visitation page also explains what special visits may be permitted, to include: approved visits with spiritual advisors and prospective employers; visits for critically ill offenders and offenders in the Hospice Program who have been diagnosed as terminally ill and receive only palliative (comfort) care; non-legal visits between offenders; and visits in which the warden or designee may authorize, outside the ordinary course of established visitation rules.

C. FEBRUARY 2014 REVISIONS TO THE TDCJ VISITATION PLAN

Pursuant to both Rider 61 and the agency's routine review of policies and procedures, in February 2014, the TDCJ *Offender Visitation Plan* was revised to incorporate the following changes in visitation policies:

- Clarified visitation with Hospice Program offenders and offenders diagnosed as terminally ill who receive only palliative (comfort) care, are allowed visits seven days a week between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., within an infirmary-setting.
- Victims of family violence who are certified as a crime victim are allowed to use a post office box in lieu of a required physical address when their identification contains only a post office address.
- Children under the age of 18 are not pat searched, but are screened by TDCJ correctional staff using a handheld or walk-through metal detector.
- Increase in the amount of coin money a visitor may bring from \$20 to \$25.
- Dress code requirements underwent significant changes to allow:
 - Shorts and skirts, as long as the length is no shorter than 3" above the middle of the knee when standing (length is not restricted for pre-adolescent children, generally ages ten and younger);
 - Sandals, flip-flops, and open-toed shoes; and
 - Sleeveless shirts and dresses, however; shoulders must be covered.
- TDCJ now allows more offenders to have contact visits every weekend with immediate family members (previously offenders impacted by this change were eligible for 3 contact visits per month).
- Extended Visits (if space is available) no longer require prior approval. This type of visit allows family members who travel over 250 miles one way a four-hour visit with an eligible offender without scheduling the visit prior to their arrival.

D. OTHER VISITATION CHANGES

As a result of this study, seventeen (17) units have been identified as high volume visitation; therefore, these units will extend visitation hours, 7 am to 5 pm, whereas general visitation is 8 am to 5 pm at the remaining facilities. These high volume visitation units received over 10,000 visits a year, averaging more than 800 visits per month.

In addition, an informational video addressing what to expect when visiting an offender incarcerated in a TDCJ unit is being prepared and will be posted on the agency website.

IV. TDCJ VISITATION SURVEY

Background

Rider 61 requires the TDCJ to perform or commission a study that seeks ways to improve TDCJ's visitation policies.

According to the rider, the study should examine and consider policy changes that strengthen family ties, including expanding areas that are child-friendly during visitation periods, while also notifying individuals who are eligible to visit incarcerated offenders that visitation has been cancelled or rescheduled if that occurs. In order to obtain public feedback, the TDCJ conducted a survey of offender visitors.

Methodology

A temporary online survey was conducted from November 2013 to March 2014 to obtain feedback from the public regarding their past visitation experience.

Flyers were posted at all units announcing the visitation survey, and business sized cards that provided the website address were handed out to visitors. Information on the survey was also published in the ECHO.

Hard copies of the survey were also made available on each unit. Both the online and hard copies were available in English and Spanish versions.

Results

The TDCJ received 2,997 responses to the survey including online submissions and hard copies. The information was analyzed and the results are available in the following tables. Information obtained will be used to make policy decisions that will help facilitate offender interaction with children during visitation and provide information to the public about offender visitation and offender eligibility for visitation.

Copies of the visitation survey were made available at all units and on line. The following is a breakdown of the total surveys by unit visited.

Unit	Frequency	Percent
Allred	36	1.2%
Bartlett	8	0.3%
Beto	41	1.4%
Boyd	63	2.1%
Bradshaw	17	0.6%
Bridgeport	6	0.2%
Briscoe	16	0.5%
Byrd	13	0.4%
Clemens	25	0.8%
Clements	35	1.2%
Cleveland	5	0.2%
Coffield	60	2.0%
Cole	19	0.6%
Connally	39	1.3%
Cotulla	9	0.3%
Crain	69	2.3%
Dalhart	27	0.9%
Daniel	30	1.0%
Darrington	23	0.8%
Diboll	5	0.2%
Dominguez	88	2.9%
Duncan	7	0.2%
East Texas	9	0.3%
Eastham	35	1.2%
Ellis	58	1.9%
Estelle	39	1.3%
Estes	12	0.4%
Ferguson	32	1.1%
Formby	13	0.4%
Fort Stockton	5	0.2%
Garza East	29	1.0%
Garza West	19	0.6%
Gist	25	0.8%
Glossbrenner	6	0.2%
Goodman	7	0.2%
Goree	57	1.9%
Gurney	347	11.6%
Halbert	10	0.3%
Hamilton	38	1.3%
Havins	12	0.4%
Henley	5	0.2%
Hightower	23	0.8%
Hilltop	24	0.8%
Hobby	12	0.4%
Hodge	13	0.4%
Holliday	37	1.2%
Hospital Galveston	3	0.1%
Hughes	60	2.0%
Huntsville	86	2.9%
Hutchins	68	2.3%
Jester I	4	0.1%
Jester III	11	0.4%
Jester IV	7	0.2%
Johnston	7	0.2%

Unit	Frequency	Percent
Jordan	12	0.4%
Kegans	6	0.2%
Kyle	5	0.2%
LeBlanc	8	0.3%
Lewis	28	0.9%
Lindsey	7	0.2%
Lockhart	7	0.2%
Lopez	11	0.4%
Luther	46	1.5%
Lychner	33	1.1%
Lynaugh	18	0.6%
Marlin	10	0.3%
McConnell	31	1.0%
Michael	80	2.7%
Middleton	9	0.3%
Montford	12	0.4%
Moore, B.	3	0.1%
Moore, C.	26	0.9%
Mountain View	39	1.3%
Murray	19	0.6%
Neal	27	0.9%
Ney	5	0.2%
Pack	31	1.0%
Plane	10	0.3%
Polunsky	59	2.0%
Powledge	23	0.8%
Ramsey	65	2.2%
Roach	21	0.7%
Robertson	38	1.3%
Rudd	3	0.1%
San Saba	3	0.1%
Sanchez	8	0.3%
Sayle	4	0.1%
Scott	129	4.3%
Segovia	4	0.1%
Skyview	7	0.2%
Smith	21	0.7%
Stevenson	35	1.2%
Stiles	65	2.2%
Stringfellow	20	0.7%
Telford	28	0.9%
Terrell	26	0.9%
Torres	22	0.7%
Travis County	16	0.5%
Tulia	5	0.2%
Vance	1	0.0%
Wallace	18	0.6%
Ware	4	0.1%
Wheeler	8	0.3%
Willacy County	16	0.5%
Woodman	10	0.3%
Wynne	86	2.9%
Young	15	0.5%
Total	2997	100.0%

Distance Traveled and Duration / Frequency of Visits

How many miles do you travel (one way) to the unit?	Frequency	Percent
Less than 150 miles	1,267	42.3%
More than 150 miles but less than 200 miles	628	21.0%
More than 200 miles but less than 250 miles	309	10.3%
More than 250 miles but less than 300 miles	290	9.7%
More than 300 miles	503	16.8%
Total	2,997	100.0%

If you travel at least 300 miles one-way, does the unit allow you to schedule an extended visit?	Frequency	Percent
No	61	12.1%
Yes	407	80.9%
No Response	35	7.0%
Total	503	100.0%

How many years have you been visiting offenders assigned to TDCJ facilities?	Frequency	Percent
Less than (1) one year	1,048	35.0%
1-5 years	1,252	41.8%
6-10 years	333	11.1%
More than 10 years	364	12.1%
Total	2,997	100.0%

How frequent do you visit?	Frequency	Percent
Every weekend	608	20.3%
More than twice per month	730	24.4%
Once per month	676	22.6%
When I am able to, but not on a consistent basis	983	32.8%
Total	2,997	100.0%

Declined Visits

Have you ever been turned away, once you arrived for a visit?	Frequency	Percent
No	2,497	83.3%
Yes	500	16.7%
Total	2,997	100.0%

Reason turned away.	Frequency	Percent
Attire	117	23.4%
Didn't have proper Identification	36	7.2%
Not on visitors list	33	6.6%
Offender already received visit	52	10.4%
Offender not eligible due to security status	40	8.0%
Lockdown/cancelled for medical reason	39	7.8%
Other	183	36.7%
Total	500	100.0%

Note: The February 2014 revisions to the TDCJ *Visitation Plan* included significant changes to dress code requirements. In addition, an offender's online status regarding eligibility for visitation is periodically updated as visits are received, and information regarding visitation being cancelled because of unit-wide lockdowns or illnesses affecting offender housing areas is available on the TDCJ website.

Visitors with Children

<i>How many children accompany you to a visit?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1	543	43.8%
2	440	35.5%
3	180	14.5%
4	57	4.6%
5+	19	1.5%
Total	1,239	100.0%

<i>What are the ages of the children?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
0-4	307	23.5%
5-10	377	28.8%
11-17	623	47.7%
Total	1,307	100.0%

Multiple responses permitted.

<i>Suggestions for occupying the children?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Child friendly books	364	30.5%
Child friendly videos	533	44.7%
Coloring page with crayon	295	24.7%
Total	1,192	100.0%

Note: Some respondents, in addition to recommending one of the three suggestions above, also mentioned separate play areas, toys, and games.

Helpfulness of Visitor Resources

<i>How helpful is the General Information Guide for Families of Offenders?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very Helpful	774	25.8%
Helpful	1,392	46.4%
Not Helpful	291	9.7%
Unsure/NA	540	18.0%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>How helpful is the Offender Rules and Regulations for Visitation?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very Helpful	769	25.7%
Helpful	1,430	47.7%
Not Helpful	320	10.7%
Unsure/NA	478	15.9%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>How helpful is the TDCJ website?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very Helpful	842	28.1%
Helpful	1,454	48.5%
Not Helpful	241	8.0%
Unsure/NA	460	15.3%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>How helpful is the bulletin board in visitation area?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very Helpful	407	13.6%
Helpful	863	28.8%
Not Helpful	738	24.6%
Unsure/NA	989	33.0%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>How helpful is the TDCJ Ombudsman Office?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very Helpful	393	13.1%
Helpful	563	18.8%
Not Helpful	490	16.3%
Unsure/NA	1,551	51.8%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>How helpful is the unit warden's office?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very Helpful	463	15.4%
Helpful	729	24.3%
Not Helpful	505	16.9%
Unsure/NA	1,300	43.4%
Total	2,997	100.0%

Contact Made Prior to Visit

<i>Do you call the unit prior to traveling to find out if the offender is eligible for visit?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Always	920	30.7%
Sometimes	1,146	38.2%
Never	931	31.1%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>Do you communicate with the offender by letter or phone to let him / her know to expect you?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Always	2,263	75.5%
Sometimes	620	20.7%
Never	114	3.8%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>Do you check the TDCJ website for announcements on unit lockdowns or other reasons that may cause an interruption in weekend visitation?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Always	456	15.2%
Sometimes	886	29.6%
Never	1,655	55.2%
Total	2,997	100.0%

Staff Facilitation of Visitation

<i>Staff does a good job to ensure visitation process is conducted in a timely manner.</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Strongly Agree	709	23.7%
Agree	1,240	41.4%
Neutral	539	18.0%
Disagree	300	10.0%
Strongly Disagree	209	7.0%
Total	2,997	100.0%

Note: For those who disagreed with the above statement, the primary reasons were having to wait too long, especially during inclement weather, and staff being rude or discourteous.

<i>In your experience, how consistent do you believe the unit staff is in following the visitation policy?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Always	1,239	41.3%
Often	796	26.6%
Sometimes	630	21.0%
Rarely	201	6.7%
Never	131	4.4%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>In general, how helpful has the duty warden / family liaison officer been to you during your visit?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very Helpful	670	22.4%
Helpful	540	18.0%
Not Helpful	414	13.8%
Never Attempted to Contact Duty Warden/Family Liaison Officer	1,373	45.8%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>Please indicate the kind of treatment you received during your most recent visit, in terms of politeness courtesy, and dignity by the TDCJ officers and staff?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Excellent	1,239	41.3%
Good	1,237	41.3%
Poor	521	17.4%
Total	2,997	100.0%

<i>If treated poorly, did you ask to speak with a duty warden/ family liaison officer?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
No	421	80.8%
Yes	100	19.2%
Total	521	100.0%

The overall suggestions comment field included many positive mentions of TDCJ staff. Suggestions included healthier options in the vending machines, ensuring that vending machines were working properly, shelter in the outside waiting areas in the even of inclement weather, more space and more chairs in the visitation rooms, and more contact with the offenders.

V. TEXAS CRIMINAL JUSTICE COALITION VISITATION SURVEY

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) independently surveyed inmates and visitors regarding TDCJ visitation policies. The results of their survey follows:



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PRELIMINARY REPORT

**A SURVEY OF INMATES AND VISITORS ON TDCJ
VISTATION POLICIES**

Submitted to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice

BACKGROUND

The 83rd Legislature passed Budget Rider 61, mandating the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to either perform or commission a study examining the prison system’s visitation policies, with an eye toward expanding areas that are child-friendly. In order to support the mandated study, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC) conducted independent surveys of inmates and visitors on TDCJ visitation policies. The preliminary findings of those surveys are included below.

METHODOLOGY

TCJC surveyed both individuals who are currently incarcerated and visitors to those who are currently incarcerated. The surveys of those currently incarcerated were distributed by mail to various TDCJ facilities, while surveys of visitors were completed online on SurveyMonkey. TCJC received 323 responses from individuals who are currently incarcerated and received 823 responses from visitors (714 full responses, 109 partial responses).

Due to the preliminary nature of this report, no recommendations are set forth. TCJC will analyze the open-ended responses from the survey, which are not included in this report, and further analyze the data from the closed responses (provided below) to develop recommendations.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: INCARCERATED PERSONS

Demographics

Age	
18-25	1.55%
26-35	15.17%
36-45	28.79%
46-60	43.34%
Over 60	11.15%

Gender	
Female	7.43%
Male	92.57%

Ethnicity/Race	
White/non-Hispanic	48.30%
Hispanic	17.96%
African American	30.96%
American Indian	2.17%
Asian American	0.62%

Relationship to Visitor(s)

Relationship	Received Visits From (all)	Received Most Visits From (one)
Spouse	29.72%	20.43%
Child(ren)	38.39%	10.84%
Mother	54.49%	26.93%
Father	29.41%	3.10%
Sibling	55.42%	13.31%
Aunt	16.72%	0.93%

Relationship	Received Visits From (all)	Received Most Visits From (one)
Uncle	14.24%	0.31%
Grandparent	11.76%	0.62%
Friend	40.87%	6.81%
Attorney	17.03%	1.55%
Other	32.20%	15.17%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: INCARCERATED PERSONS

Visit Frequency

How often do you receive visitors?	
0-3 times/year	50.15%
4-6 times/year	22.60%
7-9 times/year	6.19%
10 or more times/year	21.05%

Notification Time

On average, how long does it take for your visit to begin from the time you are notified that a visitor has arrived?	
0-15 minutes	29.81%
15-30 minutes	46.27%
30-60 minutes	21.43%
60 or more minutes	2.48%

Visit Conditions

How much of a barrier has the wire and mesh presented to your ability to communicate with the person who is visiting you?	
Not a barrier	16.77%
Somewhat of a barrier	14.91%
Moderate barrier	17.70%
Extreme barrier	21.43%
Not applicable	29.19%

How would you describe the noise level	
Not at all loud	10.56%
Not very loud	28.26%
Somewhat loud	36.65%
Very loud	20.50%
Not applicable	4.04%

If you have not been allowed “contact” visits with the person who is visiting you, which of the following methods of conversation would prefer?	
Telephone through glass	40.41%
Talking through mesh	41.52%
Other	18.34%

Have you had to sit outside on a hot day without cover during an outside contact visit?	
Yes	18.07%
No	60.75%
Not applicable (not allowed contact visits)	21.18%

If you had to sit outside on a hot day, have you been allowed to drink cold water?	
Yes	27.27%
No	30.83%
Not applicable	41.90%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: INCARCERATED PERSONS

Visitation Termination

Have you ever had a visit terminated after it began?	
Yes	8.41%
No	81.59%

If you have ever had a visit terminated, were you given a warning?	
Yes	22.22%
No	77.78%

If you have ever had a visit terminated due to misbehavior, do you feel that you were given a sufficient amount of time to change the behavior in question?	
Yes	11.11%
No	88.89%

Disability Issues

Are you disabled?	
Yes	8.41%
No	81.59%

Overall, how satisfied are you that the TDCJ visitation areas are the best they can be, given the age of the unit(s) and the limited space available?	
Very satisfied	4.67%
Somewhat satisfied	23.99%
Neither dissatisfied	28.04%
Somewhat dissatisfied	26.79%
Very dissatisfied	16.51%

If you are disabled, how satisfied have you been with the accommodations in the visitation area?	
Very satisfied	5.49%
Somewhat satisfied	16.48%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	27.47%
Somewhat dissatisfied	27.47%
Very dissatisfied	23.08%

Children

In general, how many children do you expect to see in a single visit?	
1	11.84%
2	21.18%
3	8.41%
4	2.18%
5	0.62%
More than 5	0.93%
N/A	54.83%

What were the ages of these children at the time of your most recent visit? (check all that apply)	
One month – 3 years	24.46%
4-7 years	34.53%
8-11 years	41.73%
12-17 years	34.53%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: INCARCERATED PERSONS

Visitation Policies

If you have had visits on more than one unit, how consistent are the visitation policies from unit to unit?	
Very consistent	7.17%
Somewhat consistent	24.92%
Not very consistent	22.74%
Not at all consistent	11.84%
Not applicable	33.33%

In your experience, how frequently have officers followed stated visitation policies?	
Never	7.21%
Rarely	16.93%
Sometimes	41.38%
Often	27.27%
Always	7.21%

How helpful have the following resources been in providing information about visitation policies?						
	An officer	Another incarcerated individual	A visitor	Offender orientation handbook	Brochure	Bulletin board in visitation area
Very helpful	6.85%	34.89%	18.07%	18.07%	4.67%	4.98%
Somewhat helpful	29.28%	40.50%	29.28%	38.94%	13.71%	14.64%
Not very helpful	28.97%	6.85%	14.02%	21.50%	9.35%	13.08%
Not helpful at all	23.36%	5.30%	9.97%	9.03%	13.71%	20.25%
Unsure/Not applicable	11.53%	12.46%	28.66%	12.46%	58.57%	47.04%

How satisfied are you that the visitation policies are fair?	
Very satisfied	4.67%
Moderately satisfied	22.43%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22.43%
Only slightly satisfied	28.04%
Not at all satisfied	22.43%

When an officer has taken the time to explain a policy to you, how clear has the explanation been?	
Very clear	12.46%
Somewhat clear	27.41%
Somewhat unclear	23.68%
Very unclear	10.28%
Not applicable	26.17%

Interaction with Officers

In general, how respectful have the correctional officers been to you during the entire visitation process?	
Very respectful	18.07%
Somewhat respectful	34.58%
Neither respectful nor disrespectful	24.61%
Not very respectful	17.76%
Not at all respectful	4.98%

In general, how respectful have the officers been to your visitors?	
Very respectful	22.74%
Somewhat respectful	38.01%
Neither respectful nor disrespectful	19.00%
Not very respectful	16.20%
Not at all respectful	4.05%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: INCARCERATED PERSONS

How frequently do you think that officers do all they can to facilitate a good visit?	
Always	4.67%
Usually	24.61%
Sometimes	37.07%
Rarely	22.43%
Never	11.21%

If you have asked to see higher-ranking officers (majors or wardens) to resolve a problem directly related to a visit, have those requests to see an officer always been fulfilled?	
Yes	14.67%
No	44.55%
Not applicable	40.81%

In general, how helpful have the higher-ranking officers (majors or wardens) been about resolving visitation problems?	
Very helpful	11.84%
Somewhat helpful	21.50%
Not very helpful	19.63%
Not at all helpful	13.40%
Not applicable	33.64%

How frequent have the officers been professional and courteous when searching you before or after visits?	
Always	20.25%
Usually	33.96%
Sometimes	26.48%
Rarely	11.21%
Never	8.10%

How willing would you be to accept more stringent measures if you were allowed more contact visits?	
Very willing	54.83%
Somewhat willing	15.89%
Indifferent	18.69%
Not very willing	5.61%
Not at all willing	4.98%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: VISITORS OF INCARCERATED PERSONS

Demographics

Age	
18-25	5.10%
26-35	16.16%
36-45	19.08%
46-60	33.54%
Over 60	26.12%

Gender	
Female	84.81%
Male	15.19%

Ethnicity/Race	
White/non-Hispanic	65.49%
Hispanic	20.78%
African American	11.79%
American Indian	1.09%
Asian American	0.49%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders	0.36%

Relationship to Incarcerated Person

Mother	23.45%	Uncle	0.49%
Father	3.40%	Grandparent	1.46%
Child	3.04%	Spouse	32.32%
Sibling	7.41%	Friend	22.99%
Aunt	1.34%	Attorney	5.10%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: VISITORS OF INCARCERATED PERSONS

Children

Have you brought children to visit?	
Yes	39.37%
No	60.63%

If you did bring children to visit, were these the children of the person you were visiting?	
Yes	57.98%
No	42.02%

How many children did you bring?	
1	38.34%
2	37.38%
3	14.70%
4	6.71%
5	1.60%
More than 5	1.28%

What were the ages of these children at the time of your most recent visit? (check all that apply)	
One month – 3 years	30.16%
4-7 years	40.63%
8-11 years	35.56%
12-17 years	39.37%

Does the facility make an effort to provide children with any type of activity while waiting for the visit to begin?	
Yes	4.03%
No	87.63%
Not sure	8.33%

Is there a separate area for smaller children who may not interact with the prisoner?	
Yes	1.64%
No	85.21%
Not sure	13.15%

Transportation

How did you get to the prison unit for your most recent visit? (check all that apply)	
Drove myself	86.64%
Carpooled	12.06%
Bus	0.52%
Plane	8.43%

How often have you visited?	
Less than once a year	7.40%
Once a year	6.76%
A few times a year	27.68%
Every month	23.34%
More than once a month	34.82%

What is the average total cost of a visit? Include transportation, food, and lodging costs if necessary.	
\$0-19	2.86%
\$20-49	9.90%
\$50-99	29.82%
\$100-199	23.05%
\$200-299	13.54%
\$300-399	4.56%
\$400-499	3.52%
\$500-999	5.21%
\$1000 or more	7.55%

How long has it taken you to get to the facility from your home, on average?	
Less than 1 hour	7.65%
1-2 hours	19.39%
2-3 hours	18.75%
3-4 hours	19.01%
More than 4 hours	35.20%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: VISITORS OF INCARCERATED PERSONS

Visitation

What was the average time you have usually waited before being allowed to begin your visit?	
Less than 15 minutes	8.16%
15-30 minutes	39.16%
30-45 minutes	28.32%
45 minutes-1 hour	14.80%
Longer than 1 hour	9.57%

Have you ever been turned away once you have arrived for a visit?	
Yes	25.00%
No	75.00%

Once you notify an officer that you are at the facility to visit someone, where have you normally been asked to wait?	
Parking lot	14.27%
Specific waiting area	31.57%
Actual visitation area	54.16%

If the unit has an actual waiting area, were the seating and restroom facilities adequate?	
Yes	42.93%
No	22.99%
Not applicable – no waiting area	34.08%

Have you brought children to visit?	
Yes	39.37%
No	60.63%

If you did bring children to visit, were these children of the person you were visiting?	
Yes	57.98%
No	42.02%

How much of a barrier has the wire and mesh presented to your ability to communicate with the person you were visiting?	
Not a barrier	41.08%
Somewhat of a barrier	18.10%
Moderate barrier	18.63%
Extreme barrier	22.19%

How would you describe the noise level during a normal visit?	
Very loud	26.95%
Somewhat loud	46.63%
Not very loud	21.66%
Not loud at all	4.76%

Do you feel that the options in the vending machines have been adequate?	
Yes	29.19%
No	60.90%
No opinion	9.91%

If you have not been allowed “contact” visits with the person you visited, which of the following methods of conversation would you prefer?	
Telephone through glass	35.54%
Talking through mesh	64.46%

Have you had to sit outside on a hot day without cover during an outside contact visit?	
Yes	24.17%
No	75.83%

If you had to sit outside on a hot day, have you been allowed to buy or drink cold water?	
Yes	70.00%
No	30.00%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: VISITORS OF INCARCERATED PERSONS

Are you disabled?	
Yes	15.23%
No	84.77%

If you are disabled, how satisfied have you been with the accommodations in the visitation area?	
Very satisfied	13.27
Somewhat satisfied	34.51
Somewhat dissatisfied	28.32
Very dissatisfied	23.89

Overall, how satisfied are you that the TDCJ visitation areas are the best they can be, given the age of the unit(s) and the limited space available?	
Very satisfied	7.63%
Somewhat satisfied	45.09%
Somewhat dissatisfied	29.44%
Very dissatisfied	17.77%

Visitation Policies

If you have had visits on more than one unit, how consistent are the visitation policies from unit to unit?	
Very consistent	10.68%
Somewhat consistent	37.05%
Not very consistent	31.59%
Not at all consistent	20.68%

In your experience, how frequently have officers followed stated visitation policy?	
Never	5.58%
Rarely	10.18%
Sometimes	31.94%
Often	35.01%
Always	17.29%

How helpful have the following resources been in providing information about visitation policies?						
	Incarcerated individual	Officer	Another visitor	Brochure	TDCJ website	Bulletin board in visitation area
Very helpful	51.52%	12.47%	33.24%	10.80%	16.90%	7.62%
Somewhat helpful	31.02%	41.97%	41.83%	29.09%	45.15%	22.99%
Not very helpful	7.06%	24.93%	5.96%	15.65%	15.37%	20.91%
Not helpful at all	5.54%	16.34%	4.02%	11.50%	9.42%	18.70%
Unsure/Not applicable	4.85%	4.29%	14.96%	32.96%	13.16%	29.78%

How satisfied are you that the visitation policies are fair?	
Not at all satisfied	22.99%
Only slightly satisfied	33.10%
Moderately satisfied	34.49%
Very satisfied	9.42%

When an officer has taken the time to explain a policy to you, how clear has the explanation been?	
Very clear	20.08%
Somewhat clear	28.95%
Somewhat unclear	13.30%
Very unclear	11.22%
Doesn't apply	26.45%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: VISITORS OF INCARCERATED PERSONS

In general, how respectful have the correctional officers been to you when you have visited?	
Very respectful	24.93%
Somewhat respectful	30.95%
Respectful	20.45%
Not very respectful	17.79%
Not at all respectful	5.88%

In general, how respectful have the correctional officers been to the person you have visited?	
Very respectful	12.89%
Somewhat respectful	33.05%
Respectful	21.85%
Not very respectful	23.11%
Not at all respectful	9.10%

How frequently do you believe TDCJ correctional officers do all they can to facilitate a good visit?	
Always	6.58%
Usually	29.69%
Sometimes	36.83%
Rarely	20.45%
Never	6.44%

In your experience, how frequently have the correctional officers been professional and courteous when searching you before or after visits?	
Always	36.13%
Usually	37.68%
Sometimes	17.93%
Rarely	5.46%
Never	2.80%

If you have asked to see higher-ranking officers (majors or wardens), have those requests always been fulfilled?	
Yes	54.77%
No	45.23%

In general, how helpful have the higher-ranking officers (majors or wardens) been during your visits?	
Very helpful	16.81%
Somewhat helpful	28.71%
Not very helpful	11.62%
Not at all helpful	10.36%
Doesn't apply	32.49%

How willing would you be to accept more stringent security measures if you were allowed more contact visits?	
Very willing	53.78%
Somewhat willing	15.97%
Willing	18.49%
Not very willing	7.42%
Not at all willing	4.34%