

**TEXAS INMATE FAMILIES
ASSOCIATION - TIFA**

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Executive Director
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TIFA'S MISSION:

- o TIFA is a non-profit organization whose mission is to "break the cycle of crime by strengthening families through support, education, and advocacy".
- o We work to:
 - Support and strengthen existing family relationships
 - Remove the stigma associated with family members of offenders
 - Inform state officials and the general public about the effects of the criminal justice system upon the offenders' families




**FAMILY HARDSHIPS DUE TO
INCARCERATION**

- o Added stress of knowing that a family member has lost their freedom and lives in an hostile & dangerous environment
- o Some family members are unsupportive about maintaining family ties with the incarcerated
- o Stigma hinders relationships and support networks for family members
- o Financial instability and material hardship

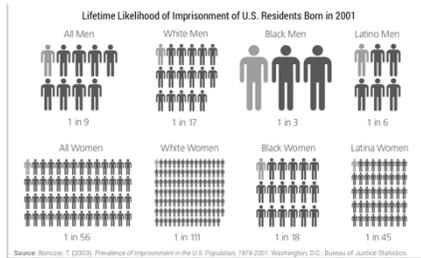


FAMILY HARDSHIPS DUE TO INCARCERATION (CONT)

- o Children having school behavior issues and performance problems
- o Stress of incarceration on premarital and marital relationships
- o Lack of organizations like TIFA who offer valuable information about the incarceration process



UNDERSTANDING THE CRISES IN OUR FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES: RACE & GENDER



TIFA'S GOALS

- o Be a support network to families with incarcerated loved ones
- o Work with TDCJ to improve visitation, family contact and strengthen family bonds
- o Improve communications between offenders and their families
- o Help families improve services to and overall well-being of offenders while incarcerated
- o Aid in the difficult transition of offenders back into society after release, (linking with agencies for jobs, housing, social programs)
- o Advocate to the legislature and the community to increase better understanding of the family's circumstances due to an incarceration



HOW TIFA ACCOMPLISHES ITS MISSION AND GOALS





TIFA CHAPTER MEETINGS

- Offer open, supportive discussions
- Meet other families with similar struggles
- Feature speakers of interest
 - TDCJ Regional Directors
 - Education – Windham and Colleges
 - Commissary
 - Parole Board Members
 - Support groups such as KAIROS
- Meet with other advocacy groups

OUTREACH

- Website – TIFA.org
 - Events calendar and chapter information
 - Parole Workshops
 - Newsletters, legislative updates, documents and links of interest
- Quarterly Newsletter – TIFA Contact
- Emails- Constant Contact
- Facebook (General Support page – Members Only Information page)



ADVOCACY WITH TDCJ

- Meet quarterly with TDCJ in Huntsville
- Subject matter is decided upon in advance
- TDCJ representatives from different divisions are in attendance
- Types of issues that are addressed include:
 - Visitation
 - Medical care
 - Parole
 - Commissary
 - Reentry
 - Grievance/Case issues
 - Food
 - Emergency absences
 - Education
 - Prison safety and environment



PAROLE PACKET WORKSHOPS

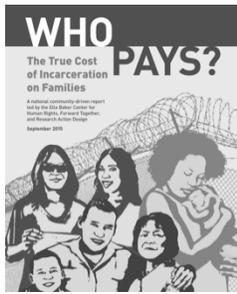
- Parole process is explained
- Opportunities for members to ask questions and get examples for packets
- Four workshops a year are given around the state
- Board of Pardons and Parole attends chapter meetings to do a follow-up Q & A session
- Work with the Darrington Seminary to provide parole workshops inside TDCJ



WORKING ON ISSUES AND CHALLENGES



FINANCIAL IMPACT OF INCARCERATION



<http://elilabakercenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/who-pays.pdf>

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF INCARCERATION

- o Expenses supported by families: trust fund, books & magazines, phone calls, emails, care packages, tuition

- o Monthly – About \$470
- o Yearly – About \$5,640

WHAT FAMILIES PAID IN 2013 INTO TRUST FUND ACCOUNTS

- o \$115-\$120 million in trust fund accounts
- o \$101 million in revenue generated through commissary purchases
 - \$91 million covers operating costs
 - o \$72 million used to purchase products for commissary
 - o \$17 million goes to salaries (~410 positions)
 - \$4.5 million transferred through a MOU to Windham for offender education and entertainment
 - \$5.5 million goes back to general revenue



WHAT FAMILIES ARE PAYING FOR PHONE CALLS

- o In 2014 \$36.8 million was paid to the OTS
- o State law allows Texas a commission rate of 40% which in 2014 resulted in \$14.5 million
- o The first \$10 million goes to the Victims of Crimes fund
- o The remaining \$4.5 million was split between Victims of Crimes fund and the State General Revenue fund



FINANCIAL IMPACT OF INCARCERATION

- o Estimates on monthly phone calls
 - How many accept phone calls – 79%
 - How much is spent
 - o \$0-\$100 – 60%
 - o \$101 - \$200 – 27%
 - o \$201-\$450 – 13%



VISITATION

Issues include:

- o Distance traveled
- o Wait/space available at unit for visitation
- o Guard interpretation of visitation rules
- o Expense
- o Difficulty of visitation with/for small children
- o Noise



DISCIPLINE & GRIEVANCES

Issues include:

- o False accusations
- o Fairness & trust in the process
- o Penalties & impact of cases on rehabilitation
- o Lack of independent oversight



TEXAS FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE RALLY



TEXAS FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE

TEXAS FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE

We rallied so Texas lawmakers would consider:

- o creating restorative, re-integrative, and community-based solutions instead of punishment for the masses
- o creating economic and social solutions to jobs, housing, food, healthcare, education and racial justice
- o making higher education available to all, in and out of prison; stopping the school to prison pipeline
- o eliminating for-profit prisons
- o reforming parole by approving applicants based on a fair evaluation

TEXAS FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE

TEXAS FAMILIES FOR JUSTICE

We rallied so Texas lawmakers would consider:

- o releasing low risk incarcerated elders
- o banning post-prison discrimination in education, jobs and housing
- o overhauling the public defense system statewide
- o raising the age of adult criminal responsibility to 18
- o paying correctional officers a fair wage and providing additional training
- o limiting administrative segregation
- o investing in community-based and public health solutions to drug addiction and mental illness

BILLS SUPPORTED BY TIFA DURING THE 84TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- o **HB 1546** Thompson -Relating to the award of diligent participation credit to defendants confined in a state jail felony facility.
- o **HB 3303** Miles -Relating to the creation of the Office of the Independent Oversight Ombudsman for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.
- o **HB 1267** Thompson -Relating to the eligibility of certain persons for the supplemental nutrition assistance program.



BILLS SUPPORTED BY TIFA DURING THE
84TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- o ~~HB 548 Johnson - Relating to the consideration of criminal history record information regarding applicants for state employment. (Ban the Box)~~
- o **HB 549 Johnson** -Relating to certain duties of the Commission on Jail Standards regarding visitation periods for county jail prisoners. (Video Visitation)

84TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION – HB 1

General Revenue Funds for TDCJ were increased by \$458.4 million for the 2016-17 biennium and this includes:

- o \$10.0 million for the purchase of comprehensive video surveillance systems
- o \$60.0 million for the agency's major repair and renovation efforts to maintain our existing physical plant totaling over 100 correctional facilities statewide.
- o 8% salary increase (\$188.0 million) for correctional officers, correctional laundry and food service managers, ranking correctional officers, and parole officers
- o \$139.4 million increase for Correctional Managed Health Care



VIDEO VISITATION

H.B. 549 works to encourage inmate access to in-person visitations.

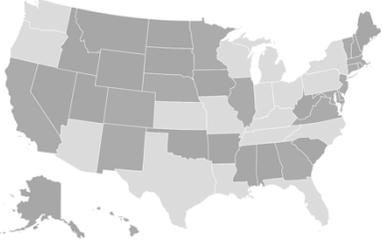
- o The number of county jails using video visitation is increasing.
- o The cost of video visitation can be a significant obstacle for low- income families.
- o Eliminating in-person visitation has led to an increase of inmate-on-staff assaults.

 **BAN THE BOX**



ENSURING PEOPLE WITH CONVICTIONS HAVE A FAIR CHANCE TO WORK

 **BAN THE BOX**



■ Has a state law (may also have city and county fair chance policies)
■ Has at least one city or county fair chance policy

 **BAN THE BOX/FAIR CHANCE**

Delaying criminal history checks:

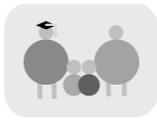
- Is Good for Families.
- Helps the Economy and is Good for Business.
- Improves Public Safety.
- Improves the Willingness of Employers to Hire the Applicant.
- Retains the Employer's Discretion to Hire the Most Qualified Candidate.



PELL GRANTS TO HELP PAY FOR COLLEGE

On May 21, a bill was introduced to Congress that would allow state and federal prisoners to receive Pell Grants for a college education, even while incarcerated. The Restoring Education and Learning (REAL) Act would revoke Congress's 1994 ban on providing Pell Grants to federal and state prisoners.





FOR FAMILIES

In-prison college education:

- o Improves parenting behaviors
- o Higher family income
- o Increases likelihood that children and family members achieve higher education levels
- o Reduces likelihood of children experiencing behavioral problems.



THE UPCOMING 85TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- o Independent Oversight for TDCJ
- o Fair Sentencing Reviews for Long-term Prisoners
- o Due Diligence Credit Toward Parole Review
- o Modification of Prison Sentences for Age, Health or Other Compelling Reasons
- o For Reentry: Fair Chance Hiring and Housing
- o Raise the Age: For those entering the adult prison system from 17 to 18 years of age



**WE NEED YOUR HELP TO
HELP TEXAS FAMILIES**

- We need your support to ensure strong, healthy, families in Texas
- Help us educate the general public about the issues associated with incarceration and its negative affects on the families and children of those incarcerated
- Support TIFA financially by using Amazon Smile, Kroger, Randall's and selecting TIFA as your charity or making a donation on our website at TIFA.org
- YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



THANK YOU!