

Texas Reduced Crime, Incarceration, and Recidivism Rates in Partnership with Private Organizations

In 2007, Texas had high rates of incarceration with growing prison populations. Rather than building additional prisons, state lawmakers chose a different path and implemented innovative and impactful reforms. Since 2007, Texas has lowered their incarceration rates, recidivism rates, and crime rates. These reforms have been implemented with the help of private organizations. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice's (TDCJ) primary partner is Management & Training Corporation (MTC), a family-run company that operates safe facilities for TDCJ and provides rehabilitation and education for over 121,000 incarcerated Texans.

Texas Criminal Justice Reforms

From the mid-1970s through 2007, Texas followed the national trend of a rising prison population.¹ This trend was caused by a political climate that emphasized incarceration and punishment.²

In 2007, Texas had 152,661 people in prisons and jails. That year, the Legislative Budget Board of Texas estimated that prison populations would continue to grow. According to their estimates, if nothing changed, 17,000 new beds would need to be built at a cost of \$2 billion, this led state legislators to propose reforms.

Lawmakers agreed to make an initial investment of \$241 million to improve treatment and rehabilitation for Texans and to expand diversion programs.

The state added 2,700 substance abuse treatment beds for incarcerated individuals, 1,400 intermediate sanction beds for those who committed technical violations, and 300 halfway-house beds. Additional legislation in proceeding years decriminalized truancy and lowered thresholds for property crimes. TDCJ also offered incarcerated individuals incentives such as good time credits to participate in programming, education, and treatment programs. The state expanded the use of alternatives to incarceration such as parole, probation, and community supervision. To help formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into society, the state removed barriers to employment often faced by those with criminal records.³

Texas-MTC Partnership

MTC began operating prisons for the State of Texas in 1995. Currently, our facilities in Texas have the capacity to house 11,775 individuals. MTC operates 10 facilities for TDCJ. In addition to partnering with TDCJ to operate facilities, MTC also provides treatment services to incarcerated individuals in 19 TDCJ facilities serving 121,000 individuals. MTC provides incarcerated individuals with programs to help them overcome substance abuse issues, gain an education, learn career skills, and develop life skills.

Outcomes

Texas reforms, combined with the expertise brought to Texas facilities by contractors, have produced impressive results. From 2007 to 2019:





- The number of probationers returning to prison has been reduced by 14.7 percent⁴
- 17 percent fewer crimes are committed by parolees⁵
- The percentage of Texans who are incarcerated fell by 21 percent⁶
- The rate of recidivism fell by 25 percent⁷

MTC Provides TDCJ with Evidence-Based Programming, Education & Training

MTC’s programming engages individuals in a pro-social learning environment and provides an array of treatment and programming opportunities that address thinking errors, change habits, and return individuals to society better equipped to lead productive and law-abiding lives. Programming includes:

- Cognitive-behavioral treatment
- Emotion regulation training
- Academic and vocational development
- Substance abuse treatment
- Relationship and life skills development
- Gender-responsive programming

TDCJ also uses MTC’s contracted facilities to pilot innovative programs that support the state’s reentry goals.

Innovative Pilot Programs	
<p>High School Diploma</p> 	<p>MTC-operated Billy Moore Correctional Center and the Lockhart Correctional Facility are piloting the Goodwill High School. This high school is located within the facilities and allows students to earn an accredited high school diploma.</p>
<p>College Credit</p> 	<p>MTC-operated Sanders Estes Unit in Texas entered into a partnership with Hill College and Texas State Technical College to provide training in logistics. This training is one of four nationally recognized programs and provides individuals with a certificate of logistics that is recognized by the United States Manufacturing Skills Standard Council. Program participants receive nine hours of college credit.</p>
<p>Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP)</p> 	<p>The PEP program is offered through Baylor University at two MTC-operated facilities—the Oliver J Bell Unit and the Sanders Estes Unit. In this program, participants gain in-depth business training, learn leadership skills, gain positive character traits, and become empowered to lead fulfilling lives. Approximately 500 individuals participate in this program every year. Graduates of PEP have only a 7 percent three-year recidivism rate, and every PEP graduate has achieved a job within 90 days of release.⁸</p>
<p>Paid Job Training</p> 	<p>At the Lockhart Correctional Facility, women earn industry level wages while gaining workplace skills. Participating women earn over \$9.00 an hour and are able to save the money, send it to their families, or use it to pay restitution. They also gain jobs skills and work experience, which helps them obtain employment after they are released. Upon release, these women can frequently continue working for the manufacturing companies, earning wages of \$12.50 to \$30.00 per hour depending on their skillset.</p>

¹ Texas Department of Criminal Justice Statistical Report Fiscal Year 2007. (2008, July). Retrieved October 15, 2020, from https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2007.pdf ;

Texas Department of Criminal Justice Statistical Report Fiscal Year 2019. (2020). Retrieved October 15, 2020, from https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2019.pdf

² Travis, J., Western, B., & Redburn, F. S. (2014). The growth of incarceration in the United States: Exploring causes and consequences.

³ Glod, G. (2015, October). Texas Adult Corrections: A Model for the Rest of the Nation. Retrieved October 15, 2020, from <https://files.texaspolicy.com/uploads/2018/08/16101833/PP-Texas-Adult-Corrections-A-Model-for-the-Rest-of-the-Nation.pdf>

⁴ Haugen, M. (2017, August 1). Ten Years of Criminal Justice Reform in Texas. Retrieved October 15, 2020, from <http://rightoncrime.com/2017/08/ten-years-of-criminal-justice-reform-in-texas/>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Texas Department of Criminal Justice Statistical Report Fiscal Year 2007. (2008, July). Retrieved October 15, 2020, from https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2007.pdf

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Texas Department of Criminal Justice Statistical Report Fiscal Year 2019. (2020). Retrieved October 15, 2020, from https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2019.pdf

⁷ Cuccinelli, K. (2015). Texas shows how to reduce both incarceration and crime. National Review. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalreview.com/2015/05/how-could-we-have-fewer-prisoners-without-more-crime-ask-texas/>

⁸ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (May 2018). 2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: 1 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014). Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf>