



**Building Successful Strategies
For Offender Reentry**

**HOUSING NEEDS & BARRIERS
FOR FORMERLY
INCARCERATED PERSONS
TRAVIS COUNTY**

August 5, 2008

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Since the early 1990's, Texas has tripled the capacity of its prisons, increasing the number of prisoners faster than any other state. Texas' incarceration rate is 51% higher than the national average. (TDCJ Community Assistance Division, "Community Supervision in Texas: Summary Statistics January 2003") A record number of prisoners have a direct correlation with a record number of ex-prisoners returning to Texas communities. In 2005 alone, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice released 64,512 felons from incarceration. These are people who must find jobs and housing or else risk turning to illegal activity to survive. Approximately 1 in 11 Texas adults has a felony conviction on his or her record (Criminal Justice Policy Brief. Texas LULAC State Executive Office. August 2004). For thousands of these former inmates, the question of where they will live upon re-entry is immediate and critical. It also has important consequences for society at large: current evidence indicates that ex-prisoners are more likely to re-offend if they do not find accommodation on release (Jamie Watson, et al. "A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Texas." The Urban Institute. 2004). With each move after release from prison, a person's likelihood of re-arrest increases by 25 percent (Meredith, T., J. Speir, S. Johnson, and H. Hull. 2003. *Enhancing Parole Decision-Making Through the Automation of Risk Assessment*. Atlanta, GA: Applied Research Services, Inc.).

Realizing the need to address this significant element of reentry, Travis County contracted with the Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable to take the first step in assessing the housing needs and barriers of offenders returning to our community. The intent of this report is to enumerate many of the considerations and challenges that policymakers must address to facilitate a person's access to affordable, appropriate and stable housing in order to promote successful reentry of former offenders returning to Travis County.

THE PROCESS

According to the standards of evidence based practices, the following process was implemented:

- Identified the problem: Austin/Travis County does not have affordable, stable housing with the support services necessary to meet the needs for successful reentry of offenders as they return to our community.
- Identified the desired outcome: Determine the needs and barriers of offenders returning to Travis County.
- Searched the research that helped address the problem: Reviewed local, state and national studies relevant to our priority area.
- Evaluated existing, related research: Conducted comparisons of process, participants, tracking, findings and outcomes to consider for replication.
- Developed an implementation strategy: Created surveys to be administered and interview questions to be conducted at multiple sites with diverse populations. Piloted and revised initial surveys and interviews and conducted on-site quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews (See Attachment A) for data collection.
- Evaluated: Conducted a data analysis, compared project data with evidence based research and determined desired outcome; i.e., the needs and barriers of offenders returning to Travis County.

This report presents findings from 124 surveys, and 46 interviews, completed by prisoners being released within 90 days from the Travis Unit of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and Travis County Correctional Complex (Del Valle) who are returning to Travis County.¹ We present quantitative data on respondents' gender, race, type of confinement (i.e., state or county jail), offense(s), sanctions, housing history, current housing plans, supported services needed, as well as qualitative data on the obstacles and barriers encountered to obtain stable, appropriate housing.

¹ The totals in the tables do not always equal the number of participants surveyed and interviewed because some responses were left blank.

TRAVIS COUNTY DATA

**“They don't have a job.
They can't afford first and last month's rent, which is huge.
So they drift, from the homeless shelter to the couch of a friend to a low-rent hotel.
And that's the lack of stability, the chaos in which small -- and sometimes large --
crimes flourish.”**

Vincent Schiraldi, President of the Justice Policy Institute

FACTS:

- ▶ Travis County Correctional Complex released 20,960 people in 2007 (Jennifer Scott, Travis County Correctional Complex).
- ▶ Approximately 850 people are released from Travis State Jail a year.
- ▶ In Fiscal Year 2007, TDCJ released 3,044 offenders to Travis County. (Alicia Frezia-King, Open Records Act Coordinator TDCJ - Executive Services).
- ▶ Travis County was claimed as the permanent residency of 5,820 TDCJ offenders in 2007(Alicia Frezia-King, Open Records Act Coordinator TDCJ - Executive Services).

The subsequent sections reflect a computation of the quantitative, needs assessment data collected in this study and its correlation to state and national research.

TABLE 1. GENDER

Sex	Travis State Jail		Del Valle Jail		All Facilities	
Male	68	100%	43	77%	111	90%
Female	0	0%	13	23%	13	10%
Total	68	100%	56	100%	124	100%

Nationally, the majority of returning prisoners are male (88%) (Harrison, Paige M. and Allen J. Beck. Prisons in 2003. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). Among inmates surveyed locally for this study, 90% were male. Only men are housed at the Travis State Jail. At the county jail, more than two-thirds of the inmates were male.

Our 11 to 1.3 ratio is consistent with the national reentry data of 88% returning male vs. 12% returning female prisoners (Harrison, Paige M. and Allen J. Beck. Prisons in 2003. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 2004) and the 2002 Housing First Findings by NPR News which reports that men are more than 10 times as likely to be imprisoned as women, but the female incarceration rate has been growing faster than the male rate. In order to maintain the gender ratio of persons incarcerated, only qualitative data from females returning to Travis County from the Woodman State Jail are included and can be found at the end of this report under “Specific Comments By Females At Woodman State Jail”.

It should be noted that female offenders with minor children find securing housing particularly challenging given their limited economic resources. (Ritchie, B. “Issues Incarcerated Women Face When They Return to Their Communities.” Paper presented at the Urban Institute Reentry Roundtable, Washington, D.C., October 2000).

TABLE 2. SANCTIONS

Type of Sanction	Travis State Jail		Del Valle Jail		All Facilities	
Not Sure	5	7%	21	38%	26	21%
No Supervision	62	93%	8	14%	70	57%
Parole	0	0%	9	16%	9	7%
Probation	0	0%	18	32%	18	15%
Total	67	100%	56	100%	123	100%

Inmates were asked what type of supervision they would be on when they left the facility where they were incarcerated. At the Travis State Jail, the vast majority (93%) said that they would not be on any type of supervision when released. The remaining 7% did not know whether they would be on supervision. In contrast, at the Travis County Jail almost half of the inmates surveyed expected to be on probation or parole when they left. Only 14% said they would not be on any type of supervision.

► As of December 31, 2007, there were 21,635 people on probation in Travis County—12,288 of which were on direct probation and 9,347 were on indirect supervision (Terri Roeber, Travis County Adult Probation).

► As of February 29, 2008, TDCJ reports that 2,542 offenders were on parole in Travis County (Alicia Frezia-King, Open Records Act Coordinator TDCJ - Executive Services). In 2006, Texas released over 32,500 prisoners on parole. (NY Times, Novs. 2007).

Texas' probation population consists of approximately 455,000 people, the largest in the nation.

One in 20 Texans is currently in the criminal justice system (Levin, Marc. "Laying the Foundation for Better Probation." Policy Perspective, Texas Public Policy Foundation. June 2006). Probation terms in Texas are 66% longer than the nationwide average, and can extend up to 10 years (Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council, Biennial Report to the 78th Texas Legislature, January 2003. Based on Bureau of Justice Statistics, August, 2002).

Probation departments receive 1/3 of their total budget dollars through the collection of fees from probationers, which creates a financial incentive for departments to maintain long probation terms. However, longer terms are not necessarily cost-effective: 54% of revocations (termination of probation for new crimes or violations) occur during a probationer's first 2 years on probation (Levin, Marc. "Laying the Foundation for Better Probation." Policy Perspective, Texas Public Policy Foundation. June 2006).

Departments often incorrectly classify probationers, resulting in misappropriated resources. For example, in Travis County, approximately 25% of offenders were found to be supervised at higher levels than were required by risk assessment, according to a 2006 Travis County impact study on supervision (Fabelo, Tony, the JFA Institute Austin, and Nagy, Geraldine. Travis County Impact Supervision. Washington, D.C. 2006.).

TABLE 3. LOCATION UPON RELEASE

Where Going	Travis State Jail		Del Valle Jail		All Facilities	
Don't know where they are going	24	35%	20	36%	44	35%
Going where they lived before incarceration	31	46%	30	54%	61	49%
Somewhere they never lived before	7	10%	3	5%	10	8%
Going where their offense is listed	6	9%	3	5%	9	7%
Total	68	100%	56	100%	124	100%

Slightly more than a third of inmates at both the state jail and the county jail said that they did not know where they would go upon release. About half of those surveyed said they planned to return to where they lived prior to incarceration. Studies indicate that parole violation and re-arrest are more likely for those prison releasees with no place to go upon release (Roman, CG and Travis, Jeremy (2004) *Taking Stock: Housing, Homelessness, and Prison Reentry*). In a 1999 Urban Institute three-site study of 400 returning prisoners with histories of drug abuse found that eighteen percent reported they were homeless for at least a month in the year after they were released from prison (Rossman, S., Sridharan, S., Gouvis, C., Buck, J., and Morley, E.(1999). *Impact of the Opportunity to Succeed (OPTS) Aftercare Program for Substance-Abusing Felons: Comprehensive Final Report*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute).

TABLE 4. LENGTH OF TIME TO LOCATE A RESIDENCE

Time Waited	Travis State Jail		Del Valle Jail		All Facilities	
30 days or less	0	0%	4	7%	4	3%
31 to 60 days	1	2%	0	0%	1	1%
More than 60 days	0	0%	2	4%	2	2%
No wait	37	56%	32	57%	69	57%
Still waiting	28	42%	18	32%	46	38%
Total	66	100%	56	100%	122	100%

For 61% of our surveyed inmates, there was little to no wait time for having a place to live upon release. This coincides with the fact that 64% of reporting offenders plan to live with the spouse, family or friends.

TABLE 5. LENGTH OF STAY ALLOWED

Length of Time	Travis State Jail		Del Valle Jail		All Facilities	
Unknown	33	50%	25	45%	58	48%
30 days or less	3	5%	3	5%	6	5%
31 to 60 days	2	3%	4	7%	6	5%
More than 60 days	2	3%	0	0%	2	2%
No deadline	26	39%	24	43%	50	41%
Total	66	100%	56	100%	122	100%

Almost half of our research participants either have a deadline to leave, or do not know how long they can stay at, the initial re-entry location. With each move after release from prison, a person’s likelihood of re-arrest increases by 25 percent (Meredith, T., J. Speir, S. Johnson, and H. Hull. 2003. *Enhancing Parole Decision-Making Through the Automation of Risk Assessment*. Atlanta, GA: Applied Research Services, Inc.).

TABLE 6. WITH WHOM INDIVIDUALS WILL LIVE

Living With	Travis State Jail		Del Valle Jail		All Facilities	
Alone	4	6%	1	2%	5	4%
Family/Friends	18	27%	24	43%	42	34%
Spouse/Kids	20	30%	17	30%	37	30%
TDCJ House	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
Don't Know/No Place Yet	25	37%	13	23%	38	31%
Total	67	100%	56	100%	123	100%

Family relationships are among the most important sources of tangible and emotional support to returning prisoners (La Vigne, Nancy G., Christy Visher, and Jennifer Castro. *Chicago Prisoners' Experience Returning Home*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2004). Sixty-four percent of our participants expect to live with their spouse/family/friend after incarceration. This figure parallels the findings that 63% of Texas inmates returning to Houston, Harris County, Texas plan to live with someone in one of the above categories (La Vigne, Nancy, Kachnowski, Vera. (2005), *Texas Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home, 2005*).

At both the state jail and the county jail, slightly less than a third of those surveyed intended to live with a spouse and/or kids when they were released. More of those surveyed at the Del Valle jail said they would live with family or friends than at the Travis State Jail (43% compared to 27%). Conversely, more of the Travis State Jail inmates than Del Valle jail inmates said that they did not have a place to live yet (37% versus 21%). There could be several reasons for these differences. Inmates serving time at the Travis State Jail serve longer sentences than their counterparts at the county jail. Also, the Travis State Jail population is all male while the Del Valle Jail includes female inmates.

TABLE 7. RESIDENCE PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

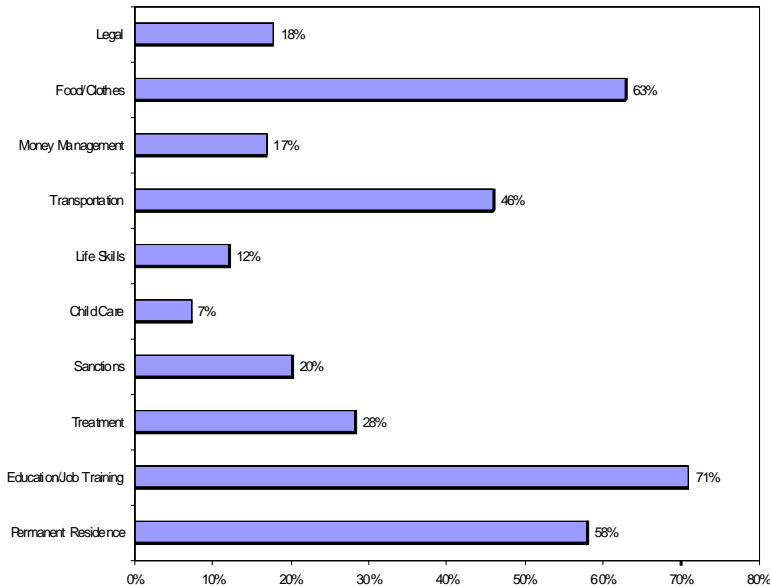
Prior Residence	Travis State Jail		Del Valle Jail		All Facilities	
Different	3	5%	6	11%	9	7%
I was homeless	21	32%	11	20%	32	26%
Same	34	52%	29	52%	63	52%
Place offense committed	7	11%	10	18%	17	14%
Total	65	100%	56	100%	121	100%

A Bureau of Justice Statistics study of state prisoners found that among those state prisoners expected to be released to the community in year-end 1999, 12 percent reported being homeless at the time of their arrest (Langan, P.A., and D. J. Levin. (2002). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. NCJ 193427. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics). However, research conducted by the California Department of Corrections in 1997 found that the 10% homeless average of state parolees jumped to an estimated 30 to 50 percent in urban communities!

At least a quarter (26%) of the inmates that were surveyed as part of this report said they were homeless prior to incarceration. The group of individuals surveyed for this report were not a randomized sample since they specifically were being released to Travis County, an urban community; and, therefore may not be representative of the general population of state prisoners.

Further confirmation of the relationship between homelessness and criminal history was found in a 1999 national survey of homeless assistance providers and individuals who use their services and estimated that about 54 percent of currently homeless clients had been incarcerated—in jail or in prison—at some point in their lives (Burt, M.R., Y.A. Laudan, T. Douglas, J. Valente, E. Lee, and B. Iwen. 1999. *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve. Findings From the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development). Finally, the likelihood of homelessness for parolees increases for those with mental health and substance abuse problems (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck, “Trends in State Parole, 1990-2000.” Bureau of Justice Statistics. October 2001).

CHART 1: PERCEIVED REENTRY NEEDS FOR HOUSING



General Findings: Three-fourths of the men and women we surveyed and interviewed reported that they would need help in dealing with various problems and challenges after release in order to acquire and maintain stable housing. The notable percentages were all within 5% of findings identified in the Texas Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home report based on surveys completed by 676 prisoners shortly before their release from Texas prisons and state jails and their return to the Houston area (La Vigne, Nancy, Kachnowski, Vera. (2005), *Texas Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home, 2005*).

Education/Vocational/Employment: Many prisoners (71.5%) wanted to improve their educational and vocational abilities by getting more education and job training after release in addition to acquiring a job.

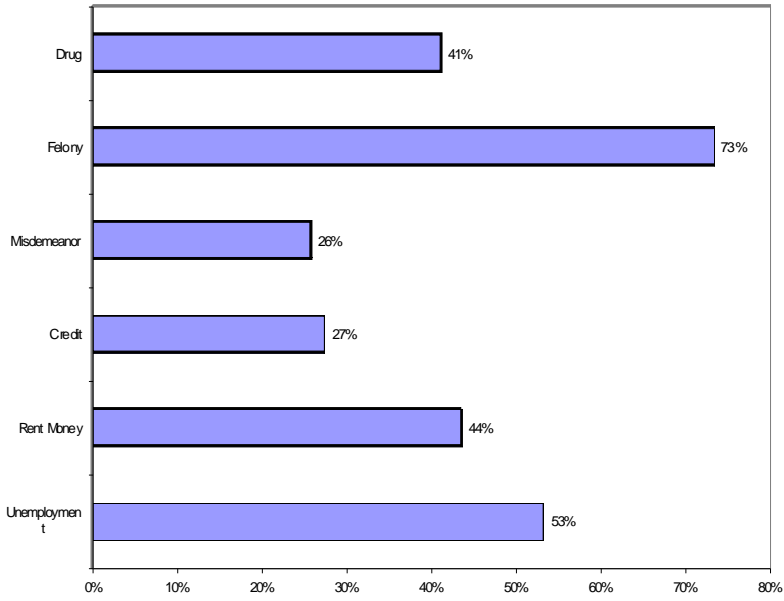
Survival necessities: Such provisions as food and clothes were identified as a significant need by 63% of those preparing for release.

Permanent residence: One of the most significant needs and barriers to a successful reentry experienced by returning prisoners is the attainment of permanent housing. Of those surveyed, 57.5% desired help locating permanent housing for their family. The Urban Institute's *Illinois Returning Home* study found that returning prisoners view housing as a key component—perhaps even the most important component—of successful community reintegration (La Vigne, N.G., C. Visher, and J. Castro. 2004. *Chicago Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute).

Sanctions: Almost half of the offenders interviewed at Del Valle perceive the need for assistance with their sanction mandates. Their assessment is justified in that 43% of offenders had been serving time in Texas prisons or state jails because of a parole or probation violation (La Vigne, Nancy, Kachnowski, Vera. (2005), *Texas Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home*, 2005). Nationally, over half of released inmates return to jail or prison within three years for violation of the terms of their probation or parole. (Pew Report, One in 100: Behind Bars in America, 2008) and most recidivism (two-thirds of all events) occurs within the first year after release (Langan, P.A., and D. J. Levin. (2002). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. NCJ 193427. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics).

Other: Of all offenders surveyed, 46% needed assistance with transportation, and slightly less than 30% identified mental health/substance abuse treatment as a need to reaching their housing goals. Some respondents mentioned needs that were not on the original survey. These included such things as identification and/or social security cards, child care, a way to get home, and medical/psychiatric medicines.

CHART 2: PERCEIVED REENTRY BARRIERS TO HOUSING



Criminal Record:

Seventy-three percent (73%) of the participants in this assessment placed their criminal history as the greatest barrier to obtaining stable and affordable housing. This presents a bleak outlook since recent research indicates that 81 percent of prisoners being released from Texas prisons and states jails had been convicted of a crime more than once, 63 percent had been in prison or state jail at least once before, and 56 percent had their parole or probation revoked at least once (La Vigne, Nancy, Kachnowski, Vera. (2005), *Texas Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home, 2005*).

Unemployment:

Poor employment prospects exacerbate an already difficult housing search (Roman, Kane, Giridharadas. "The Housing Landscape for Returning Prisoners", 2006.). The second highest identified barrier to obtaining housing in our research was unemployment.

History of Substance Abuse:

Forty-one percent (41%) of our participants reported the history of substance abuse as a major barrier to housing. Texas has the largest incarcerated population in the U.S., 80% of which reports a history of drug and alcohol abuse (Policy Brief: Offender Re-entry." NASADAD February 2006). Approximately 22% (32,550) of Texas prisoners are incarcerated for non-violent drug offenses (Levin, Marc. "How to Avert Another Texas Prison Crowding Crisis," Austin, TX: Texas Public Policy Foundation, May 2006). Approximately 55% report using drugs or alcohol when committing the crime that resulted in their incarceration (Policy Brief: Offender Re-entry. National Assn. of State Alcohol/Drug Abuse Directors, February, 2006). A 2002 survey of Texas' state jail inmates found that 52% of women and 44% of men met the criteria for alcohol or drug dependence (National Institute on Drug Abuse. Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment for Criminal Justice Populations National Institute of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. July 2006). Since research reflects that substance abuse is a primary factor in criminal behavior, it is understandable that housing providers strongly consider a history of substance abuse in their application criteria.

Credit/Rent Money:

Most prisoners leave prison without enough money for a security deposit on an apartment. Most states provide a token amount of "gate money," ranging from \$25 to \$200, hardly enough for a deposit in most cases. (Petersilia, J. (2003). *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press).

SUMMARY OF PRIMARY HOUSING BARRIERS

The two primary barriers identified by the survey participants, criminal records and unemployment, are supported by state and national research.

▶ A 2002 study found that a criminal record is associated with a 50 percent reduction in employment opportunities for whites and a 64 percent reduction for blacks (Pager, D. 2002. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." Doctoral dissertation. Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison).

▶ One year after release, as many as 60 percent of former prison inmates were not employed (Watts, H., and D.S. Nightingale. 1996. *Adding it up: The economic impact of incarceration on individuals, families, and communities*. Oklahoma Criminal Justice Research Consortium Journal vol. 3).

▶ A survey of over 3,000 business establishments in the mid-1990s found that over 60 percent of respondents would "probably not" or would "definitely not" hire individuals with criminal records (Holzer, H.J., S. Raphael, and M.A. Stoll. 2001. "Will Employers Hire Ex-Offenders? Employer Preferences, Background Checks, and Their Determinants." In *The Impact of Incarceration on Families and Communities*).

▶ Finally, 93% of Texas inmates returning to Harris County from Texas state jails and prisons felt that finding a job after release was important and 87% believed they would need some help or a lot of help in finding a job (La Vigne, Nancy, Kachnowski, Vera. (2005), *Texas Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home, 2005*).

HOUSING OPTIONS?

Of the survey participants in Travis County, 57.5% reported previous barriers in securing permanent housing. The following explains available housing “choices” and why formerly incarcerated persons experience barriers to the housing options.

For a majority (64%) of Travis County returning prisoners in our study, their first home post-release is with a spouse, family, or friend. Research suggests that strong familial ties can assist the reintegration process (Laub, J.H. , D.S. Nagin, and R.J. Sampson. 1998. “Trajectories of Change in Criminal Offending: Good Marriages and the Desistance Process.” *American Sociological Review* 63:225-238.) (Warr, M. 1998. “Life-Course Transitions and Desistance from Crime,” *Criminology* 36(2):183-216.). Families provide financial, social, and emotional support.

For returning prisoners who do not have family members willing or able to take them in, the private market is one option but affordability is an almost insurmountable barrier. The greatest need for affordable housing in Travis County is found among those households earning 30% percent of HUD’s Median Family Income (a single person earning \$14,950 or \$17,100 for a family of 2) who primarily rent and cannot afford to buy a home (Texas Workforce Commission press release, January 18, 2008). At minimum wage for a standard 40 hour week, the typical former offender earns a total of \$12,636 before standard deductions! He/she would have to work a 50 to 60 hour week, just to reach the 30% MFI! An informal barrier to private market housing is perception. Landlords typically view individuals with criminal records as a threat to safety. Criminal background checks are standard practice by many landlords, and are a serious consideration in the approval of an application for a rental property.

The third housing option is federally subsidized housing but the barriers for returning prisoners seeking to access these programs are many. In Travis County, there are insufficient units available to meet the demand, as demonstrated by long waiting lists. Perhaps the biggest hurdle for this housing option is eligibility. Typically, an applicant is required to show proof of employment and/or income which is virtually impossible for former offenders to obtain in their first days of freedom. Although federal law does not deny public housing for persons with criminal convictions, denials—based on criminal history—are at the discretion of the Public Housing Authority or landlords. HUD’s “One Strike and You’re Out” policy gives PHAs power to deny admission or to terminate assistance to individuals with a history of use or abuse of drugs or alcohol, or of criminal behavior (HUD March 2000). No set time period is defined for past criminal activity, and is “left up to the owner (or PHA) to determine its admission policies.

A final housing option available to those with very few resources and a criminal history is service-enhanced transitional housing and supportive housing. Service-enhanced housing includes transitional (i.e., fixed length of stay) or phased-permanent housing and is coupled with a variety of support services to assist clients in achieving self-sufficiency. Programs that match offender needs with offered services are estimated to reduce recidivism risk by as much as 50% (Austin, James. 2001. “Prisoner Reentry: Current Trends, Practices, and Issues.” *Crime and Delinquency* 47:314-334). However, only 1/3 of homeless ex-offenders have their needs met through supported accommodation. The remaining 2/3 have little or no access to housing with or without support. (“Supported accommodation for ex-offenders: Identifying effective practice. *Housing Research* 138.” Joseph Rowntree Foundation. February 1995).

NEXT STEPS

This housing needs and barriers assessment is the first step in the Austin/Travis County Re-entry Roundtable’s work plan to develop an effective model, based on evidence based practices, to significantly improve housing options, services and resources. We are currently producing a comprehensive Housing Inventory Report reflecting the diverse array of available housing programs and services in Travis County as well as a Housing Provider Needs Assessment Analysis to determine the needs of housing providers to include and/or increase formerly incarcerated persons into their programs, supports, and services.

A gap analysis should be conducted to determine what is needed vs. what exist in Travis County. Once this is determined, realistic recommendations can be made to meet the ever growing demand for the safe and affordable housing necessary to give formerly incarcerated persons “a second chance” (Male inmate at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice—Travis Unit)!

COMMENTS FROM THE SOURCE!

The following are additional comments assessment participants made in addition to the survey and interview questions:

EMPLOYMENT:

Find more employment places that ex-offenders can have a good job to succeed in life.

Help with getting a job so I can have a place to live.

Thank you for helping get resources.

A good job that meets the payment requirements to survive in society.

Job skills training and a mentor that is successful already.

Knowing that we are repeat offenders and our felonies would not allow us to live or even to work.

We are like everyone else who wants good/safe lives for our children. We qualify for employment and housing but are being discriminated against due to our background.

Better jobs, new credit start, criminal history hurts, no transportation, need job training and place to live.

List of jobs that felons can work at.

I have always had a good paying job to go to and housing wasn't a problem. I have now lost housing and my job and I'm scared!

HOUSING:

More transitional housing and funding.

More incentives for regular apartments and landlords and bonding to open up rent situations.

We need some ex-offender friendly apt communities accepting convicted felons.

I want to live on the streets. I have since I was 14.

I just want a place I can come home to after a hard day's work.

I want a place that my kids can come visit me and watch TV.

I want some place I can call home.

Get other housing systems to give us a chance. We're human too!

Whenever I attend an interview for public housing, they not only look at the one crime I'm in jail for, they always refer back to a crime that was dismissed.

Some sort of loan program such as a grant to be used solely for housing so as not to be misused.

Knowing that we are repeat offenders and our felonies would not allow us to live or even to work.

We are like everyone else who wants good/safe lives for our children.

We qualify for employment and housing but are being discriminated against due to our background.

I, personally, have my own home to return to. In talking to others, needs would include affordable, housing outside of "drug-infested", high crime areas.

Most seem to be good people who continually find themselves in "bad environments".

I need a place to live and my mortgage.

I think helping us find a place to stay is very hard due to having a charge on our record.

It would be nice to get out and have the first month rent paid for and it not be in a high drug risk area.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE:

I don't want to go back to drugs but I don't know how I can help it living on the streets where it's so easy to get them and sell them for money.

REHABILITATION:

It would help if people would show more consideration to people that really trying to change.

BASIC NEEDS:

A second chance!

I need a sleeping bag.

Teach us how to give to the community instead of just taking.

I run out of my medicine and get scared.

I need help with vouchers and meetings with helpful information.

Helping more of us that have felonies.

Do not have a minimum of 5 years for your last felony conviction especially drug related for housing. Also, make a better decision on getting food stamp when your offense is drug related.

I need help even though I don't deserve it, I want to earn it.

I got a place to live but I would like help on food and clothing that all I am living in a good place, with lot family support.

Thank the Roundtable for helping us.

God Bless you all.

Make people compassionate to give us a chance to show we have changed.

CHILD SUPPORT:

My ex-husband is suing me for child support and I'll come right back in with bench warrant if I don't get help.

I need an ID and SS card to find a job and get child support off my back!

PHONES:

Change the telephone calling so all calls can go through, like you can call cell phones to reach your family and friends so that they can help you.

Take the blocks off people phones so we can get in touch with our family and resource people.

ID AND SS CARD:

You have to have an ID and SS card to go to work or get a place to live.

I need an ID and SS card to find a job and get child support off my back!

MENTAL HEALTH:

Help for us that have been mentally handicapped all our life.

Psychological oriented conditions!

SPECIFIC COMMENTS BY FEMALES AT WOODMAN STATE JAIL:

Our biggest barrier to housing is discrimination--being a woman that committed a crime. People expect criminals to be men and women to be homemakers. A woman that is a criminal is seen as the lowest of the low and they presume we are all prostitutes!

I have had trouble getting any kind of assistance with housing because I do not have children. (4 similar comments)

I was a realtor and I'd say 95% of all apartments will not rent to felons. I also do not think my license will be renewed because of my criminal history.

I have 3 children and I'm a single parent. I need a large enough, safe place that I can afford to live with my children. Thank you. (7 similar comments)

The survey already addressed the most important things.

Us inmates need all the help we can get so we won't strike out before we even get to the batting box!

I am a woman with a disability and now a criminal record. Do I really have a chance to stay free?

Help us get a job before we leave or at least as soon as we get out. (19 similar comments)

I moved to Austin to try to start over but it's been very hard 'cause I've been living on the streets or in the woods and I was carrying my baby that got taken away because I was homeless.

I have 3 kids and 6 grandkids. I don't know how I can I work to pay for them while I work, a place to live, and food to eat.

My family had a problem cashing my check this month so had to pay the rent late and now the landlord wants us out before I get released.

I have a child with special needs. He looks scary to people so they use my crime as an excuse to keep from renting to us.

To keep from coming back here, I need help with a place to stay so I won't be in the street and so I won't lose my 3 children to CPS.

Getting a job with a felony is really hard. Without a job, I can't afford a place to live. (4 similar comments)

I have the biggest problem in finding a place to live due to my criminal history—drug offense and assault with a deadly weapon on the dealer trying to hurt me. I have either had to rent a cheap motel by the week or stay in some other unsafe environment. No one wanting to rent to you is really hard on someone's self esteem when you are in recovery. It's like the odds are against us from the beginning.

My husband couldn't put me on his lease because of my criminal background. We are afraid they will evict him and the kids if I move home with them.

I need a house because most low income apartments are not accessible and I plan to live with my 29 year old disabled son so he can get out of that nasty nursing home where they put him when I went to jail.

I was already on Section 8 but I lost all of that when I got this dope case. It's very hard with finding houses you can afford. That's the reason I sold dope. Now no one will even consider us because of the drug related crime but we pay our bills on time and keep things straight because of our children.

Section 8 has a waiting list that takes years to even get on. (8 similar comments)

Thank goodness for CTC. At least I have basic living for 90 days but it is unsure if it will continue to be available when I get out. (4 similar comments)

I need a place for my children, near a school, a bus stop and medical clinic if they get sick. Thank you for your time and efforts.

I want to be responsible for my children and give them a house to get away from bad memories and continuing in the same cycle.

With assault charges, I can't get a place to live. Without a place to live, I can't get my kids back from CPS. Without my kids, I don't have any reason to keep going.

Please get our government to give us a chance to reintegrate into society by allowing us housing and employment.

I'm headed back to the streets because I have no place to go.

I want to get away from the environment I got into trouble in.

Without a chance, our nightmares continue...



TOGETHER, WE CAN BREAK THE CYCLE!