



From the Executive Director

TORTURE BY ANOTHER NAME: SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

On October 3, 2019 Jennifer Erschabek Executive Director of the Texas Inmate Families Association (TIFA) was invited to be a panelist at the *'Torture by Another Name: Solitary Confinement in Texas'* conference hosted by the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) and the Center for Justice Research at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. Experts came together to share first-hand accounts about the barbaric and torturous practice that strips people of their dignity and fuels mental health issues in Texas prisons.

Other TIFA members attending included Sharon McKinney, LaKeidru Blaylock, Melanie Cash, Aimee Brock and several others.

In Texas, over 4,100 people are held in solitary confinement and Texas leads the nation in holding people in solitary for the longest periods of time (over six years) than all other states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons combined. In fact, as of August 2018, over 3,000 Texas prisoners had been in isolation for longer than one year, 654 people had been there for a decade or longer and 145 people had stays that exceeded two decades.

According to the report: "In 2015, President Barack Obama directed the Attorney General of the United States to conduct a review of the 'overuse of solitary confinement across American prisons' and to develop strategies for

reducing its use." In January 2016, the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a 128-page report that included numerous 'guiding principles' for the use of solitary confinement.

The DOJ's report concluded that prisoners should be 'housed in the least restrictive setting necessary to ensure their own safety, as well as the safety of staff, other inmates, and the public' and that the conditions of confinement should include out of cell opportunities for recreation, education, clinically appropriate treatment therapies, skill-building, and social interaction with staff and other inmates. The report acknowledged that the 'stakes are high' because when applied without regard to basic standards of decency, restrictive housing can cause serious, long-lasting harm. Thus, the practice should be used responsibly and sparingly.

In 2017, TDCJ announced that the agency would no longer use solitary confinement/ administrative segregation (ad seg) for punitive reasons. However, little has changed. Because of the change only approximately 75 people were affected while 4,100+ inmates remain in ad seg.

In their recent report, the TCRP made the following recommendations:

1. End prolonged isolation for every person in the care, custody and control of TDCJ.

- Set a determinate duration of 15 days or less for people housed in solitary confinement.

- Improve data collection for all solitary confinement units.

2. End Automatic Solitary Confinement of Alleged Security Threat Group Members.

3. Transform the Housing Review Process.

- Make the State Classification Committee (SCC) review hearings of record.

- TDCJ should establish an internal audit process for reviewing SCC rulings.

- Provide adequate notice of the evidence used against a person.

BY THE NUMBERS:

4,165
people are in solitary
confinement in Texas
as of May 2019

1,343
people on the mental
health caseload in
administrative segregation
as of July 2019

40%
of survey participants
reported a history of
mental illness in
administrative segregation

TIFA Contact

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Membership in TIFA is open to anyone. A Basic membership is \$25 per year and includes one newsletter subscription to the member e-mail address. A Basic Plus membership of \$35 per year includes all family members residing in one household and the inmate newsletter.

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TIFA

P.O. Box 300220
Austin, Texas 78703-0004
Office: (512) 371-0900
www.tifa.org
tifa@tifa.org

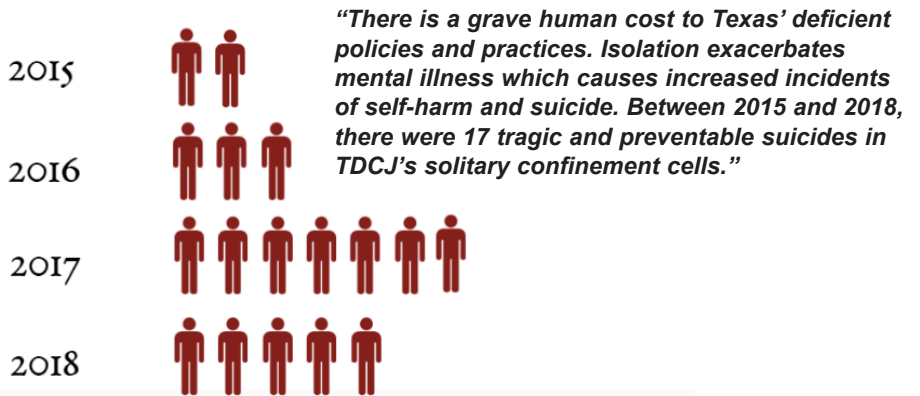


Find us!

Note: We read all mail but cannot answer every letter.

Our mission is strengthening families through support, education and

Administrative Segregation Suicides by Calendar Year



The conference was followed up with an excellent article by Michael Barajas of the Texas Observer – “**Death in Solitary**” that vividly describes the heartbreaking story of the horrors and grief that families suffer when criminal justice and mental health collide and there is no help or hope to be found. Russell Johnson’s sister warned officials that nearly three years in solitary confinement had broken him. His suicide in isolation two months later points to compounded crises inside Texas prisons.

The conference was another demonstration of the alliance between advocates, educators, and news media and their continued efforts in Texas to document the need for independent oversight of the Texas prison system.

Texas needs to fully commit to the humane care and rehabilitation of ALL of the prisoners under the State’s supervision and TIFA will be working toward that goal.

You can download the entire TCRP report – “Torture by Another Name.” <https://texascivilrightsproject.org/solitaryconfinement-report/> ■



Sharon McKinney, TIFA Director of Programs & Membership (L) Michael Barajas, Texas Observer Journalist (C), Jennifer Erschabek, TIFA Executive Director (R)



Meagan Harding, Senior Staff Attorney at The Texas Civil Rights Project (L) Jennifer Erschabek, TIFA Executive Director (R)



Data analyzed by the Center for Justice Research at Texas Southern University

TIFA'S INTERIM ADVOCACY PLANS

Thanks to everyone who joined us for the free webinar on October 29, 2019. Here's what we covered:

This session was tough, and issues we supported were not passed (Earned Time Credits and Independent Oversight), but the other bills that passed were helpful! Here's a reminder of those:

- **TDCJ Health Services fee to \$13.55 (HB 812)**
- **Women's Dignity Bill (HB 650)**
- **Parole Improvements (HBs 374, 918)**
- **Improved Jury Instructions (HB 1279)**
- **Occupational Licensing Improvement (HB 1342)**
- **Primary Caretaker Diversion (HB 1374)**
- **Repeal of Driver Responsibility Program (HB 2048)**
- **Helping Incarcerated Women (HB 2169)**

Now, we're building a new Volunteer Advocacy Program! Do you want to get more involved in advocating for the bills you want to see passed? Join our new advocacy team! The work will include:

- Research
- Developing handouts
- Finding partners
- Office visits, social media engagement
- Finding legislative supporters
- Calling/emailing legislators (and staff)
- Directing advocacy actions for the base
- Developing advocacy strategies writing/messaging

Timeline:

1. Submit applications by November 15, 2019 to lauren.oertel@tifa.org.
2. Our team and committees will be announced November 22, 2019.
3. Team training, plans, and goal-setting starts early December.
4. Advocacy actions start in January 2020 through the elections that year and through the 2021 legislative session.

We'll be following these races:

- State Legislators
- District Attorneys
- Judges
- Sheriffs

WHAT CAN YOU DO? A LOT!

- Contact the news sources that publish great articles -- let them know you appreciate their work.
- Share those great articles on social media ("like" them, comment on them, ...etc. to boost their effectiveness and encourage more articles like that).
- Contact the news sources (and their editors) if they publish a biased or harmful article. Let them know what you would like to see them do differently.
- Write op-eds or letters to the editor to be published!
- Connect with a reporter/journalist you respect and help them with stories when you have good information.



VOLUNTEER ADVOCACY TEAM APPLICATION

1. Which of the following activities would you be interested in? (circle all that apply)

- (a) Contacting your representatives and other candidates
- (b) Attending meetings with representatives, candidates (in district/local offices)
- (c) Participating in local advocacy groups/attending volunteer meetings
- (d) Drafting bill language and/or handouts
- (e) Increasing voting awareness/education for these issues
- (f) Research for advocacy and legislation changes

2. What could you commit to, if you were part of TIFA's Volunteer Advocacy Team?

- (a) Attending webinar trainings (about once every other month)
- (b) Attending local volunteer meetings in your area (about once every other month)
- (c) Contacting/meeting with your representatives (about once per month)
- (d) Helping with the TIFA rally at the Capitol in early 2021
- (e) Making office visits at the Capitol during the 2021 session (2-3 days per month)

3. What is your experience with advocacy that would be relevant to this team?

4. Do you have any suggestions/ideas you'd like to share?

5. Which county are you in and who are your representatives? (If you're not sure, you can enter your address in the "who represents me?" section here: <https://capitol.texas.gov/>)

A CONVERSATION WITH REP JAMES WHITE

By Jennifer Erschabek

I recently had a conversation with Rep. James White, Chair of the House Corrections Committee, and had some specific questions for him concerning the future of criminal justice reform. Unfortunately, he was traveling and the conversation was cut short before we finished, but I plan to talk to him again in the near future.

My first question was about the formation of the Criminal Justice Caucus.

Q. Why was it formed and what is the purpose of the caucus?

A. Even though we got some great legislation passed including the Women's Dignity bill, several great reform proposals failed during the last legislative session. Some House members who had worked on these issues decided to get together and do something about it. Most of the failures occurred because of misinformation regarding criminal justice and the lack of issue-specific education on the floor. This stopped the bills from moving forward. Thus, one of the goals of the new caucus is to educate their colleagues, including their local Senators, on criminal justice issues and work together to advance reform proposals.

Each member of the caucus has their own expertise and reform agenda including everything from issues with the incarcerated population, public safety, gun violence, and the death penalty. The caucus is only several months old, needs to grow into its role and will be adding new members. They want to keep it bipartisan, keeping the caucus focused on policy and not on politics.

Note: Rep Joe Moody D-El Paso and state Rep. Jeff Leach, R-Plano will initially lead the House Criminal Justice Reform Caucus. The other members include Briscoe Cain, R-Deer Park, Garnet Coleman, D-Houston, Nicole Collier, D-Fort Worth, Jessica Gonzalez, D-Dallas, Todd Hunter, R-Corpus Christi, Matt Krause, R-Fort Worth, Ina Minjarez, D-San Antonio, Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, Senfronia Thompson, D-Houston, and James White, R-Hillister. TIFA has strong



*House Corrections Chair
James White, R-Hillister.*

chapters in each of these Representative's areas and this will give us a lot of great opportunities during the next session.

Q. What are your top three criminal justice issues leading up to next session?

A. My primary concerns include hepatitis C, correctional medicine and mental health issues in general and facilities responding to heat and climate control issues. The tough part of these issues is that they are tied in with appropriations and will include major fiscal notes.

Q. Has there been any information on the interim charges? Has the Speaker indicated any specific interests for the interim?

A. Speaker Bonnen's approach to the interim is to evaluate how the agencies are doing implementing the laws that were passed during the last session. Next session could be a pivotal session for criminal justice because of the good data that will be available. (There will be more information about specific interim charges at the end of the year.)

A question I didn't get a chance to ask but Rep. White wanted to discuss was about independent oversight. His suggestion for an approach next session would be to take the juvenile independent ombudsman statute and add "adult" so that it would read "juvenile and adult" ombudsman. He recommended taking some of the existing FTEs from the existing ombudsman office and moving them to the independent ombudsman office. Rep. White felt this would be a good start for the office.

This is where the phone call was dropped and we did not get to continue our conversation. The topics with questions

left unanswered included expanding education, rehabilitation opportunities, closing prisons, and of course, his thoughts on parole reform. I'll save those for our future conversation.

SUPPORT TIFA WHEN SHOPPING!

As you do your holiday shopping, remember Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to TIFA if you select us as your charity. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. So use the easiest way to support TIFA and start shopping at <https://smile.amazon.com/>.



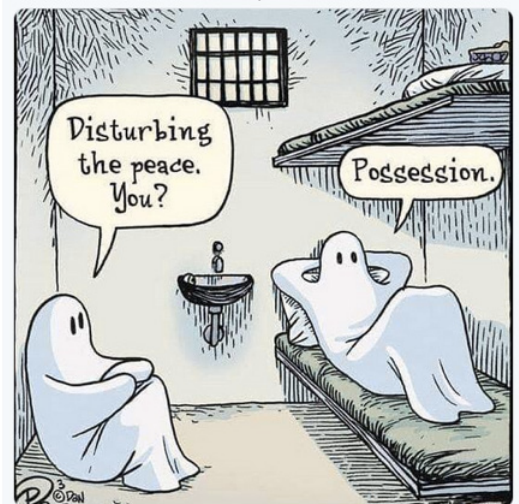
Another easy way to donate to TIFA is through Facebook. When your birthday is coming up, Facebook will invite you to create a fundraiser. You can select TIFA as your nominated charity. You then select how much you would like to raise and how long you would like your fundraiser to run. Facebook transfers all donations to the charities and does not charge a fee. Every donation, small or large makes a positive difference!

-- Thank you and Happy Birthday! --



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

What're you in for?





TYLER CHAPTER



KARNES COUNTY CHAPTER



HOUSTON CHAPTER

TIFA wants to extend a **HUGE** thank you to the members who participated in our TIFA Fun Runs all across Texas!

A REMINDER: There are still TIFA Run For Justice Fun Run t-shirts available. They're available for a \$20 donation plus shipping and handling. Visit TIFA's website at tifa.org to get yours today!



Photo of winning holiday card submissions.



CONGRATULATIONS to the three winners of TIFA's Annual Holiday Card Contest!

~Harold S. ~Donna B. ~Leonard H.

We received many incredible holiday card submissions and were overwhelmed by the artistic talent our loved ones displayed. From everyone at TIFA, we truly thank all those who participated in the contest. Every single contribution was valued and appreciated.

HEP C: A NEW LAWSUIT AGAINST TEXAS

On September 18, 2019 the Houston Chronicle covered the latest lawsuit of TDCJ. Similar to the heat lawsuit, this new one could be a game changer for TDCJ.

From the article: "A federal lawsuit filed Thursday says the Texas prison system is 'callously' denying thousands of inmates access to a costly hepatitis C medicine that is widely considered the standard of care, potentially exposing them to liver damage and other health complications. At least 18,000 inmates in the state's 104 facilities have been diagnosed with the chronic virus. And up to 30 percent of Texas's roughly 148,000 inmates may be infected - a similar rate to prisons across the nation. The standard of care for hepatitis C is Direct-Acting Antiviral medication, or DAA, a course of pills known to cure more than 90 percent of patients. Yet the lawsuit alleges that the prison health care system prescribes the drug only to patients who already have liver damage. Failure to treat incarcerated patients as well as their peers in the outside world amounts to "cruel and unusual punishment," and deliberate indifference to a serious medical need. The policy violates the Eighth Amendment and the Americans with Disabilities Act, according to the class-action lawsuit filed in Corpus Christi."



TIFA's ED is quoted, "With all the advancements they have made in the treatment of hepatitis C, it's a shame that these treatments are not widely available to those who are inside TDCJ. The inability to get treatment is a common complaint among those who have hepatitis C," she said, based on the letters TIFA has received about the issue.

TIFA will continue to follow the lawsuit and whether TDCJ is providing treatment when needed. We'll keep everyone updated through our weekly emails and the next newsletter when we get more information.

HEALTH SERVICES FEE UPDATE

An inmate assessed the \$100 annual health care services prior to September 1, 2019, will not be assessed the \$13.55 fee until the completion of the covered 12-month period.

They will **NOT** be charged for a health care visit that is for:

- an emergency or life-threatening situation;
- follow-up services recommended by the health care staff;
- chronic care (including communicable diseases such as HIV, AIDS and TB);
- prenatal care;
- health screening and evaluations related to the diagnostic and reception process; or
- health care services necessary to comply with State law and regulations.

You will not be denied health care services if you do not have money in your trust fund account to pay the fee.



SPOTLIGHT: PROPOSED CHANGE TO MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY FOR PEOPLE LEAVING PRISON

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE NHCCN
hepeducation.org

H.R. 1329 — 116th Congress: Medicaid Reentry Act, would enable men and women leaving prison to be covered by Medicaid thirty days before releasing. If passed, this could significantly reduce barriers for incarcerated patients when returning to their communities.

Currently prisons are required to provide healthcare to their residents because insurance coverage is suspended or cancelled when someone is living in

prison. This leaves an incarcerated person with the burden of re-enrolling for insurance just before or immediately upon release within a 60-day enrollment period.

H.R. 1329 would make it easier for individuals leaving prisons to enroll and remain enrolled in health insurance and have the care and medications they need when they need them, thus making them better able to re-establish their lives and care for their health. By eliminating barriers faced by formerly-incarcerated individuals, those re-entering society will have a better chance to protect their health and establish themselves in their communities.

ADVOCATES GATHER AT CONFERENCE AT UT IN AUSTIN

In late September, TIFA's Director of Organizing and Policy spoke on a panel titled "Reckoning with Violence" at an international conference hosted by the Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice. The panel featured three other advocates who are formerly incarcerated and also survivors of violent crimes. Each person described how their experiences shaped their understanding of where violence comes from and how we could address it more effectively with alternatives to incarceration. The panelists enjoyed exploring these ideas with the audience members, who had many questions. Many of them took TIFA brochures and our "Until We Reckon" book summary handouts to find out more about the work we do.

There were various other highlights of the conference, which had roughly 400 attendees over the three days of panels, roundtables, and breakout sessions. The group learned the history of "organizing from the ground up" and how we can connect with various levels of government to influence positive changes for the system from well-known activist and professor Ruth Wilson Gilmore. A panel then discussed the "double standard" of some advocates calling for prison abolition, but wanting prison sentences for police, corrupt politicians, and international military actors. They explored the idea of returning to the roots of human rights movements which aims to keep everyone out of carceral punishments.

Breakout sessions covered topics including “mass” vs. “over” incarceration, the problems with “carve-outs,” healing for Chicago’s torture survivors, redemption and resilience narratives, dehumanization at all levels of the system (including those who work in it), and the importance of legal empowerment for incarcerated people. The conference provided an engaging opportunity for people from around the world to exchange ideas on how we can have a brighter future through reduced incarceration.

LAW OF PARTIES REFORM EFFORT

A new political action committee named DropLoPTexas has been formed with the goal of reforming and/or abolishing Texas’s Law of Parties, and providing sentencing reviews for those currently incarcerated under this law. What does this mean for you and your loved one in TDCJ?

If your loved one was present at a violent felony, or became involved after the fact, was NOT the principal actor in the crime, but received a sentence as if he or she were the principal actor, that is the Law of Parties. It’s what some used to call being an “accessory” to a crime.

DropLoPTexas (LoP for Law of Parties) is not a group that can take anyone’s case to court. Rather, it’s a group in the process of accumulating data to help challenge and change this unjust law. Friends and family are welcome to visit www.DropLoPTexas.com or write to reformit@droploptexas.com for more information about the project, and you can find out how to have your information included in the DropLoPTexas database. We know that Law of Parties falls most heavily on women and young men, especially on people of color, but the state nor the counties keep any record of when this law is used in prosecution and sentencing.

DropLoPTexas is not a direct project of TIFA, but it was started by a TIFA member, Becky Haigler of the Dallas Area Chapter. In Becky’s words: “I am so grateful to have found TIFA early in our family’s experience with TDCJ. I have learned so much and taken so much courage from the organization and its members. I probably never would have dared to begin a project like DropLoPTexas without my involvement with TIFA.” ■

WORKING WITH CRIME SURVIVORS

We are seeing a shift in the role crime survivors/victims play in the criminal legal system. While their stories have often been used by prosecutors to seek tough-on-crime punishments, we now know a few facts about crime survivors:

- 1. Many people in jail and prison are also survivors/victims of crime, violence, and trauma. The line between “victim” and “offender/perpetrator” is blurry.*
- 2. Most crime survivors prefer rehabilitation over incarceration for those who harmed them.*
- 3. Most crime survivors prefer community supervision and alternatives over prison and jail for those who commit crimes.*

These stats were found through the national survey of the Alliance for Safety and Justice, which encompasses regional Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice groups (and there are multiple chapters in Texas). These groups advocate for safety and healing over punishment, and they support the legislation TIFA works on. Let’s also not forget that dozens of crime survivors showed up to testify in support of the Earned Time Credits bill at the Capitol in April this year. It’s exciting to see two sides of the issue working together for change that benefits everyone.



CHANGE OF PLANS FOR PACT CONFERENCE

TIFA learned at a recent Quarterly Meeting that TDCJ wants to try a new format for the PACT Conference during the next year. Instead of offering one state-wide conference in Huntsville they are going to ‘take it to the families’ and offer 3-4 REGIONAL meetings located around the state. These regional conferences will offer the same great presentations and offer you the same access to TDCJ senior management personnel, including the Board of Pardons and Paroles. This new format is in response to family comments that it was expensive and hard for everyone to get to Huntsville.

Within the next 8-10 months they are hoping to do conferences in Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio.

The first regional PACT conference will be held in Houston on Saturday, January 25, at the Hiram Clarke Multi-Service Center located at 3810 W. Fuqua St. Houston, Texas 77045-6402.

They are now busy locating space for the other conferences and hoping to have the next conference in Dallas. So stay tuned and we will let you know the minute we have more information.



TDCJ EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

New Educational Opportunities for Women in TDCJ

At the TDCJ Quarterly Meeting in August, TIFA received exciting news on new educational opportunities for women, and some for men too!

During the Legislative session, Windham received additional funding to support programs for women and will hire a Program Specialist and an additional Special Education Teacher. The Program Specialist will be responsible for coordination and implementation of new programs and ongoing support. The Special Education Teacher position, once filled, will reach out to the women who had refused classes but are eligible for special education to take a special interest class. The hope is that the special interest classes would help to get them back into school full time. These positions will be available September 1, 2019.

Employers are now asking for more women through TDCJ's Website for Work. Many companies require a certain percentage of employees be female.

So Windham will now offer vocational programs in Plumbing, Automotive Fundamentals, Masonry/Tile Setting, Information Technology and Support Services, Truck driving/CDL, Welding and Cosmetology for the women.

Austin Community College is now partnering with TDCJ and will offer Welding and Logistics, and also an Associates Degree program at the Lockhart unit.

In the Post Secondary division Lee College and Central Texas College will expand their curriculum to include Computer Logistics. Gatesville and Mt. View will offer a Network Analyst Certification. Plane State Jail will be offering a new Horticulture program.

A&M Central Texas will continue the Bachelors Degree program for the women and also the men at the Hughes Unit in Gatesville. Beto Unit in Palestine and Ramsey Unit in Rosharon will also continue their Bachelors program through the University of Houston.

It's really exciting to announce that Central Texas College will offer an Online Academy for an Associates Degree at the Mt. View Unit in Gatesville. The online classes will be taken through a secure college portal workstation just as they would if they were taken from home.

The Hobby Unit will be the host of the Women's Seminary program. Ground has not been broken for the program yet, but the ladies are excited that the program is coming soon.

WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN

Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources

- Landscape Design, Construction, and Maintenance/Horticulture

Architecture & Construction

- Advanced Electrical (anticipated start Oct. 2019)
- Construction Fundamentals
- Electrical Trades
- Electronic Systems Technician
- Finished Carpentry/CNC
- HVAC Maintenance Technician
- Masonry & Tile (anticipated start Jan. 2020)
- Pipefitting (anticipated start Oct. 2019)
- Plumbing (anticipated start Nov. 2019)
- Welding

Hospitality & Tourism

- Culinary Arts (anticipated start Oct. 2019)
- Customer Service Specialist
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Hospitality Services
- Restaurant Management
- Specialized Skills--Hospitality Services

Human Services

- Cosmetology (anticipated start Nov. 2019)

Information Technology

- Business Computer Information Systems--Access & Outlook

- Business Computer Information Systems--Word & Excel
- Information Technology Support Services & Web Design (anticipated start Jan. 2020)

Manufacturing

- Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) Machining/5-axis

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

- Telecommunications Connectivity--Intro to Telecommunications
- Telecommunications Connectivity--Copper-based Systems
- Telecommunications Connectivity--Fiber Optic-Based Systems
- Telecommunications Connectivity--Audio/Video Systems
- Telecommunications Connectivity--Grounding & Bonding

Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

- Automotive Specialization Fundamentals (anticipated start Dec. 2019)
- Truck Driving

Work & Career Readiness

- OSHA--Construction
- OSHA--General
- Strength Through Restoration Independence Vision & Empowerment (STRIVE)

Arts, A/V Technology & Communications

- (Braille courses offered in collaboration with TDCJ - Mt. View ONLY)**
- VCP-COM and Media Systems-Literacy
- VCP-COM and Media Systems-Math
- VCP-COM and Media Systems-Tactile
- VCP-COM and Media Systems-Textbook Formatting

Academic Programs

- Lead & Achieve
- Literacy I-Reading
- Literacy
- ESL

Life Skills Programs

- CHANGES
- Cognitive Intervention
- Parenting & Family Wellness



WSD
Windham School District

Securus and Video Visitation

A new contract between TDCJ and Securus went into effect at the end of 2018. This is the same contract that brought you the lower priced phone calls. One of the other components of the new contract included installing a small number of video visitation sites. The purpose is to test the implementation of video visitation to see if it would improve access for families who could not afford or physically travel long distances. There will be six units that will have the visitor visitation booths and six sites for inmates to use for video visitation.

This will NOT replace regular visitation and we still have had no word when the video visitation will be available at the units listed below. And currently there are no plans to make video visitation available from home computers.

There is no cost for a video visitation

using a prison terminal. Visitations will have to be prescheduled and this will be done online through Securus. Each visit will be 2 hours and it will count as a regular visit. More details will be available at a later date.

Visitors will have to travel to the following units to access a video visitation terminal to visit their loved one in the 2nd list of units:

Jester III, Richmond
Garza Complex in Beeville
Hutchins in Dallas
Montfort in Lubbock
Travis in Austin
Sanchez in El Paso

Inmates at the following units will be able to receive video visitation visits with family visiting from the above units:

Clements in Amarillo
Connally in Kenedy
Crain in Gatesville
Michael in Tennessee Colony
Stiles in Beaumont
Wynne in Huntsville

A few other helpful details about Securus and phones: if you have problems with a phone when calling your loved one, you can call Paige Chittenden at TDCJ at 936-437-8313. Please be ready to give her the information regarding the issue, which unit, the number on the phone and the location in the unit (dorm or wing number). TDCJ will turn in a ticket and based on how often the tech visits the unit the phone should be fixed. I would say give the process two weeks at the most. If not, call again. But most problems should be fixed within 3-5 business days.

For an inmate, they need to turn in a pink slip with the same information: the issue, unit, the number on the phone and the wing or dorm location. These forms are delivered to the mailroom where it is scanned and sent to Securus Tech Support.



UPCOMING WORKSHOPS & WEBINARS

Confident Communication	November 20, 2019	Free Zoom Webinar
Mental Health & Stress	December 5, 2019	Free Zoom Webinar
Parole Workshop	January 11, 2020	Lufkin/Nacogdoches
Parole Workshop	March 21, 2020	New Braunfels
Parole Workshop	April 25, 2020	Houston

TIFA 2020 Parole Packet Workshops

TIFA has scheduled our Parole Packet Workshops for 2020. For registration and more information visit our website at www.tifa.org/events. The cost to attend is \$50 for members and \$85 for nonmembers (which includes a membership).

January 11, 2020 – Nacogdoches
March 21, 2020 – New Braunfels
April 25, 2020 – Houston
September, 2020 – Plano



At these workshops TIFA will provide a workbook that includes information on:

- Good Time, Work Time, and Flat Time
- Parole and Mandatory Supervision Eligibility Timeframes
- The Parole Timeline
- The Risk Assessment Instrument and the Offender Severity Class
- Voting Options
- Parole Board and Prison Units
- Contact Information
- Helpful Phone Numbers and Websites
- A Sample Parole Packet

TIFA CHAPTER NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

Reentry & Attorney Candidates with the Austin Chapter

The Austin Chapter had a busy, but wonderful past two months. We had the pleasure of welcoming two representatives from TDCJ's Reentry Department in September and hearing the platforms of two Travis County attorney candidates in October. To recap the information shared at the September meeting, the Reentry Program provides a three-phased program designed to prepare those leaving incarceration from TDCJ for a successful return to the community.

Phase I – Identification Processing: Provides replacement social security card, certified birth certificate, and state identification card at the time of release.

Phase II – Assessment and Reentry Planning: Completion of risk and needs assessment with individual case planning provided to those at moderate to high risk of re-offending.

Phase III – Community Reentry Services: Provides post-release individual case management, employment readiness training, and employment services with an emphasis on assisting the formerly incarcerated with obtaining sustainable employment.

Veterans Reentry Services: Assists veterans in obtaining records of military services, completion of veteran's benefits application, linkage to military peer support services and continuity of care.

* * *

When it comes to making big impacts on local criminal justice reform, local attorneys and prosecutors hold a significant amount of power and can make substantial change. That's just what Travis County District Attorney candidate José Garza and Travis County Attorney candidate Dominic Selvera plan on doing in Travis County. Garza sees our system as fundamentally broken and wants to turn Travis County into the nation's leading progressive county in criminal justice reform. Garza wants to decriminalize substance abuse and homelessness, and

truly believes every person is capable of change.

Selvera seeks to create a County Attorney's Office rooted in fairness, justice, and rehabilitation. He wants to end the cash bail system, help communities who've been targeted by the failed war on drugs, and believes in prioritizing treatment over incarceration. Both candidates support the Earned Time Credits bill, and Garza offered to bring his support to the Capitol if he were to be elected. The Austin Chapter invites all other candidates for these positions to speak at future chapter meetings.



José Garza, Travis County District Attorney candidate (L) and Dominic Selvera, Travis County Attorney candidate (R)

Fort Worth Chapter Joined By Parole Board Member

The Fort Worth Chapter was joined by Parole Board Member, Brian Long. In September, we had a room full of family members eager to hear a Parole Board Member speak. The format of the meeting was an informal question and answer session. Mr. Long did a great job in making time for all of our family member's questions.

The questions and following discussions included:

Q: Is it true that certain crimes can't attend certain programs?

A: Yes. Sexual offenses must attend a Sex Offender Education Program (SOEP) before release. These offenses are not eligible for the drug or DWI programs.

Q: How soon do you want the parole packet in your office?

A: Once in the review process and the board has the file.

Q: Who is guaranteed an interview?

A: Only the victim is guaranteed an interview.

Q: What do you want to know when you are voting a case?

A: I want to see what support you have, whether that's letters from family, friends, or potential employers. I also look at what age you committed the offense -- were you just young and made a mistake? I consider age, history, and if it's your first time being incarcerated.

Q: What can I do to increase the likelihood of parole?

A: Remain case-free, have a solid release plan, and complete programs.

Dallas Area Chapter Hears From Haven of Rest Ministries

This October, 14 attendees including members and visitors enjoyed a presentation by Rachael Yancey, Director of Operations for Haven of Rest Ministries, at the Dallas Area TIFA Chapter meeting. Rachael has had direct involvement with TDCJ herself and through her son and daughter. Haven of Rest has been around for about 25 years and currently has 10 houses serving about 80 men on parole. The facilities offer counseling and 12-step groups onsite.

Since joining Haven of Rest in 2008, Rachael has developed great connections with several TDCJ departments, including parole officials, and with many employers. All Haven of Rest residents are placed in long-term stable jobs usually within a week of arrival because local employers hold Haven of Rest in high esteem.

Since Haven of Rest is reasonably priced and good at what they do, their residences are always full, and they are only able to serve men at this time. However, Rachael is always willing to talk with returning citizens or their families and will still send an application form to keep on file, and/or help them find other placement. You can contact her at rachaelyancey2@yahoo.com.



Houston Chapter Welcomes Representative Jarvis Johnson



Chapter members with Representative Jarvis Johnson

The Houston Chapter was honored to have State Representative Jarvis Johnson as the guest speaker for October's meeting. The Representative is a native Houstonian and has dedicated his life to making a difference in the lives of those around him. For over thirty years, he has looked for opportunities to engage the community and local businesses to create a successful society that works for everyone. He attended Texas Southern University, was elected to Houston City Council in 2005, and then elected to the state legislature in 2016.

Representative Johnson gave the Houston Chapter members in attendance an overview of his position on the Independent Oversight bill, as well as his plans to keep it at the forefront for the next legislative session. His office has been dedicated to this issue for years and provided significant support for TIFA's advocacy efforts over the last two sessions. The Representative encouraged everyone not to wait until the next legislative session to start knocking on the doors of their representatives, but to start reaching out to them now. Let them know what your expectations and needs are as a constituent in their district. We are grateful for his leadership on this important issue.



LaKeidra Blaylock, Houston Chair (L) Representative Jarvis Johnson (C) Sharon McKinney, TIFA Director of Programs & Membership (R)

San Angelo Chapter Chair is Spotlight Speaker

Karen, the TIFA San Angelo Chapter Chair, was the "spotlight" speaker at the September volunteer meeting of the Through God Comes Justice Ministry.

With about 40 community members in attendance, she spoke on behalf of TIFA. In addition to her speech, many questions were asked, flyers handed out, and several connections were made.

The jail ministry was founded in 1997 and celebrates 22 years of ministry in the Tom Green County Jail. It is the largest jail ministry in a county facility in the state of Texas. Bible studies, devotionals, and prayers are offered daily throughout the jail to encourage positive growth, while baptisms are conducted monthly. Visit their website at www.tgcjministry.com. They will be hosting a fundraiser on November 8, 2019 at the Tom Green County Jail -- barbecue provided!

The San Angelo Chapter of TIFA is actively seeking families who have loved ones incarcerated and are in need of support, education, and advocacy.

TIFA is Growing: Welcomes Karnes County Chapter

Give a warm welcome to our newest TIFA members from the brand new Karnes County Chapter! TIFA is excited to grow and serve families and their loved ones all across the state of Texas. Visit page 5 to see a snapshot from the Karnes County Chapter TIFA Fun Run.

New Braunfels Chapter Features Speaker From Commissary & Trust Fund

The New Braunfels Chapter had the pleasure of having Eric Johnston, Director of Commissary & Trust Fund, as the speaker in August.

He brought with him many of the different products that are sold in the commissary of each unit, and we were all able to view and sample those items.

He explained the steps on how he and his team get a product approved by TDCJ and how it is moved to the individual units to sell in commissary.

Mr. Johnston stated that most of the products in commissary come from ideas that our loved ones wrote to him and requested to have available. He welcomes any new ideas or thoughts on different products and explained that commissary fluctuation issues will arise due to the demand by each unit and by product shortages from manufacturers.

He explained that when you go online to order, there are times when the item list may be low. This means that the commissary product at the individual unit has fallen below the minimum 70% margin, and until the product has either been reordered by the unit or restocked, the product will not be available to purchase online. This does not mean the product is not available to purchase at the unit itself. Many times the unit still has that commissary product available to purchase.

Next, Mr. Johnston discussed that the eCommDirect fee to make a purchase is \$3.75 and the fee to make a deposit is \$2.50 plus 2.25% of the deposit. The fee to make a deposit and a purchase at the same time is \$3.75 plus 2.25% of the deposit. The holidays are coming up and so the spending limit has changed to \$85.00 for this quarter.

- January to March up to \$60.00;
- April to June up to \$60.00;
- July to September up to \$60.00; and
- October to December up to \$85.00 (Holiday Spend)

We had a great turn out, and he graciously answered our many questions. We truly appreciate having speakers come to our TIFA meetings, and I want to give a BIG shoutout to our New Braunfels Chapter for being so supportive of TIFA and the Chapter as a whole.

Eric R. Johnston, Director Commissary & Trust Fund
901 Normal Park, Suite 207C
Huntsville, TX 77320
Email: eric.johnston@tdcj.texas.gov



Texas Inmate Families Association

Strengthening families through support, education, and advocacy

TIFA
P.O. Box 300220
Austin, TX 78703-0004

CONTACT
Vol.25 No. 4 Oct. 2019

TIFA Chapters

Amarillo 3rd Friday, 6:30 pm Petro Truckstop Meeting Rm 8500 E I-40 Amarillo, TX 79118 (806) 420-1684	Corpus Christi 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm New Life Behavior Ministries 3833 S. Staples, Suite S-103 Corpus Christi, TX 78411 (361) 813-7106	Karnes County 2nd Thursday, 6:30 pm First Baptist Kenedy 209 E School Road Kenedy, TX 78119	Pearland - South Houston 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 pm (exc Nov & Dec) Manvel Bible Chapel 4230 FM 1128 Pearland, TX 77584 (281) 300-7275
Arlington 2nd Monday, 6:30 pm George W. Hawes Library 100 South Center St Arlington, TX 76010 (817) 721-1398	Dallas 2nd Tuesday, 6:30 pm Prairie Creek Baptist Church 3201 W 15th Dallas, TX 75075 (214) 792-0649	Lufkin/Nacogdoches 2nd Tuesday, 6:30 pm First Baptist Church 411 North Street Nacogdoches, TX 65961 (936) 634-2181	San Angelo 2nd Thursday, 6:00 pm Immanuel Baptist Church 90 E 14th St San Angelo, TX 76903 (512) 371-0900
Austin- Central 2nd Monday, 7:00 pm AGE Center 3710 Cedar Street Austin, TX 78703 (512) 775-1797	El Paso 3rd Tuesday, 7:00 pm MST Mount Hope Lutheran Church 9640 Montwood Dr. El Paso, TX 79925 (512) 371-0900	McAllen 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm Edinburg Municipal Park Edinburg, TX 78542 (956) 570-2391	San Antonio 2nd Wednesday, 7:00 pm TriPoint- A Center for Life 3233 North St Mary's Street San Antonio, TX 78232 (210) 872-5087
Beaumont 1st Tuesday, 6:30 pm St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic Church Family Life Center 6825 Gladys Beaumont, TX 77726 (409) 617-8395	Ft. Worth 2nd Monday, 6:30 pm St. Christopher Episcopal Church 3550 S.W. Loop 820 Fort Worth, TX 76133 (817) 798-9010	New Braunfels 1st Thursday, 7:00 pm Peace Lutheran Church-Cafe 1147 South Walnut New Braunfels, TX 78132 (830) 237-2679	Tyler 2nd Thursday, 6:30 pm Freedom Fellowship 2915 SSE Loop 323 Tyler, TX 75701 (903) 504-9771
Bryan/College Station 1st Tuesday, 6:00 pm Friends Congregational Church 2200 Southwood Dr. Bryan, TX 77845 (832) 608-3371	Houston 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm United Way of Greater Houston 50 Waugh Drive Houston, TX 77007 (713) 261-0638	Paris 2nd Saturday, 2:00 pm Christ Community Church (in building with Nautilus fitness) 116 S Collegiate Dr Paris, TX 75460 (903) 495-0018	Virtual Chapter (Zoom Meeting) 2nd Wednesday, 7:00 pm (409) 789-7376
Conroe Last Monday, 7:00 pm Eagle's Nest Ministries 1450 Blake Road Conroe, TX 77304 (281) 435-9908			Waco 3rd Thursday, 6:30 pm Waco Hispanic Chamber of Commerce 915 La Salle Ave Waco, TX 76706 (254) 290-9551

Check our website calendar at www.tifa.org; times and locations are subject to change.

Also look for new TIFA Chapters starting near you.

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