



Budget Rider 63 83rd Legislative Session Implementation Guide



Collaborations with Nonprofit Agencies Will Provide Individuals in Prison Information Crucial to Post-Release Success

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the 129 reentry coordinators in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide meaningful case management to the 70,000 men and women leaving Texas prisons yearly. Many of those individuals are in desperate need of housing assistance and information about employment opportunities, along with contact information about agencies that can provide care for medical and mental health needs.

Many Texas organizations — private, nonprofit, local, or faith based — have compiled locale-specific resource lists that could be made available to incarcerated individuals preparing for their return to society. Access to this information would greatly help incarcerated individuals formulate reentry plans based on available community providers, and it would increase the chances that these individuals will successfully reintegrate into their communities.

What does Budget Rider 63 intend to do?

This budget rider intends to provide meaningful information about federal, state, and local resources to incarcerated individuals so that they may begin the transition process and not be totally reliant on TDCJ reentry coordinators. In addition, this bill intends to provide information to incarcerated individuals so that they may improve their conditions of confinement through legally approved channels.

Budget Rider 63 mandates that TDCJ ensures that information is “always available” to incarcerated individuals on various topics, which are listed in the box below. It also directs TDCJ to make this information available in libraries and any areas that may increase offenders’ knowledge of this information.

There are many national and state organizations that have compiled information that can be crucial to incarcerated individuals seeking to improve their post-release lives. These organizations include, but are not limited to, the Texas ACLU Prison Project; the Texas Civil Rights Project, which has both the Justice for Veterans Campaign and the Prisoners Rights Program; the Texas Inmate Families Association; the Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid; the Restorative Justice Ministry Network; the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition; and others.

Each of these organizations has compiled and is willing to share with TDCJ a wealth of resources that would be enormously beneficial to individuals preparing to return to their communities. In addition, there are Reentry Roundtables in Dallas, Harris, Bexar, Tarrant, and Travis counties, all of which publish information that is specific to their communities, and this information might prove the difference between an individual finding employment, housing, and necessary medical care or becoming homeless and returning to crime.

How can I help implement Budget Rider 63?

Organizations That Compile Information Useful to Incarcerated Individuals

If you have compiled information in an easy-to-read format, and it is up to date, comprehensive, and you believe it will help an incarcerated individual either have an easier transition to society or guide the individual in his or her effort to navigate prison in a dignified way, please address it to: **Reentry and Integration Division, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 4616 West Howard Lane, Suite 200, Austin TX 78728, Attn: Giovanna Nava.**

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TDCJ has the right to deny any material or to require that it be amended or edited in order to fit the demands of security. Be reasonable. Also, check your sources. Keep the information as up to date and accurate as possible. This is not TDCJ's job — it is yours. Remember that individuals in prison have no way of checking the veracity of claims or accuracy of contact information. They may have a release date coming up and limited resources, so the time spent in contacting organizations that no longer exist may be the difference between the individuals getting housing and employment or being on the streets, without a job.

TDCJ Administrators

The information in many of these pamphlets or brochures not only can help women and men making the transition to their communities, it can also be a key element in fostering more-positive relations between them and staff members, contributing to the safety and security of TDCJ units. Some of this information may be available already, but it is in the law libraries, and sometimes getting approval to go to a unit law library may be a difficult process. The mandate of Budget Rider 63 — ensuring this information is available in libraries and “other TDCJ areas” such as dayrooms and peer educator classrooms — will help many incarcerated individuals as they deal with issues other than reentry, such as parenthood, drug abuse, veterans issues, and others. TDCJ's two responsibilities in this are clear: (1) ensure there are enough copies so that anyone interested in accessing this information is able to do so, and (2) make it clear to lower-level staff that these booklets, pamphlets, and general guides are to be kept in common areas, and that they are to be available to every man and woman incarcerated in TDCJ.

Examples of Information That Would Be Useful To Individuals Incarcerated In Texas Prisons

Budget Rider 63 mandates that TDCJ shall ensure certain information is always available to people incarcerated on TDCJ units. Examples of what types of resources would be helpful are below:

- Information about innocence and wrongful convictions
- Access to TDCJ policies that are not always in the law libraries but nonetheless have a large impact on an individual's life, like inmate transfers, in-depth explanation about the health services fee, and how to properly file a grievance or request medical care
- Resources specifically geared toward particular populations: veterans, women, geriatric individuals, or individuals with a certain disease, such as diabetes, Hepatitis C, AIDS, etc.
- Information about programs that will ease an individual's path back into society, such as pamphlets from Reentry Roundtables; child support requirements by the Attorney General's Office; and services offered directly by community-based organizations