



Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

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The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition is an Austin-based non-profit organization that works with peers, policy-makers, practitioners, and community members to identify and promote smart justice policies that safely reduce Texas' costly over-reliance on incarceration – creating stronger families, less taxpayer waste, and safer communities.

Implementation Guides For Adult-Related Criminal Justice Bills and Budget Riders

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition is committed to working with practitioners to ensure they understand and fully implement positive new reforms. As such, we have created short “how to” guides about important bills and budget riders passed during the 2013 Texas Legislative Session.

We hope these guides will be helpful for practitioners, as well as system-involved individuals and family members, and others interested in juvenile and criminal justice. Please click on the links below to access each guide.

If you are unable to access a computer and would like a hard copy of a guide, please contact Jorge Renaud at the phone number above.

- **Budget Rider 58:** This rider directs the Ombudsman with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide an annual report to state and legislative leaders about: (1) the number and type of public inquiries it receives about TDCJ, incarcerated individuals, or staff; and (2) how those inquiries were resolved. The Ombudsman must also make that report available to the public. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/lvkvzxy>
- **Budget Rider 59:** This rider directs TDCJ's Reentry and Parole Divisions to examine and annually report on parole referrals and their outcomes, and to provide information on reentry barriers, along with the benefits and services that are most helpful to recently released individuals. This rider aims to identify and close gaps in the services provided to individuals preparing to reenter their communities. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/n4e6nlt>
- **Budget Rider 61:** This rider directs TDCJ to perform or commission a study on its visitation policies, with the goal of making the visitation experience more child-friendly and conducive to family bonding. The rider also directs TDCJ to notify eligible visitors if visitation has been canceled or rescheduled. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/lwmr8jn>
- **Budget Rider 63:** This rider requires TDCJ to collaborate with organizations that provide meaningful information to incarcerated individuals about a wide range of topics, including geriatric, veterans, and gender-specific issues, reentry and community programs, and many others. This rider also directs TDCJ to make this information “always available” in libraries and in any areas that will increase access to this information, thus better assisting incarcerated individuals' rehabilitative efforts and reentry success. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/n6frrvn>

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- **HB 634:** This bill requires TDCJ to investigate and verify the veteran status of incarcerated individuals, and to then use the verified status to help veterans apply for benefits. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/ma66qnr>
- **HB 797:** The Windham School District (WSD) provides educational and vocational opportunities to individuals incarcerated in TDCJ. This bill directs WSD to inform individuals who are considering enrollment in particular vocational courses about future occupational licensing issues, including potential licensing restrictions, rates of licensure among past vocational students, and the licensing process (including procedures for appealing a license denial). Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/mutmho8>
- **HB 798:** This bill prohibits state licensing agencies from denying an occupational or professional license to people simply because of a previous conviction for a Class C misdemeanor, unless the conviction was for a domestic violence offense, or unless the person is an applicant for or holder of a license that authorizes the person to have a firearm. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/ky5ugwg>
- **HB 799:** This bill directs the Windham School District to assess existing Texas job markets in order to update, augment, and expand the vocational programs it offers to incarcerated individuals. The goal is to provide vocational students with up-to-date and needed skill sets, especially in areas where licensing is required. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/lzyd33t>
- **HB 1188:** This bill limits the liability of employers who hire people with criminal records, preventing them from being sued for cause if an employee with a record commits a crime. However, there are two exceptions: (1) the employer knew of the past crime and the conviction was for a serious aggravated or violent sexually related felony, or involved a crime committed in circumstances substantially similar to those required by the current job duties, or (2) the employee's current offense is fraud or misuse of funds, and he or she has previously been convicted of a similar crime. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/mregttf>
- **HB 1318:** This bill requires public defender offices to refuse appointments that would violate the maximum caseloads they have established; it also requires appointed counsel to report the percentage of their practice time dedicated to appointments. Additionally, the bill requires counties to provide the state with copies of public defense plans and contracts for defense services, as well as the number of appointments made to each attorney. **Note:** HB 1318 also contains changes to the time frame in which a youth must be appointed counsel – in a *reasonable* time frame and *before* the first detention hearing. Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/mmwyw65>
- **SB 345:** This bill directs each TDCJ warden to file an annual report with the Board of Criminal Justice that summarizes the warden's efforts to identify and encourage volunteer and faith-based organizations to provide particular types of programming (e.g., literacy, job skills, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, parent training, and other types of programming specified in code). Click here for the guide: <http://tinyurl.com/kf7zryx>