



***Second Chance 4 Change:***

***A Handbook for Determined Fathers***

## **Second Chance 4 Change: A Handbook for Determined Fathers**

This handbook gives you resources and information to help you deal with the difficulties of being in jail and the challenges after you are released. It can be hard readjusting to life when you are back in your communities, and most importantly, in lives of your children. The handbook contains details about agencies and organizations that provide services aimed at helping you during this transition including web sites, phone number and physical addresses, where available.

For information not found in this handbook refer to **2-1-1 Texas**. **2-1-1 Texas** connects you to local resource and service providers throughout Texas 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If your transition is going to be successful you have to start getting ready before you are released. With this in mind, this handbook is divided into two major categories;

- Issues faced while incarcerated
- Issues faced after release.

### **Before Release**

#### **Contact with Children**

**The Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG)** gives you information regarding child support for fathers who are about to be released. There is also information to assist incarcerated review their case and provides guidance on issues like establishing paternity and information on the terms of child support orders. The **OAG** provides information about important things like child support and, if needed, confirming that you are the biological father of your kids for legal reasons. The **OAG** can be accessed using the Internet

(<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/incarcerated.pdf>), telephone, or by mail. The **OAG** also offers 24 hour payment and case information for fathers inquiring about their child support status.

Email: [www.childsupport.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.childsupport.oag.state.tx.us)

Customer Service Center: (800) 252-8014

Paternity Opportunity Program: (866) 255-2006

24 hour Payment and Case Information: (800) 252-8014

It is important to stay in touch with your kids while you are away. Writing them letters, talking to them on the phone, and encouraging them to come and visit can help both of you during this difficult time. You can also use this time to help your kids prepare for your return.

**Txaccess.org** is operated by the **OAG** and provides a guide for incarcerated parents and custodial parent(s), information for the time during incarceration, as well as after release. Txaccess.org provides useful information about positive communication while fathers are incarcerated like tips for in-person visits, letters, and phone calls. There is also information about the process of establishing paternity in the case of unwed parents.

Txaccess.org can be reached at its Access and Visitation Hotline: **1(866) 262-4636 (10am-6pm CST)**

### **Keeping a Positive Attitude**

Staying positive while you are away can have a good effect on your transition. It can also help you have healthy communication with your children and family as well. Keeping a positive attitude can also make the time away from your kids less stressful for you. Taking part in programs put on by the facility can give you valuable tools that are helpful in staying positive. Things like visits from children and family can improve your mood while you prepare for your release. Coming home with the right attitude can help after you are released. Having strong connections to come home to can also help you avoid getting arrested again. This section is aimed at providing you with the tools that can help maintain a good attitude before you are released from jail.

**Sesame Street** provides tips for you to stay active in your children's lives. During the separation children will, no doubt, have questions about the ordeal that are difficult to answer. Further, these answers and the children's reaction to them can have significant influence on the children's ability to cope as well as their willingness to see or speak to their fathers while they are away. **Sesame Street** can also offer useful tips to help your answer these important questions. The website itself also has helpful videos and activities that can help you tell your kids about this difficult time in their lives. The information on the following page was obtained from **[sesamestreet.org/incarceration](http://sesamestreet.org/incarceration)**.





LITTLE **children**  
BIG challenges: **incarceration**

## Tips for Incarcerated Parents



**You will always be a parent.** Even though you are incarcerated, you can still play an important role in your child's life. Try these actions to assure your child that you still care about her and will always be her parent.

### Answering difficult questions

Your child may have trouble understanding why you're gone. There are ways you can answer his questions truthfully and in ways that he can understand.

- Where are you?  
"I'm in a place called prison [jail]. Grown-ups go to prison [jail] when they break a rule called a law. I'm not here because of anything you did. This is not your fault."
- When will you be home?  
"I won't be home for a while. I'm waiting for more information and will let you know when I find out. I'd rather be home with you but know that wherever I am, I'm thinking about you."
- Will I get to see you?  
*If your child can visit:* "You can visit me in prison once in a while. Your caregiver will let you know when. Between visits we can write letters and talk on the phone."  
*If your child cannot visit:* "We may not be able to see each other often, but I want you to know that I'm always thinking of you."

### Connecting through visits

Seeing you can assure your child that you are okay. Here are some things you can do:

- Help your child feel comfortable  
Your child may feel nervous at first. Let her know you are happy to see her. Continue any rituals or customs you have together such as singing a song. Ask her questions about herself, such as: "What do you do with friends? What have you learned in school?"
- Make the most of your time together  
Take turns describing something you see and asking her to guess it; making funny faces; or discussing favorite colors, music, or sports teams.
- Make good-bye easier  
Saying good-bye is hard. Come up with a special phrase you both can say at bedtime or something you will both do at the same time each day even though you are apart.

Good communication is one way to help support your child.  
Build a positive relationship with her caregiver so she experiences support and love from you both.  
Talk to your child's caregiver about visits, letters, and phone calls.

The **Texas Inmate Families Association (TIFA)** provides education and support for you and your family. **TIFA** can also help you stay connected with your children while you are away. **TIFA's** storybook program allows you to record readings of children's books that can be played for kids. This can help you and your children feel closer while you are away. Services like this allow fathers to remain close to their children during a difficult time.

**Phone:** (512) 371-0900

**Email:** tifa@tifa.org

### **Legal Concerns**

**The Travis County Domestic Relations Office (DRO)** provides services to help in these areas:

- Conflict Resolution
- Civil Legal Action
- Parental Skills Classes
- Parental Mediation Referrals

The **DRO** is also helpful for fathers seeking assistance in productive and collaborative parenting.

**Phone:** (512) 854-9020

Website: **<https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/>**

**Texaslawhelp** provides free legal assistance for civic issues. This resource provides information and assistance on issues from child custody to removing arrests from one's criminal record.

Website: **<https://texaslawhelp.org/family-divorce-children/child-custody-visitation>**



## **After Release**

### **Reintegration into Community/Family**

Becoming part of your community and family again after you are released is important to your transition. The resources in this section can help you feel comfortable again with your family and friends.

**2-1-1 Texas** is a useful one-step phone number that can help with many different types of assistance. It can connect you with help in things such as:

- Housing
- Childcare
- Crisis counseling
- Substance abuse treatment

Phone: **2-1-1; 1-877-541-7905** (if 2-1-1 does not work from your phone)

**The Domestic Relations Office (DRO)** can help you to rebuild relationships with kids, and family members. This resource is useful to father both before and after they are released.

**Phone: (512) 854-9020**

Website: **<https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/dro/>**

**Parents Anonymous** offers help with the hard job of being a parent.

Phone: **1-855- 4A PARENT (1-855-427-2736)**

Email: **<http://www.parentsanonymous.org/>**

### **Employment/Financial Support**

Finding and keeping a job after you are free is an important step in helping you stay out of jail. Your children depend on the money you make to live and working allows you a way to provide for them. The resources in this section are aimed that helping dads obtain employment and/or alternative means to support their children.



**Capital IDEA** is a community based, non-profit organization that provides education, training, support services, as well as counseling and case management. **Capital IDEA** provides training for employment in several fields.

This resource also provides support in the following areas:

- Childcare
- Transportation
- Emergency Assistance
- Counseling.

Website: [www.capitalidea.org](http://www.capitalidea.org)

Phone: (512) 457-8610

Email: [info@capitalidea.org](mailto:info@capitalidea.org)

**Goodwill** can help you find a job as well as job training and education.

Website: <https://www.goodwillcentraltexas.org/education-job-training/find-a-job>

Phone: (512) 637-7580

Email: [intake@goodwillcentraltexas.org](mailto:intake@goodwillcentraltexas.org)

Having a criminal record can look bad on a job application. The **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)** can help.

Website: <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>

Central Texas Specific Info Website: [www.wfscapitalarea.com](http://www.wfscapitalarea.com)

Phone: (512) 454-9675 (Mon.-Fri; 8am-5pm/CST)

**2-1-1 Texas** has a lot of resources and many areas that can help you. Whether your need is:

- Housing
- Child Care
- Crisis Counseling
- Substance Abuse Treatment

**2-1-1 Texas** can get you the help you need.

Phone: **Dial 2-1-1; 1-877-541-7905 (if 2-1-1 does not work from your phone)**

Utility expenses can seriously impact a family's financial well-being. **Texas HEAP** is a federal program that can help you with your energy bills. **HEAP** also helps you with the costs of maintenance and repair for broken heating equipment.

Website: <http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/community-affairs/index.htm>

Phone: 1-877-399-8939

### **Avoiding Re-arrest**

One of the biggest challenges you will face when you are released is staying out of jail. This section is dedicated to helping you deal with the negative influences that could lead you back to prison by providing resources aimed at helping you avoid major factors that can lead to bad behavior.



Lack of formal education can be one of the most significant barriers to success. The Texas Education Agency is a way to get your high school equivalency through the **High School Equivalency Program (HSEP)**. **HSEP** can also provide help with job searches and training.

Website: [https://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/](https://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/)

Phone: (512) 463-9734

Email: [teainfo@tea.texas.gov](mailto:teainfo@tea.texas.gov)

Austin **Alcoholics Anonymous** offers group counseling to assist if you suffer from alcohol addiction. Alcohol abuse affects many in our prison population and it doesn't just disappear when you are set free.

Website: <https://austinaa.org>

Phone: (512) 444-0071

**Central Texas Area Narcotics Anonymous (CTANA)** provides information about group counseling for those who suffer from drug addiction. **Narcotics Anonymous** also provides information about other methods and assistance to those who suffer from this addiction. Addiction to illegal drugs, much like alcohol, affects many in our criminal justice system. The **CTANA** provides help managing and overcoming your addictions.

Website: <http://ctana.org/>

Phone: (512) 480-0004



**The National Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Information Center** gives you information about the leading alcohol and substance abuse centers. They can provide information about:

- Treatment For Alcohol And Drug Abuse
- Detox
- Intervention
- Addiction Assistance

You can use this information to help with the difficult task of battling addiction during the already challenging circumstance of the post-jail transition.

Website: **[www.addictioncareoptions.com](http://www.addictioncareoptions.com)**

Phone: **1(800) 784-6776**

If there is help you are looking for that is not in this handbook **2-1-1 Texas** is a good place to look. Whether the need is in areas like housing assistance, counseling, or childcare, **2-1-1 Texas** has information about services available to dads in these areas and many more.

Phone: **Dial 2-1-1; 1-877-541-7905 (if 2-1-1 does not work from your phone)**

*You are more than capable of rebuilding your life after jail, and changing for the better. This handbook can help you as long as you are willing to do the work and make the effort. You play a huge part in your kids' lives and they look to you for guidance and support. Your kids need you, and you can be the father they deserve. **NOW GO DO IT!***