

Project RIO(Re-integration of Offenders)

Program Objectives: The program is designed to reduce recidivism through employment.

Leadership: Project RIO is administered by the Texas Workforce Commission in collaboration with Local Workforce Development Boards, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the Windham School District and The Texas Youth Commission (TYC). The project provides a link between education, training and employment during incarceration with employment, training and education after release.

Who is eligible: In TDCJ's prison units, adult offenders within 24 months of release are eligible for Project RIO. Offenders held in state jail facilities are eligible for services 18 months prior to projected release. Offenders assigned to substance abuse felony punishment facilities are eligible for Project RIO six (6) months prior to release. Additional eligibility criteria includes appropriate security classification, the absence of felony detainees, a release plan that envisions return to a Texas community, and the physical and mental ability to work.

Process of entering and completing RIO program:

- Prior to release, Rio staff develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), which assess the needs of the offender and assist in the selection and placement in Windham, college, TDCJ and TYC programs. The evaluation process is a multi-step approach that includes information gathering, goal-setting, program placement and offender self-assessment.
- Project RIO staff encourage participants to take advantage of educational and vocational services and assist offenders in obtaining documents necessary for employment. Unit or facility staff also provide placement services to give offenders practical work experience in their areas of training.
- After release, TWC Project RIO staff provide ex-offenders with individualized workforce development services including job preparation and job search assistance.
- Participants are often placed with one of more than 12,000 employers who have previously hired RIO participants. The employment specialists follow up with employers and participants on a regular basis. The specialists can also provide access to social and community services for the participants who need them.
- RIO participants attend structured job search workshops that focus on basic skills such as completing a work application, preparing a resume and performing in a mock interview.
- Project RIO staff ensure that potential employers are aware of and take advantage of special incentives for hiring releasees.

Services: Services are offered to program participants pre- and post-release. An individualized treatment plan is developed to identify a career path for the offender and to guide placement decisions.

Services Project RIO

- program orientation;
- educational assessment and interest survey;
- career exploration and career path counseling;

- labor market information specific to prospective release area;
- educational, vocational, or behavioral program referrals while incarcerated;
- enrollment in academic and vocational programs (Windham School District and postsecondary level);
- life and cognitive skills training;
- TDCJ job assignment referrals;
- on-the-job training (OJT) program participation;
- job placement recommendations;
- résumé development;
- completion of job applications;
- employment interviews;
- exit interviews prior to release
- *Job workshops*
 - How to obtain and hold a job.
 - Preparing an application.
 - Resume and employment history summary.
 - Job interviewing skills.
 - Telephone techniques.
 - How to utilize community resources.

Project RIO Staff will attempt to gather the following employment documents:

- **Driver License:** Project RIO staff will assist in obtaining a Driver's License for eligible offenders. If a Driver's License is obtained, a Birth Certificate is not required.
- **Social Security Cards:** Project RIO staff will assist in obtaining a Social Security card if the offender is eligible and correctly completes the application process.
- **Birth Certificate:** Project RIO staff will assist in obtaining an original birth certificate.
- **DD214:** If applicable, Project RIO staff will assist in obtaining military records.
- **Application for Employment:** Project RIO staff will furnish a Work in Texas application for employment and assist in completing the application to prepare the offender for their first interview either prior to or upon release.

Outcomes

EMPLOYER

- Support services to increase employment stability.
- Offense screening to reduce risk.
- Applicants are job-matched by employment skills.
- Tax breaks through Work Opportunity Tax Credit.
- Fidelity bonding available upon request.

COMMUNITY

- Improved public safety through reduction of crime.
- Better community image which attracts conventions, retail trade and new business.
- decreased welfare and social service costs related to unemployment.

EX-OFFENDERS

- Access to legitimate means of income.
- Intensive job referral.
- Enhancement of employment potential.

Contact Information

For additional information call:1-800-453-8140

or contact:

Texas Workforce Commission

Project RIO Staff

101 E. 15th Street

Austin, TX 78778

<http://www.nicic.org/Library/serial643>

<http://www.nicic.org/pubs/1998/serial643.pdf>

Project Rio in the media:

<http://www.healthysanbernardinocounty.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PromisePractice&file=promisePractice&pid=822>

<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/rio.html>