



### **Reentry Roundtable Civil Rights Strategic Agenda**

The Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable is a local network promoting safe and healthy communities through effective reentry and reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons and individuals with criminal histories. We are a group of service providers, community leaders, formerly incarcerated individuals, academics, policy makers, and advocates working to reduce the number of incarcerated persons in Travis County; to improve access to housing, job opportunities, and physical and behavioral health care for persons with criminal backgrounds in Travis County; and to shift public perception of people with criminal justice involvement so that every person in Travis County understands that people with criminal histories are contributing members of society.

The Roundtable, in partnership with the City of Austin and Travis County, has developed a strategic agenda with the goal of ensuring civil rights for persons with criminal backgrounds as measured through *increased rates of housing stability and employment*. These goals were informed by a series of listening sessions on the intersections of reentry and housing, homelessness, and employment. The Reentry Roundtable Civil Rights Strategic Agenda Work Group developed the goals and strategies with success measures and potential partners.

The Reentry Roundtable will serve as the entity to ensure accountability for the implementation of the strategic agenda, but understands that the strategies outlined in the agenda will necessitate the alignment of multiple entities and institutions. The Roundtable anticipates continuing to convene the City of Austin and Travis County partners who informed the development of this agenda in order to ensure continued momentum throughout the implementation of the civil rights strategic agenda over the next three to five years. The Roundtable will incorporate the civil rights strategic agenda into the Roundtable's guiding documents and work plans for the next year.

Goal	Strategy	Activities	Success Measured by	Potential Partners
<b>Advocate for local legislative and administrative policy changes related to fair chance housing and hiring</b>	Create strong partnerships and advocacy channels with area housing authorities to increase public housing opportunities for persons with criminal backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for area housing authorities to decrease criminal background lookback periods during administrative rule revision periods</li> <li>Develop partnerships to share advocacy messages with allied organizations</li> <li>Work with housing authorities to create incentives to increase housing choice voucher program participation by landlords</li> <li>Promote reentry peer leadership in public housing communities</li> </ul>	Decreased criminal background lookback periods in public housing and housing choice voucher administrative requirements; increased public housing opportunities for persons with criminal backgrounds	Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA); Housing Authority of Travis County (HATC); ECHO
	Lower barriers for persons with criminal backgrounds to access housing and job opportunities funded with local government investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for lower barrier housing provider policies in locally funded housing programs</li> <li>Advocate for lowering criminal background barriers for city and county contractors and subcontractors</li> </ul>	City and County funding requires housing provider policies with reduced lookback periods and lower-barrier housing policies	Austin Housing Finance Corporation; Travis County Housing Finance Corporation; Strategic Housing Finance Corporation; City & County Purchasing Depts/SMBR
	Increase inclusion of returning citizens as priority population in city, county and regional planning efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for returning citizens as priority population in City and County strategic plans</li> <li>Advocate for persons in reentry to included as a priority population in the Workforce Solutions Capital Area Master Plan and in workforce development services funded by the City of Austin and Travis County</li> </ul>	Increased numbers of persons with criminal backgrounds accessing City and County social services; increase	Austin City Manager Office; Travis County Health & Human Services; Workforce Solutions Capital Area
	Strengthen enforcement mechanisms for existing fair chance hiring ordinance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage policymakers to assess the existing fair chance hiring ordinance and its impact on job seekers with criminal backgrounds and make recommendations</li> <li>Explore the creation of a clearly communicated universal appeal process for any denied job applicant</li> </ul>	Increased numbers of employers aware of Austin's fair chance hiring ordinance; increased enforcement	Austin Office of Civil Rights; Austin City Council

<b>Partner with State-Level Organizations to impact state policy changes related to fair chance housing and hiring</b>	Reducing barriers to obtaining an occupational license, including eliminating automatic exclusions, vague disqualifying criteria, and broad criminal record inquiries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support statewide occupational licensing reform efforts</li> </ul>	Increase in formerly incarcerated persons accessing occupational licenses	Texas Center on Justice and Equity; Texas Smart on Crime Coalitions
	Advocate for improved reentry planning and programming at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the process to obtain identifying documents upon release is reliable and accessible</li> <li>Offer coordinated assessment for all releases from jail or prison</li> <li>Advocate for improvements at Austin Transitional Center</li> </ul>		TDCJ; Texas Center on Justice and Equity; Texas Smart on Crime Coalitions
<b>Educate employers and housing providers to reduce stigma</b>	Convene employers to share benefits of hiring persons with backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect testimonials and success stories from employees, employers, and fair chance hiring advocates</li> <li>Promote skills-based hiring rather than credentials-based hiring</li> <li>Facilitate connections between criminal justice institutions and employers</li> </ul>	Increase in number of posted fair chance hiring employment opportunities; increase in formerly incarcerated persons accessing employment opportunities	Austin's Corporate Engagement Council; Austin Chamber of Commerce
	Develop processes for continued education to housing providers on disparate impact, lowering or removing lookback periods and clearly communicated appeal processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop incentives for housing persons with criminal backgrounds: risk mitigation funds, ability to pay higher security deposits, signing bonuses, etc.</li> <li>Explore the creation of a "good landlord" certification program for landlords meeting certain criteria, including the adoption of the Roundtable landlord guide, which offers incentives for landlords with this certification, like money for repairs in the case of property damage or assurance of one months rent if a lessee is evicted.</li> </ul>	Increased numbers of housing providers participating in educational opportunities; increase in formerly incarcerated persons accessing housing opportunities	Austin Apartment Association; ECHO; Austin Tenants Council; Austin Housing & Planning Dept