Introduction

This report contains an evaluation of data and a summary of activities completed since September 2020, for the Reentry and Integration Division (RID) of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). As demonstrated throughout this report, the RID has continued to grow and adopt practices which ensure effective service delivery for inmates returning to the community following incarceration. However, it should be noted that many other reentry-related programs administered by other divisions within the TDCJ, and the Windham School District (WSD), also contribute to reduced recidivism. While this report provides an overview of particular accomplishments and enhancements relative to reentry, the TDCJ-RID has multiple functions which contribute to successful reentry and are delineated in other reports, to include the yearly report on reentry and parole referrals required by Government Code 501.103, as well as the biennial report submitted by the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI) in January of odd numbered years in accordance with Health and Safety Code 614.009.

During the 87th Legislature, state policymakers again demonstrated a commitment to enhancing both state and local level reentry practices. Policy initiatives enhanced the development of a comprehensive reentry process designed to eliminate reentry barriers and achieve the goals of increased public safety and reduced recidivism. Measures taken by the Legislature enabled the TDCJ to continue to utilize evidence-based practices to assess criminogenic risk and needs and develop effective, individualized plans for return to the community based on that information. As a result, there were numerous accomplishments, including:

♦ Continued implementation of a Special Needs Reentry Program to supplement the existing continuity-of-care programs;

♦ Continued engagement with the Reentry Task Force;

♦ On-going certification and re-certification for the Texas Risk Assessment System end users, as well as certification of trainers in use of the assessment tool;

♦ The implementation of TDCJ-certified master trainers for the Texas Risk Assessment System for the purposes of training to certify trainers;

♦ Continued processing of all inmate releases from individual Correctional Institutions Division (CID) units and privately contracted TDCJ units by case managers to ensure seamless reentry services;
Continued support of the “Website for Work” services that link employers with skilled releasing inmates and clients in the community;

Launch of hiring initiatives to secure post-release employment prior to release;

Enhancements to the ordering process for Texas identification (ID) cards in coordination with the Department of Public Safety (DPS);

Improved tracking and security accountability related to inmate identification documents;

Effective collaboration for mental illness and intellectual disability care and outcomes tracking;

Implementation of the pre-release workbook for use in reentry case management programs for female inmates on state jail facilities;

Sustained multi-agency approach to strengthening existing veterans reentry services and the expansion of veteran dorms; and

Continued collaboration among various TDCJ divisions and WSD to improve post-release employment opportunities.

These implementation activities, along with other initiatives, are discussed in detail throughout the remainder of this report.
Recidivism

The ultimate goal of the TDCJ’s reentry program is reduced recidivism. Recidivism is measured by the Legislative Budget Board and is calculated based on the number of individuals who return to incarceration three years after release. Recidivism rates for the TDCJ inmate population continue to be among the lowest in the country with the current overall recidivism rate at 20.3%. See chart below.

![10 Year Recidivism Study Chart](chart.png)

Source: Legislative Budget Board

Population Demographics

Throughout Texas, more than a million individuals are processed in local jails each year, many of whom transition to TDCJ supervision. As of July 2022, a combined total of approximately 403,387 individuals were on probation, parole, or in prison.

- 204,426 on direct misdemeanor or felony probation;
- 121,102 incarcerated in TDCJ facilities; and
- 77,859 parole supervision.

In considering the demographics of the justice-involved population, it is important to also consider those impacted beyond this population. Each individual represents families, communities, and victims from every segment of the state’s demographics who must also be served in order for reentry initiatives to realize success. Thus, those affected demographics go far beyond persons under TDCJ supervision.

Although these numbers are significant, the challenge is magnified by the sizeable geographical area within the state of Texas. It is with those challenges in mind that
the continued engagement by the TDCJ with state and local partners, as well as the development and implementation of internal initiatives, provides significant momentum toward a seamless system where all components work in tandem to achieve the goal of reduced recidivism.

Reentry Task Force Membership

The statewide Reentry Task Force continues to provide a conduit for state and local stakeholders to address reentry practices and provide recommendations for continued enhancement of reentry services across the state. The Reentry Task Force maintained a membership of 29 individuals representing a cross-section of the following Texas agencies, organizations, and communities:

- Texas Juvenile Justice Department
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments
- Health and Human Services Commission
- Texas Judicial Council
- Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
- Windham School District
- Texas Commission on Jail Standards
- Department of State Health Services
- Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
- County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas
- Sheriff’s Association of Texas
- Texas District and County Attorneys Association
- Texas Conference of Urban Counties
- Criminal Justice Coordinator, Urban County
- Reentry Coordinator, Urban County
- Urban County Representative
- Urban County Commissioner
- Rural County Judge
- Rural County Commissioner
- Texas Inmate Families Association
- Texas Center for Justice and Equity
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- Office of Court Administration
Reentry Task Force Working Groups & Statewide Councils

The Reentry Task Force maintains working groups to address specific barriers to successful reentry. In addition to these working groups, the TDCJ-RID serves on multiple statewide councils tasked with developing recommendations to address all gaps and barriers identified. These working groups and councils include:

**Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council:** The council develops, updates, and oversees the implementation of the Texas Statewide Behavioral Health Strategic Plan which outlines a coordinated effort to address behavioral health gaps in services and systems.

**Joint Committee on Access to Forensic Services:** The purpose of the committee is to provide customer/consumer and stakeholder input to the health and human services system in the form of recommendations regarding access to forensic services within the state of Texas.

**Texas Coordinating Council for Veteran Services:** The purpose of this council is to coordinate the activities of state agencies that assist veterans, service members, and their families; coordinate outreach efforts that ensure veterans, service members, and their families are made aware of services; and facilitate collaborative relationships among state, federal, and local agencies, and private organizations, to identify and address issues affecting veterans, service members, and their families.

**Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless:** The purpose of this council is to survey current resources for services for the homeless; assist in coordinating and providing statewide services for all homeless individuals; increase the flow of information among providers and authorities; provide technical assistance in assessing the housing needs for individuals with special needs; and maintain a central resources and information center for homeless services.

**Employment Working Group:** Goals include identifying strategies to eliminate barriers to employment in a post release environment, as well as coordination of resources, job training, and assistance. This work group was also tasked with assisting the Mapping the Future grant project to identify gaps in the existing TDCJ reentry system and processes and make recommendations for solutions.

Through collaborative council efforts and implementation of previous recommendations, as well as the body of work produced by the Reentry Task Force
throughout the current biennium, the RID, alongside agency leadership, has created, expanded, and refined reentry service delivery systems.

**Texas Risk Assessment System**

Reentry program supervisors continue to complete certification as Texas Risk Assessment System (TRAS) trainers and become qualified to train reentry case managers as certified end users of the assessment tool. Newly hired reentry case managers have been trained and certified in the use of the TRAS, ensuring the TRAS is administered consistently and appropriately, providing an accurate risk level of the inmate.

Existing TRAS users must become re-certified prior to their three-year certification anniversary. An automated TRAS re-certification training program has provided an efficient means for those initially certified to become re-certified. Pre-release reentry case managers work collaboratively with the inmate to develop an individualized reentry case plan that addresses problem areas, goals, action steps, and community resources to aid in the inmate's success upon release from the TDCJ. The case plan transitions to both the supervising parole office and the community case manager post-release, providing continuity in the inmate's transition from prison to community.

During fiscal year (FY) 2022, through coordination by the TDCJ Training and Leader Development Division, experienced reentry certified TRAS trainers began the certification process to become master TRAS trainers. Master TRAS trainers will train and certify TRAS trainers; this will be the first time since the implementation of the TRAS that TDCJ staff will hold the credential of master TRAS trainers.

**Birth Certificate & DPS Identification Card Ordering Process**

The TDCJ-RID has continued efforts to increase the number of inmates within the population receiving a certified birth certificate and a DPS ID card. The TDCJ’s contract with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) continues to support that effort by providing a process for obtaining a Texas birth certificate for inmates unable to physically appear in a reentry case manager’s office to participate in the electronic ordering process. Additionally, the TDCJ continues to order birth certificates for inmates born out-of-state, allowing for this segment of the inmate population to be able to apply for a Texas ID card from DPS. The TDCJ-RID continues to work with Texas DPS to identify opportunities to increase the number of inmates approved for a Texas ID card. In FY 2021, enhancements were made in coordination with DPS to the ID card ordering process. These changes allow a DPS ID card to be ordered for individuals that have not received a social security card but have a
verified social security number on file through an affidavit process created by the TDCJ and DPS. Additional enhancements through this collaborative effort allow for the DPS ID card to display the individual’s home address to which they are returning upon release, versus the prison unit address. This initiative immediately addressed barriers that returning individuals faced as it related to COVID-19 restrictions in public services for obtaining identification and social services during a pandemic, and with its success will continue as a best practice for reentry services.

Reentry Program

The reentry program operated through the current biennium with 195 allocated positions providing pre-release and post-release reentry services across the state; 125 pre-release, eight release-dedicated, and 51 post-release case managers. Case managers are in correctional facilities, district parole offices, and community residential reentry facilities (halfway houses). The remaining 11 positions are dedicated to serving the special needs population. These positions are assigned to TDCJ units where inmates with serious medical or mental health needs are housed, and complement the existing unit-based pre-release case managers who are responsible for ensuring identification documents are secured in addition to the completion of the risk assessment and associated case planning prior to release from TDCJ facilities.

Pre-Release Reentry Services

Pre-release reentry services include Phase I and II of a three-phased Reentry Program. During Phase I, a reentry case manager assists eligible inmates in ordering identification documents prior to release, including a replacement social security card, certified birth certificate, military service record (DD-214), and DPS ID card. All identification documents obtained are issued to the reentering inmate at the time of release from the TDCJ, including resumes and certification certificates earned in career and technical education programs. Currently, the TDCJ and DPS are enhancing processes to allow ordering for re-issues and renewal driver licenses and commercial driver licenses. These documents equip the releasing inmate with identification documents, credentials, and interview skills necessary to secure
employment, housing, benefits, and other services upon return to the community. During Phase II, the reentry case manager conducts a risk assessment for parole approved inmates to determine risk level as it relates to criminogenic need and risk of re-offending. Those that score moderate or high risk on the assessment are enrolled in individualized case planning. While in case planning, the case manager and the inmate work together to develop an individualized case plan that addresses their needs, sets goals, lists action steps, and identifies resources targeted toward equipping the inmate for a successful return to the community. Additional efforts to support employment initiatives include career expositions on TDCJ units and a pre-release hiring pilot allowing employers and soon-to-be-released inmates to connect via video conference.

### Special Needs Case Management

Through coordinated efforts to ensure post-release continuity of care planning, special needs case managers work directly with unit medical staff, human services specialists, community resources, and the inmates and their families. In addition, pre-release benefit applications are submitted for those inmates who have a severe and persistent illness to minimize delay in receiving eligible entitlements. Special needs case managers have completed a total of 925 benefit applications from September 2020 to July 2022. In addition to the benefits applications submitted by special needs case managers, a pilot project was launched in late FY 2022 allowing voluntary pre-enrollment in programs supported by the Affordable Care Act.

### Post Release Reentry Services

Phase III community-based reentry provides a variety of services with a targeted focus on employment. In addition to employment search and job preparation classes, case managers assist in obtaining housing, as well as other basic necessities, and provide a connection with other community resources. Reentry staff also coordinate job fairs, career expositions, and hiring events for unemployed and underemployed clients, providing an opportunity for a potential employer to meet with a client, complete an application on site, and offer employment with the advance knowledge of the client’s status with the criminal justice system. The TDCJ-RID has worked in close collaboration with other TDCJ divisions and WSD to improve post-release employment by providing opportunities to obtain vocational certificates and on-the-job certifications to aid in job placement post-release.

Through the automation and enhancement of referral reports, identification of unemployed clients and their employment skills continues to enhance existing case management practices to reduce unemployment, enhance industry skilled employment, and bolster hiring within industry trade shortages.
Summary of Services Provided

For the period of September 2020 through July 2022, reentry case managers completed 38,019 applications for birth certificates. Of those, 28,530 birth certificate requests were submitted to the Texas DSHS and 9,489 were submitted out of state. Case managers also submitted 36,683 applications for social security cards to the Social Security Administration and processed 42,757 inmates for Texas DPS ID cards.

The TDCJ has seen a significant decline in the inmate population; therefore, there has been a decline of 27% in the number of those releasing during this reporting period. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues and the decrease in prison population can likely be attributed to a reduction in sentencing during the pandemic. Although there was a reduction in the total number of documents ordered due to various factors, such as the decline in the inmate population, an increase in inmates received at the TDCJ with valid identification documents, and an increase in inmates already having documents on file with TDCJ, more than 134,500 documents (birth certificates, social security cards, military service records, or DPS ID cards) were dispatched to TDCJ units or parole offices for delivery to the reentering population.

In addition to pre- and post-release case management provided by the TDCJ-RID during the reporting period, resource guides are available at various locations throughout the TDCJ’s correctional facilities. A toll-free reentry hotline number is also provided which allows individuals and their families to contact the TDCJ-RID for additional assistance and referrals post-release. Reentry case managers assessed 17,959 inmates utilizing the TRAS as part of the parole review process, with 8,335 of those assessed scoring moderate to high in risk. A review of the TRAS scoring tool was conducted in FY 2021 to ensure accurate scoring based on validated measures, and those changes attributed to a greater percentage of inmates assessed scoring low during this reporting period. As a continuation of the case management program, reentry case managers enrolled 16,835 clients in post-release case
management and provided employment services to an additional 27,336 not enrolled in case management services. Over 200,000 referrals were provided for employment, housing, continuing education and skills training, clothing, food, transportation, and other social service needs.

**Employment Initiatives**

Employment is one of the most important elements of an individual’s successful reentry back into the community and the TDCJ has continued to enhance programming during the reporting period to support the goal of self-sufficiency on the part of the reentering individual. Collaboration between the TDCJ-RID, Manufacturing, Agriculture and Logistics (MAL) Division, Rehabilitation Programs Division (RPD), and WSD connects a pre-release inmate’s job training and skills information with employers to increase opportunities for sustainable employment.

To assist in the preparation for employment, 21,175 clients attended employment readiness classes facilitated by reentry case managers, while Intensive Employment Classes were conducted for those chronically unemployed/underemployed clients in select locations. COVID-19 brought on many challenges that required reentry services to be adaptive. Some of those challenges included services being conducted over the phone when clients were unable to attend employment classes in person. Other related barriers to services included the inability to host community employment events as in previous years. Efforts to host virtual events were immediately initiated to allow employers to continue to meet and hire participants. During this report period, 63 employment events were conducted with 2,137 participants attending.

Similarly, virtual career expositions were launched to assist inmates. As restricted access to the units lifted and the inmate population became accessible, these efforts continued by allowing employers to come back into a secure facility to provide an overview of their business, outline opportunities in careers that are in demand, and provide the opportunity for the inmates to secure post-release employment in the days leading up to their release. To date, 57 career expos have been held with 30% of inmate attendees securing employment as a result of the events. In addition to career expos, a pilot project was recently launched to allow case managers located on select units to set up video conferencing job interviews between soon-to-be-released inmates and potential employers to bolster efforts in securing post-release employment prior to release. Other employment initiatives include:

- The Strength Through Restoration, Independence, Vision, and Empowerment (STRIVE) dorm was launched in 2018 at the Mountain View Unit to better prepare female inmates to meet post-release employment needs and continues with 394 women having successfully completed the program. Reentry staff assist the women in identifying barriers specific to their reentry
needs by providing referrals, job training, resources, and employment assistance along with continued support post-release. Another integral part of the program is a professional clothing drive which allows the women to dress professionally at career expos with potential employers and provides the ability to release with appropriate career clothing, shoes, and accessories. In response to the challenges presented by COVID-19, Virtual Career Fairs were introduced as part of the STRIVE dorm program and have provided a successful and meaningful employer/applicant experience. During this reporting period, 11 career expos have been held with 284 participants attending and all securing employment.

The Website for Work program was developed to further enhance relations with potential employers. The TDCJ-RID Website for Work program provides an electronic means for potential employers to connect with skilled individuals using a web-based application that can match the employer with an available job to an appropriate client in the community. There are now more than 900 employers that have used or are utilizing the program.

As part of the on-going practices and activities already occurring within reentry programming relative to employment, and in accordance with House Bill (HB) 918 of the 86th Legislature, a joint effort between WSD and the TDCJ provided for releasing inmates to obtain a resume and practice interviews to enhance job readiness. A total of 17,320 resumes were completed and 16,865 mock interviews were conducted during the reporting period.
Veteran Services and Programming

The TDCJ-RID has a dedicated Veterans Program supervisor to provide the oversight and coordinate expansion of veteran-centric programming and a veterans coordinator assigned to coordinate pre- and post-release services for veterans.

Veteran services consist of pre- and post-release activities as well as interagency collaboration. Interagency collaboration includes liaison activities that relate to the development of processes for exchanging information and establishing connections between the criminal justice system and the Veterans Integrated Services Network, through the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2008. In response to HB 634, passed during the 83rd Legislative Session, additional efforts include the ongoing development of a comprehensive Continuity of Care network through a partnership with the Military Veteran Peer Network and the Veterans Administration’s Health Care for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program. The TDCJ and the Veterans Administration (VA) maintain an agreement for verification of veteran information through an electronic file transfer utilizing the Veterans Reentry Search Service (VRSS). All veterans are identified through the VRSS upon intake.

Once Identified, the TDCJ veteran services coordinator (VSC) assists with notifying Veteran Benefits Administration of incarceration and aids with apportionment to the spouse, children, or guardian of children.

During incarceration, the TDCJ assists with requesting copies of the Military Service Record Discharge of Duty form 214 (DD-214), requesting copies of military and medical documents, military discharge upgrade assistance, rehabilitation services, veteran programming, veteran peer housing, and providing guidebooks for veterans.

Through a formal partnership with the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), veteran service officers and the TDCJ VSC conduct training and coordinate with reentry case managers to aid incarcerated veterans in applying for VA disability compensation and healthcare benefits and VA pension information. During the reporting period, a total of 454 benefit and compensation applications were submitted to the VA through the TVC, and 461 compensation and pension exams were completed on the veteran’s unit of assignment. The reentry case manager also provides information regarding education benefits to which the veteran is entitled.

Veteran programming is supported across the state through 59 volunteer organizations committed to the well-being and unique needs of the incarcerated veteran population. Additionally, the TDCJ-RID, through coordination with the CID, facilitates veteran program dorms and veteran peer housing dorms featuring dedicated veteran correctional officers and reentry case managers. There are currently three program dorms and six peer housing dorms:
The Travis County State Jail Veterans Reentry Dorm is a 24-bed housing unit set in squadron formation located in Travis County. The veteran’s dorm program is a voluntary, transitional program for veterans confined in state jail facilities which provides rehabilitation programming in developing healthy relationships, anger management, and substance abuse treatment. Through a partnership with the Samaritan Center, veteran inmates are assessed and, if selected, enrolled in the reentry dorm program. Classes facilitated by the Samaritan Center are taught by military veterans, who are peers from the community who understand the challenges these men face and can offer a unique perspective as they prepare for release and successful reintegration.

In 2021, the S.T.R.I.P.E.S. (Success Through Restoration, Independence, Perseverance, Excellence, and Service) veterans dorm program was launched at the Coffield Unit. The program consists of 12 modules of Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) courses divided over 52 weeks and additional programming provided by volunteers, the TDCJ VSC, and a reentry case manager dedicated to the program. The MRT classes are taught by AIMVETS volunteer-certified professional facilitators, who have completed 32 hours of MRT training. The S.T.R.I.P.E.S. program is a peer dorm environment designed to help incarcerated veterans develop better decision-making and coping skills, provide them with the necessary tools to enhance their well-being, and assist them with their reintegration into society.

The Women’s Veterans Program at the Lane Murray Unit is a new initiative and consists of MRT courses, female veteran centered programming, and peer support. The MRT classes are taught by AIMVETS volunteer-certified professional facilitators, who have completed 32 hours of MRT training.
Additional programming will be provided through recognized veteran curriculum taught by volunteers, the TDCJ VSC, and a reentry case manager dedicated to the program.

- Veteran peer housing was designed and implemented with the purpose of assisting distressed veterans in finding help for problems associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, or other trauma related to military service. Seeking to recreate an environment conducive to obtaining the best results, veteran peer housing dorms were created at the Ellis, Estelle, Ferguson, Huntsville, Luther, and Wynne units to offer the feel of a military dormitory. The TDCJ has also partnered with the VA and the HCRV Program to provide continuity of care services for all incarcerated veterans.

Reentry Initiatives

Beyond the initiatives described thus far and their benefit to the state’s reentry efforts, growth and development of the reentry program was demonstrated through numerous other endeavors during the biennium, as the TDCJ-RID:

- Continued to expand reentry case manager involvement in release processing duties on prison units, including state jails, to further enhance continuity in inmate transition from pre- to post-release reentry services.

- Continued coordination with the WSD, and other TDCJ divisions, including Facilities Division, MAL Division, Parole Division, and RPD, to improve post-release employment opportunities through evaluation of pre-release training and certification and engagement with employers offering those job opportunities.

- Continued coordination with the Information Technology Division to improve tracking and oversight of reentry program components.

- Initiated a multi-divisional Women’s Workgroup to identify and address female needs, processes, and programming throughout the entire system.

- Launched an innovative Reentry Certified Peer Specialist program, through a grant with the governor’s office, that focuses on female-centric issues and needs utilizing peer mentors both pre- and post-release.

- Enhanced employment efforts focused on securing post-release employment prior to release in continued efforts with employers, non-profits, WSD, and partner TDCJ divisions.
Implemented two additional veteran program dorms and six peer housing veteran dorms.

Looking Forward

The implementation steps and initiatives detailed thus far, in addition to a list of other activities, mark the ongoing and significant growth of the reentry program. This momentum will continue with the following planned for the immediate future:

- Coordination with TDCJ divisions and WSD to further enhance the goal of a seamless reentry system.
- Collaboration on the continued implementation of the inmate tablet system to enhance reentry initiatives and planning.
- Establishment of Certified Peer Specialists for Mental Health within current TCOOMMI continuity of care programs.
- Coordination with partner TDCJ divisions on establishing reentry dorms for inmate movement into, leading up to and within a designated window of release.
- Expansion of veteran program dorms and veteran peer housing dorms, including trained veteran peer mentors within the dorms.

Conclusion

The significant progress realized since the inception of the TDCJ-RID in September 2009 continued throughout this biennium. The TDCJ has increased the number of inmates served through each component of the pre- and post-release reentry programs. Collaboration among partner agencies and organizations has increased, aiding in attaining the goal of a seamless system that prepares and equips the inmate for success upon return to the community. As the next steps articulated in this report are accomplished, the TDCJ will remain mindful that, while there have been many significant accomplishments, the work is not complete. Collaborative efforts with agency partners as well as local and state level partnerships ensure the success of each inmate, with the focus on the reduction of recidivism in Texas.