

## Denying Parole at First Eligibility

*How much public safety does it actually buy?  
- A report from Michigan*

According to the 2014 TDCJ Statistical Report (page 17) there were 74,865 people in TDCJ who were eligible for release and 7,594 who were eligible for discretionary mandatory supervision. Below is an excerpt from a report done in Michigan that examines the issue of keeping offenders past their review date. The full report is available on-line at <http://www.capps-mi.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Denying-parole-at-first-eligibility-2009.pdf>

### Purpose of the Research

The Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending examined 76,721 cases of Michigan prisoners sentenced to indeterminate terms after 1981 and released for the first time from 1986 through 1999. The primary goal was to answer the following questions:

- 1) Does continuing to incarcerate people who have served their minimum sentences actually improve public safety and, if so, to what extent and at what cost?
- 2) Specifically, does denying parole at the minimum only to release a person a year or two thereafter have a substantial impact on re-offense rates?

The analysis also shed light on a number of other important questions regarding the nature and cost-effectiveness of parole decision making. In particular, because offense groups were analyzed separately, the impact of the nature of the crime on both release decisions and actual recidivism could be identified.

### The Findings

The research supports seven key findings and numerous related ones.

- 1) Success rates varied greatly by offense type. Homicide and sex offenders re-offended the least while those whose crimes were financially motivated returned to prison the most.
- 2) New crimes against persons by released prisoners were rare. Among those who returned with new sentences, larceny was the



most common new crime.

- 3) The impact on parole decisions of characteristics well known to predict success varied widely by offense.
- 4) Parole was commonly denied based on the nature of the past crime, not the actual likelihood the person would commit a new one.
- 5) Sheer length of time served bears no relationship to success.
- 6) Incarcerating people for an additional year or two after they reached their earliest release date had very little impact on success rates in general and returns with new sentences in particular. On average, the people continued for one year were somewhat less successful than those released when first eligible, but keeping people for two, three or four years made virtually no additional difference. However, variations among offense groups were substantial.
- 7) If everyone denied parole for up to two years had been released when first eligible, it would have saved nearly 33,000 beds over 14 years, or more than 2,300 beds a year, on average. The impact on overall arrest rates would have been virtually imperceptible. The cost savings, in today's dollars, would have exceeded \$1 billion for the entire period and averaged nearly \$74 million a year.

### Implications Of the Findings:

- 1) Relying on lengthy incarceration as a crime control strategy is not a cost-effective policy.
- 2) Michigan can safely reduce its incarceration rate to the levels of comparable states while continuing to adequately punish the most serious offenders.
- 3) Sentence length should reflect appropriate punishment but should not assume that exceedingly long sentences are necessary to prevent reoffending. Sentencing guidelines for assaultive, sex and habitual offenders should

be reevaluated.

- 4) Substantially increasing the rate of parole on the earliest release date would reduce the prisoner population without threatening public safety. In particular, eliminating the frequent delay of parole for one or two years would save significant amounts of money without releasing anyone "early" or causing more than a minimal change in success rates.

- 5) Establishing a statutory presumption of parole on the minimum for all prisoners, subject to individualized risk assessments, would avoid unnecessarily imprisoning people who have served their punishment and are at low risk for reoffending.

- 6) Current parole guidelines which account for institutional misconduct, prior record and current age are adequate to identify an individual's statistical risk for reoffending. However, they should be adjusted to accurately account for the nature of the offense.

- 7) Since time served does not relate to success on release, the use of sentence reductions or community placements as incentives for good behavior would not reduce public safety and might increase it by encouraging self-discipline and program participation in prison and a structured reentry to the community.

- 8) The application of stringent supervision conditions to whole categories of parolees and of employment and residence barriers to whole categories of people with criminal convictions is not necessary to protect the public. The selective use of parole conditions and of work and residence related prohibitions, based on actual risk, would be fairer and more cost-effective.

- 9) Since many former prisoners will not reoffend in any event, reentry efforts will be most cost-effective if targeted at the people who are at highest risk for reoffending, such as by providing job training and placement for those who committed financially motivated crimes and treatment for those suffering from mental illness or substance abuse.

- 10) In order to make realistic and responsible policy choices at every stage of the criminal justice system, we need to better understand what distinguishes those former prisoners who do not reoffend from those who do. Research should focus not only on which post-conviction programs are effective but on which offender characteristics correlate with success even in the absence of programs. **n**

## TIFA Contact

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**Note:** We read all mail that is received but cannot answer every letter. Our mission is strengthening families through support, education and advocacy.



## Telling Your Story, from Chair Patti Kassel



**T**elling your story of a loved one incarcerated can be a barrier to many of our acquaintances and even friends. It is good to start with those who have become our closest friends and companions in life. As you share with them and they share with you, it begins to build really meaningful and healing relationships. It gives us someone to walk alongside with, friends who will lend us support for our struggles, and who will listen, pray and care for us.

Recently I was invited to speak at the Kyle Rotary Club meeting to talk about TIFA. As many of you know, you can't talk about TIFA without sharing some of your own personal stories and struggles. Before arriving I concerned myself with how they would react or if I would make them feel sad or sorry for me. On the contrary, they listened, asked questions and even followed up after my presentation to ask more questions. They were interested in knowing about my loved one and TIFA; as well as all we do, who we help, and how we help them. Some people even shared their own stories of incarcerated loved ones, past and present.

I walked away from that experience feeling encouraged to continue telling my story and the TIFA story. In many cases, it is not that people don't understand or care, but they have never had anyone share their story. Do you have that opportunity? If so, I encourage you to share your story with others and continue to spread all the knowledge gained as members of TIFA.

"Your greatest life messages and your most effective ministry will come out of your deepest hurts." **n**

**Don't Forget! As you do your shopping and when you order from Amazon use AmazonSmile and select TIFA as your charity.**

## Message from the Executive Director, Jennifer Erschabek



**T**here is no way to predict what will be happening in the area of criminal justice in the next twenty years except for the fact that things will change. There are many things pointing in the direction of change; knowing what works and what doesn't work with criminal justice, making the public aware of the issues and then fixing the system so that our loved ones can come home and be successful without the barriers that make reentry into the community so difficult.

With new leadership on the Criminal Justice Board and the Board of Pardons and Parole, we hope for new attitudes and visions. With Brad Livingston retiring from his position as Executive Director of TDCJ we can also hope for a culture change in an agency that in the past has been inconsistent and lacked transparency. The problems in TDCJ will not have simple fixes but with a fresh attitude and an adoption of a strategy that emphasizes opportunities instead of punishment, we could look forward to better prospects for our family members while they serve their time and when they return home.

But let us not forget to make our voices heard. In the end, change is up to you. If you have not already done so, be sure to go to **TIFA.org** and click on the petition button, sign it and share with as many friends and family members as you can. **n**

## WRITING TO PERSUADE

*By Terri LeClercq, Ph.D.*

**F**rustration! That's the universal response from inmates and families about **writing grievances** and letters that seem to be routinely returned, unresolved.

Before anyone starts writing, it's a good time to **envision your audience**: a tired UGI, a prison bureaucrat in an office stacked with Step 2s, an Ombudsman with too much to do, too little time, and no

patience. Trust me on this: it is NOT someone eager to hear your problems. So how do you catch the reader's attention, and convince that person that they should sit back, take the time to read all the way through, and rule in your favor? It's not actually magic.



**1. Your first sentence** should identify the problem. For instance, perhaps your property was 'misplaced' when you were sent to ag seg while officials investigated your cellie's problem. Why begin with the cellie's problem, or with indignation that you are missing property? You would miss your best opportunity to catch the reader's attention: that first line. After the form questions of who/what/action at the top of Step 1, you have the opportunity in the space provided. For instance, "When I was sent to ag seg during a routine investigation, my documented property disappeared." They get a lot, a whole lot, of complaints about missing property. So if you do have documentation, mention that to separate your claim from all those others.

**2. Follow TDCJ's instructions!** They ask for "who, what, when, where, and disciplinary number if appropriate." Make sure you follow their directions and include those **specifics**.

**3. Organize** your paragraph(s). Law students are taught a simple but effective organizational structure that you might follow. If you eventually take your grievance out into the courts, you will already have an outline that legal audiences recognize. It looks like this:

a. **ISSUE:** [what you are complaining about] My documented property disappeared.

b. **RULE:** [TDCJ policy or Constitution or Amendments] TDCJ policy # [?! can't find one!] states that lost/stolen property will be either replaced or inmate will be compensated for loss. [remember—I just invented that language here]

c. **APPLICATION:** [your facts, following the TDCJ instructions above] On July 15, 2015, my cellie fell and hit his head on the bed, causing his

forehead to bleed. Following procedure, the officers took me to ag seg until they investigated the incident. While I was gone, between July 15-18, Officers xx and yy allowed other inmates to come into our cell to pack us up. When I got to my new cell, most of my belongings were missing. I talked with Officer zz and showed her a list of the commissary items—my proof of purchase. She was able to recover only a few items. The rest are gone. Thus I have informed the appropriate official but have not had my property compensated. Official documents show that the still-missing property cost me \$375. Keep your facts limited to the ISSUE you began with. Do not wander off onto your cellie's head problems, or how much you hate the new cell location.

d. **CONCLUSION:** TDCJ should reimburse me for the documented property that officials allowed to be taken by other inmates. TDCJ policy [??] states that inmates are entitled to compensation, and I have proof of the items' legitimate costs.

**4. Be factual and not emotional.** Do not appeal to reader's pity. ("Since the theft, I want to stay in my house all day now.") Do not appeal to your previous sterling behavior. ("I don't ask for much around here.") Do NOT attack the reader. ("I know you officials just rubber-stamp these grievances, and I might as well use this paper to draw on.") Do NOT exaggerate. ("Probably 100 guys around here lost their property last year.") while you are reading to see 'who done it.' When you take the GED vocabulary tests, you will know a surprising number of words others don't know. When you write your letters home, you will use new words that will make your Loved Ones smile.

**5. Remember the different purposes** of a Step 1, and Step 2, and court filing, and letter to an Ombudsman. Step 1 establishes your facts and complaint. Step 2 is the appellate argument: what went wrong in Step 1 answer that you want re-considered? Do not re-state everything you already explained in Step 1. You might point out that the first reader did not review the property list; did not question the officials or ask the other inmates; did not return the response in the proper time limit. Step 2 readers, like appellate court judges, do not review the facts but rather the appropriate procedure. An Ombudsman, for family-member

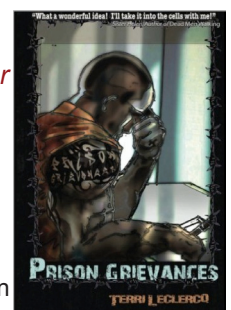
writers, needs all the facts also, and as little emotion as possible. State clearly what you believe the Ombudsman Office can do within the limitations of that office. (They cannot get a new trial. They cannot step into a custody battle. Perhaps, maybe, they may ask the Warden etc., to review your facts or investigate the problem.) Ask the Ombudsman reader, up front, what that office can do about your worry/complaint.

Writers who attempt to get a complaint acted on, or a decision overturned, are indeed climbing a steep hill. I understand your frustration from reviewing all the rejected grievances that correspondents forward to me. Steep hill, indeed. But it is not an insurmountable mountain if writers stick to the full facts and follow the rules. If the relief is money or property or a disciplinary decision overturned, you will probably keep the TDCJ decision as final. If the decision affects your parole or time served, or of course if it is life-threatening, then you will take it outside into the court system-- which also has overburdened readers.

I remind my correspondents that the Real World has bad readers too; that bosses may not review all the facts; that government rules are arbitrary and occasionally nutty. Out here, of course we have more options for resource. Inmates have few. That is why, though, you want to practice persuasive techniques, perhaps getting someone else to compare your draft to the suggestions above.

May fortune smile on all legal writers with legitimate complaints. [n](#)

*Terri LeClercq,  
Ph.D., is the author  
of **Prison  
Grievances:  
when to write,  
how to write***



This fabulous graphic novel offers in cartoon form all sorts of hints, artwork, and check-lists for writing a successful grievance. This book teaches inmates how to think through a jail or prison problem and conform to the stringent rules of the federal Prison Litigation Reform Act and the rules of particular jails or prison systems. It also warns against frivolous and malicious filings. And you can order it through [AmazonSmile.n](#)



# News from the Chapters

## Parole Division and Reentry Visit the Dallas Chapter

By Darlene Mathis

The Fort Worth Chapter had a very informative meeting in February. Forty-three members and visitors along with five reentries were in attendance to hear a group of speakers that provided a wealth of information. **Mr. Stuart Jenkins**, Director of Parole Division; **Jennifer Robinson**, Section Director of Review and Release Processing; **Troy Johnson**, Regional Supervisor for Reentry and Integration; **Jacqueline Dickerson**, Parole Division Regional Director; **Wayne Stewart**, Assistant Regional Director; **Lisa Howard**, Deputy Director of Reentry and Integration; and **April Zamora**, Division Director, Reentry and Integration Division.

April Zamora works with the reentries to obtain important documents needed upon release. These items include a birth certificate, a social security card and an identification card. She stressed how important it is to have the name correctly spelled in order to process the request with each department.

Mr. Jenkins' Division does not make the release decisions, nor does it decide whose parole should be revoked, or what special conditions should be placed on releases. His office is to promote public safety and positive offender change through effective supervision, programs, and services. With this group of people they are working to help make the parole transition a smoother process. It is the desire of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for all clients to successfully complete parole.

According to the Parole Division Policy and Operating Procedure, all face-to-face contacts with clients shall be scheduled at a time that is convenient to the client and the Parole Officer. If a client is employed, they shall NOT be instructed to take time off from work in order to report for office visits or scheduled home contacts. Mr. Jenkins reiterated this at the meeting. The power of communication is what works best for all.

Should you have any questions or encounter any problems, please contact the Office Manager or Region Director. Or you can visit the Parole Division web-site at <http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/parole/index.html>.

The Reentry Hotline is 1-877-887-6151. Visit the Reentry Division web-site at <http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/rid/index.html> n

## Myra Walker, TDCJ Health Services, Speaks at Dallas Chapter

By Debra Lenamond-Smith

The Dallas Chapter had a wonderful guest speaker for their April meeting, Myra Walker chief of the TDCJ Health Services Division, Office of Professional Standards. She provided a lot of general information about medical and how the medical department operates. She explained that the Sick Call Request slips are collected at a minimum of once a day and taken to the medical department where they are reviewed and appropriate action taken. Dental requests are referred to dental staff; mental health requests are referred to mental health staff.

If your request requires you to be seen for sick call in the medical department, the medical department will schedule you for triage/evaluation. If it is determined that you need to see a doctor or a physician extender, the medical department will arrange an appointment. If you wish to be seen by a physician only, you must make that clear when you submit a Sick Call Request; however, it is left to the physician's clinical judgment to see you or to conduct a chart review. You may not request a provider by name.

If your medical problem is urgent, you should tell an officer or staff member and request assistance from the medical department. This is called the "walk-in" procedure. If one of the professional medical employees at the medical department agrees you need immediate attention, you will receive immediate attention. You do not need to fill out a written Sick

Call Request if you have something minor and need Tylenol. You can get Tylenol at various locations at your facility.

### Offender Complaints and/ or Grievance about Medical Care

If you believe that you are not receiving or you did not receive appropriate medical care, there are several things that you can do. First, you should always ask the treating professional all the questions you need answered to understand what he/ she is doing about your health problem. Second, you should send an I-60 form (Inmate Request to Official) to the facility medical Complaints Coordinator in your facility medical department. The Complaints Coordinator has been selected by the Management Team to facilitate informal resolution of all medical concerns. It is the responsibility of the Complaints Coordinator to review your concern and direct it to the appropriate discipline director for evaluation, response and action as deemed appropriate by that service provider. The TDCJ Health Services Division, Patient Liaison Program is available to you, the offender and third parties as one mechanism to initiate medical investigations.

### Annual Health Care Services Fee

As of September 28, 2011 and in accordance with state law, if you initiate a health services visit you may be charged an annual \$100.00 fee, unless specifically exempt. The fee covers health care visits that you request for one year and will be deducted from your Trust Fund. You will not be charged another \$100.00 fee until you request a visit after the one year period has expired. The Board of Pardons and Paroles does not currently impose reimbursement of unpaid health care services fees as a condition of parole.

Be sure to sign your HIPAA forms every 6 months so if a medical issue occurs your family members can be notified. n

## TIFA Webinars - Our Virtual Chapter

This year TIFA has started a new program designed to help our members who do not live close to an existing chapter or live out of the state. TIFA wanted to be able to offer everyone the same access to information that we have in our chapters.

Our next webinar will be on Tuesday,

May 24 at 6:00 pm CDT and the presenter will be Ariel Dulitzky, Clinical Professor of Law at the UT School of Law and Director of the Human Rights Clinic (HRC).

In 2014, the HRC published a report, entitled "Deadly Heat in Texas Prisons," challenging the current situation in Texas prisons on domestic and international standards addressing extreme heat. In 2015, the Clinic published the report "Reckless Indifference: Extreme Heat in Texas Prisons" and revealed the ongoing, dire conditions that inmates and guards alike are exposed to in Texas prisons, which have claimed the lives of at least 14 inmates since 2007. [n](#)



## Catalyst for Change

*By Roland Guerra &  
Tracy P Williams  
Coffield Field Ministers*

Every community has its own culture. Prison is no different. Everyone knows that the prison culture is notorious for its negative reputation. However, there is a fresh current of change blowing in the air behind prison walls in Texas. The word change is a popular buzzword in society today. But when this word is applied to the transformation of convicted felons' behavioral patterns, many are skeptical at best. Notwithstanding, here on Coffield are on a mission for change as men are getting a point of reference for their future through evidenced based initiatives that lead to behavioral changes. We, the field ministers at Coffield, want to take this opportunity to thank TIFA for their contribution to this mission for change and to inform its members of some of the initiatives that are happening here at the largest prison in the state of Texas.

First, we are compelled to preface this writing by emphasizing that we believe that positive culture change only happens when men begin to believe the truths of the Bible and follow its teachings. Real transformation always starts inward from the heart and manifests itself outward in one's behavior. Once the spiritual founda-

tion is laid, the structure that is built on it will be sound and lasting. We believe that construct should be framed with education, and bricked and mortared in job skills and hard work, respectively. So, our commitment is to the whole man, first the spiritual aspect and then the cognitive aspect. This whole-man initiative is the key to culture change here in prison and to preparing incarcerated men for successful reentry back into society. The inward change serves as the motivation we build upon through a wide array of personal growth, educational, and reentry programs. These include: Tutorial classes, Job Skills classes and Resource Fairs, and Parole Forum and Parole Packet workshops.

It is a proven fact that education provides men with greater opportunities for gainful employment. Therefore, we have allied with Windham School District to provide a tutorial program designed to help those students who need a little more personal assistance in their quest for a GED. A well-equipped team of 18 tutors have been assembled for the task. These are inmates who care about the well-being of their fellow inmates and provide their time and energy to help men reach their education goals. We have seen great results with some receiving their GED and others advancing to new levels in their Math and English scores. Our tutorial program covers a broad range of the learning spectrum. There are tutors for students who are trying to increase their EA scores in order to get into GED classes, while also preparing others for their college entry exams. We even provide tutors for those who cannot read and for those who are trying to learn English as a second language. We provide an environment of learning and trust where everyone is striving to better themselves. The benefits to the individual are obvious, but we are encouraged about the intrinsic benefit to the community as a whole. The concept of inmates helping inmates creates an atmosphere of peace and service, which fosters a community mindset that leads to culture change in here and potentially better citizens out there.

Statistics show that a man is less likely to return to prison when he has a good job to support himself and his family. Therefore, we have created an 8-week Job Skills course comprised of a 5 member team uniquely qualified to teach a systematic curriculum designed to take a man through the entire job process. The course begins with a Philosophy of Work and provides

assistance in the following areas: personality trait assessment and skills inventory, goal setting, market analysis and job search training, personal finance, employer expectation awareness, resume writing, application and interviewing tips. The class culminates with mock interviews considered by outside volunteers designed to prepare the students to answer the really tough questions. A Job Fair is planned for later in the year. The fair will be a networking and information platform that connects those inmates who will be eligible for parole shortly with prospective employers who are willing to hire ex-felons.

Finally, in order to help inmates to "map a course forward" in preparing themselves for their approaching parole date, we recently conducted a parole forum. The forum (1/25/16) was a huge success. About 200 inmates participated and left the event much more informed. We are extremely appreciative of Michelle Skyrme, Region II Palestine Parole Board Member, who fielded questions from the floor and brought much needed clarity to the parole process. Likewise, we owe a special debt of gratitude to TIFA Executive Director Jennifer Erschabek, Sharon Bass, and Pamela Willis who presented valuable information to the men.

We are excited about the changes that are currently taking place here at Coffield. The idea of inmates helping inmates is not novel, it is the logical conclusion derived from the reality that we are all in this together. And, we are truly fortunate to work with a chaplaincy department and an administration that is forward thinking and innovative. But we are not alone. The winds of change are swirling throughout the system. Other units are also diligently working to change prison culture and to make prison a place where men can flourish, so that they might leave better than when they arrive. But change takes time and only through a cooperative effort from the community within and without. We all must be a "catalyst for change." Once again, thank you TIFA for being at the forefront of the mission for positive change. God bless!

**(Editor's note:** Currently Field Ministers are located at Coffield, Beto, Estelle, Ellis, Ferguson, Michaels, and Darrington. The Field Ministers are graduates of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at the Darrington Unit. For more information visit <http://heartoftexasfoundation.org/>.) [n](#)

## TDCJ's New Social Media Rule



In April, the TDCJ updated the offender handbook to say that inmates are not allowed to have active social media accounts. This includes media accounts that are managed for offenders by friends and family in the offender's name. Social media companies require corrections agencies to have a specific rule in place that bars offenders from maintaining active social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc in order for the agencies to request that a page be taken down. The new rule does not include blogs or private web pages because there is not a mechanism to request they be taken down and TDCJ would not be able to enforce compliance.

Under General Rules of the Offender Orientation Handbook rule #4 (page 24) "Offenders are prohibited from maintaining active social media accounts for the purposes of soliciting, updating, or engaging others, through a third party or otherwise." The level three violation can result in loss of privileges, extra work duty, or confinement to an inmate's cell for up to 45 days.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation objects to the new rules in Texas, arguing "a person does not lose all of their rights to participate in public discourse when they are incarcerated... This policy would not only prohibit the prisoners' exercise of their First Amendment rights, but also prevent the public from exercising their First Amendment rights to gather information about the criminal justice system from those most affected by it."

Texas ACLU senior policy strategist Matt Simpson said "This rule clearly fails to acknowledge the critical role of social networks in helping individuals overcome the challenges they face when re-entering our communities, such as finding steady and stable employment." It helps them stay connected to friends and extended

family who they will eventually rely upon for support when they return home to their communities. [n](#)



## Update on HB 1914

HB 1914 (84th Legislature) authorized the Board of Pardons and Paroles to set a next parole review for up to 10 years when the Board denies parole for offenses involving capital life sentences eligible for parole, and aggravated sexual assault. In 2015, procedures were implemented authorizing the Board to set a next review for either 5, 7, or 10 years in the future for those cases and they began applying those set offs to existing sentences. In April 2016, the Board met in Austin for their quarterly meeting and voted to also include the option of a 3 year set off, in addition to the 5, 7, and 10 year set off options for HB 1914 cases. [n](#)



## Phone Rate Change Halted by Judicial Stay

**W**hat happened to the phone rates? A federal appeals court has put on hold a FCC order imposing strict caps on prison and jail phone-call rates. The new rates that were suppose to go into effect March 17 would have limited the rate for debit and prepaid calls in state or federal prisons to 11 cents a minute and restricted the amount of "ancillary" fees that could be tacked on.

The caps were challenged in court by prison phone companies and several states, including Oklahoma, which argued that the commission had exceeded its statutory authority and had unlawfully

disregarded the actual costs of providing inmate calling services.

The first stay was issued March 7 and prevented the FCC from implementing new rate caps of 11¢ to 22¢ per minute on both out-of-state and in-state calls from prisons. But the stay—which would remain in place while the prison phone companies' lawsuit against the FCC is still pending—did not disturb an earlier "interim" cap set in 2013 of 21¢ per minute that applied only to out-of-state calls. The order also didn't specifically object to the FCC changing its definition of "inmate calling service" to include both out-of-state and in-state calls.

On March 23, 2016 the DC Circuit modified the stay imposed in the March 7th Order that provided for imposing interim rate caps as applied to "in-state calling services" raising it to 23.4¢.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler said he was pleased that the D.C. Circuit panel had allowed at least part of the FCC order to take effect as planned, saying the curbs on fees significantly lowered call charges.

"While we regret that relief from high inmate calling rates will be delayed for struggling families and their 2.7 million children trying to stay in touch with a loved one, we are gratified that costly and burdensome ancillary charges will come to an end," FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and Commissioner Mignon Clyburn said in a joint statement. [n](#)

## TIFA 2016 Parole Packet Workshops

**T**IFA has three scheduled workshops remaining for 2016. For registration and more information visit our website at [TIFA.org/events](http://TIFA.org/events) or you can call the TIFA phone line at 512-371-0900 and leave a message. The cost to attend is \$50 for members and \$85 for nonmembers (which includes a membership).

Sat May 21st, 2016 1-4 **Conroe**  
Eagle's Nest Ministries

Sat July 16th, 2016 9-1 **San Antonio**  
St Marks Evangelist Catholic Church

Sat Oct 15, 2016 8-12 **Dallas**  
Lover's Lane Methodist Church [n](#)



# "Think About the Why and Believe"

By **Lewis Conway Jr.**

*Austin Reentry Advocacy Project member*

Imagine if you will a great cruise ship full of passengers but with no Captain at the helm. Now imagine you set that cruise ship off with no destination and no guidance. I submit that it wouldn't be long before that ship turned up on the News or the Internet as missing. It is my opinion that you would find that ship washed up on a shore or at the bottom of the ocean. Either way, without a destination that vessel is doomed.

Imagine now that cruise ship is your life. Imagine that every day you proceed forth with no destination and no navigation. Where would you be? In most cases, exactly where you are now. The advancements I was able to make in the Film and Music industry and now my Writing and Speaking Career, I did based on goals. I learned to break my big goal down into a

series of small goals. I find it necessary to have immediate goals, six month goals, five year goals and long term goals. Every set of goals are designed to accomplish your long term goal. You have to start somewhere. Set small goals that you know you can achieve. The purpose is to fortify your faith and belief.

Your immediate goals have to be easy and something you completely believe you can accomplish. Then set some 6 month goals. Make a list of the things you want and believe 100% that you can achieve. Focus on that goal without ceasing or distraction. If it doesn't come



in exactly six months, don't sweat it. The time table isn't important, the belief and faith you give to it are. If you believe and you desire it, it will become a tangible

reality. It has to, it's a law. It's a law designed by the Architect of the Universe, Allah, the Source or God. God has created everything based on law and order. Everything is exact, even down to the design and geometric structure of a snowflake. Now start working on some 5 year goals and your long term goal. By accomplishing your immediate goals, you are positioning your mind in the direction of faith and belief.

Although you should set periodic goals, you should not focus on the time. Don't focus on when it will come, focus on why it will come. The why is how it will make you feel if you were to have the thing you desire right now. It is also found in the desire and in the belief. Because you want it and believe you can have it, those are components of why. Stop thinking about when and think about WHY. The secret to this process that the rich and powerful are aware of and have kept secret, is belief. Belief trumps desire and disbelief will stump achievement. Whatever your mind can conceive and bring itself to believe, you can and will achieve it. **n**

## Resilience Study for Children

Researchers at the Resilience Research Lab at Sam Houston State University are looking for families to take part in a research study. They are willing to pay \$70 for participation in the study.

They are looking for children who have (or have had) a parent incarcerated through the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. They are interested in understanding a families' strengths and any difficulties they may face.

The study involves a number of surveys and interviews for both the child and their caregiver and will take about 3 hours. To participate, children must be between 6 and 21 years of age and the family should be available for a full 3 hours of participation.

Participation is available on weekends! Please email [shsu.rsclab@gmail.com](mailto:shsu.rsclab@gmail.com) or call (936)294-1177 if interested. **n**

## Camp Good News is Taking Applications for the Summer

Camp Good News is now taking applications for summer camp for June 5-10, 2016 and its **FREE!**

Camp Good News is situated 10 miles south of beautiful Navasota, Texas, and each year they hosts 30 male and 30 female campers for a session of hope, love, and fun. The camp is open to children ages 10-15 who have a parent incarcerated in Texas.

For the campers and their families, it costs nothing! Support for the camp comes mostly from Episcopal churches throughout the state.

"At Camp Good News, we're all about blessing the children of incarcerated parents" says camp director Ed Davis. "We believe that every person on earth needs to know Jesus. We know that

children who have an incarcerated parent are 6-8 times more likely to get into the system themselves, and so these kids need our help more than anyone."

Feel free to check out the camp information on their website at <http://www.campgoodnews4kids.org/>. Then, when you're ready, click "How to apply." **n**





## Texas Inmate Families Association

Strengthening families through support, education, and advocacy

TIFA  
PO Box 300220  
Austin, TX 78703-0004

**CONTACT**  
**Vol.21 No. 2 April 2016**

## TIFA Chapters

### **Amarillo**

1st Tuesday at 7 pm  
First Christian Church  
3001 Wolfen Ave.  
(Snodgrass Hall)  
Amarillo, TX 79107  
(806) 352-6928

### **Austin - South**

1st Monday, 6:30 pm  
Sunrise Community Church  
4430 Manchaca Road  
Austin, TX 78745  
(512) 371-0900

### **Austin - North**

3rd Tuesday, 7:00 pm  
Call for information  
(512) 371-0900

### **Beaumont**

1st Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic  
Church Family Life Center  
6825 Gladys  
Beaumont, TX 77726  
(409) 617-8395

### **Conroe**

Last Monday, 7:00 pm  
Eagle's Nest Ministries  
1450 Blake Road  
Conroe, TX 77304  
(281) 435-9908

### **Corpus Christi**

2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm  
New Life Behavior Ministries  
3833 S. Staples, Suite S-103  
Corpus Christi, TX 78411  
(361) 813-7106

### **Dallas**

3rd Wednesday, 6:30 pm  
Lover's Lane Methodist Church  
9200 Inwood Rd Oxford Rm #103/105  
Dallas, TX 75220  
(817) 219-1628

### **Ft. Worth**

1st Monday, 6:30 pm  
St. Christopher Episcopal Church  
3550 S.W. Loop 820  
Fort Worth, TX 76133  
(817) 798-9010

### **Houston**

2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm  
Workfaith Connection  
(Dacoma Location)  
10120 Northwest Fwy 290 Suite 200  
Houston, TX 77092  
(281) 435-4143

### **Humble**

2nd Thursday, 7:00 pm  
First United Methodist Church  
800 E Main St  
Humble, Texas 77355  
(936) 217-0768

### **Killeen - Harker Heights**

2nd Thursday, 6:00 pm  
VFW (Ladies Auxiliary)  
201 VFW Dr  
Harker Heights, TX 76548  
(254) 289-9429

### **Nacogdoches**

3rd Saturday 10:00 am  
First Baptist Church  
411 North Street  
Nacogdoches, TX 75961  
(936) 564-4546

### **Pearland - South Houston**

3rd Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
Manvel Bible Chapel  
4230 FM 1128  
Pearland, TX 77584  
(713) 303-9785

### **Rio Grande Valley**

3rd Friday, 6:00  
Calvary Baptist Church  
Slayton Building 2nd Floor  
1600 Harvey Drive  
McAllen Texas, Texas 78501  
(956) 280-0951

### **San Antonio**

2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm  
St. Vincent De Paul Catholic  
Church Parish Hall  
4222 Southwest Loop 410  
San Antonio, TX  
(210) 387-1558

### **San Antonio - North**

3rd Thursday, 7:00 pm  
St Marks Evangelist  
Catholic Church  
1602 Thousand Oaks Dr.  
San Antonio, TX  
(915) 204-5870

### **Tyler**

2nd Saturday, 10 am  
Freedom Fellowship  
2915 SSE Loop 323  
Tyler, Texas 75701  
(903) 504-9771

***If you are interested in starting a TIFA chapter in your area,  
please contact the TIFA office. (512) 371-0900 or send an  
email to [tifa@tifa.org](mailto:tifa@tifa.org)***