

AUSTIN·TRAVIS COUNTY

REENTRY ROUNDTABLE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

ABOUT

Our **vision** is a community that values and supports equity for formerly incarcerated persons and individuals with criminal histories.

Our **mission** is to be a robust collaborative promoting safe and healthy communities through effective reentry and reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons and individuals with criminal histories.



Our core values are:

- **Community Voice** – we listen to and engage people with lived experience in the criminal justice system and communities impacted by the criminal justice system.
- **Inclusion** – we include multiple perspectives on how to achieve safe and healthy communities through effective reentry and reintegration.
- **Respect** – we honor the basic dignity of every person and support relationship building as a means to overcome challenges.
- **Equity** – we focus on disparities and inequities in system delivery and we are not afraid to ask hard questions to facilitate system change.
- **Preventing Incarceration** – we champion strategies that offer alternatives to jail/incarceration whenever possible.

Our intended impacts:

- Policy and practice changes that lead to reductions in recidivism and revocations from community supervision with the aim of reducing the number of incarcerated persons in Travis County.
- Improved access to housing, job opportunities, and physical and behavioral health care for persons with criminal backgrounds in Travis County.
- Shifted 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.

We serve...

- Those impacted by the criminal justice system, including justice-involved individuals, victims, families and communities;
- Criminal justice institutions; and
- Private and public-sector entities engaged in providing services and/or advocating for issues that impact reentry.

In Travis County, Texas, and statewide on issues that impact reentry locally.

How we work:

- We engage diverse stakeholders impacted by reentry.
- We convene dialogue and critical conversations.
- We advocate to support institutional and public policy change.
- We partner to broaden our impact.

Strategic Plan Goals:



2019-2020 IMPACT

Engaging Diverse Stakeholders Impacted by Reentry

This year, the Roundtable engaged community leaders, employers and policymakers across the region and state to discuss the impacts of incarceration and reentry on diverse communities, including the following activities:

- **Fair Chance Hiring.** Hank Perret, Leadership Austin Executive Fellow, engaged with more than 25 employers, employer associations and community coalitions to discuss the positive impacts of hiring persons with criminal backgrounds.
- **RAP Experience-Based Co-Design Project.** Carl Hunter, RAP Representative on the Roundtable Executive Committee, led a group of RAP members and other allies in a participatory process to identify the needs of justice-involved individuals by elevating the voices of those directly impacted, including launching a survey and conducting five focus groups with formerly incarcerated persons and their families. See the results from this effort later in this report.
- **Reentry Journey Videos.** Due to the generosity of volunteer allies, the Roundtable was able to document powerful reentry stories from twelve amazing individuals on video. All the stories are available on the Roundtable's [YouTube channel](#).



Convening Dialogue and Critical Conversations

The Roundtable is uniquely positioned as a convener to engage the community to better understand the impacts of incarceration and reentry, and to engage with system partners to improve reentry outcomes.

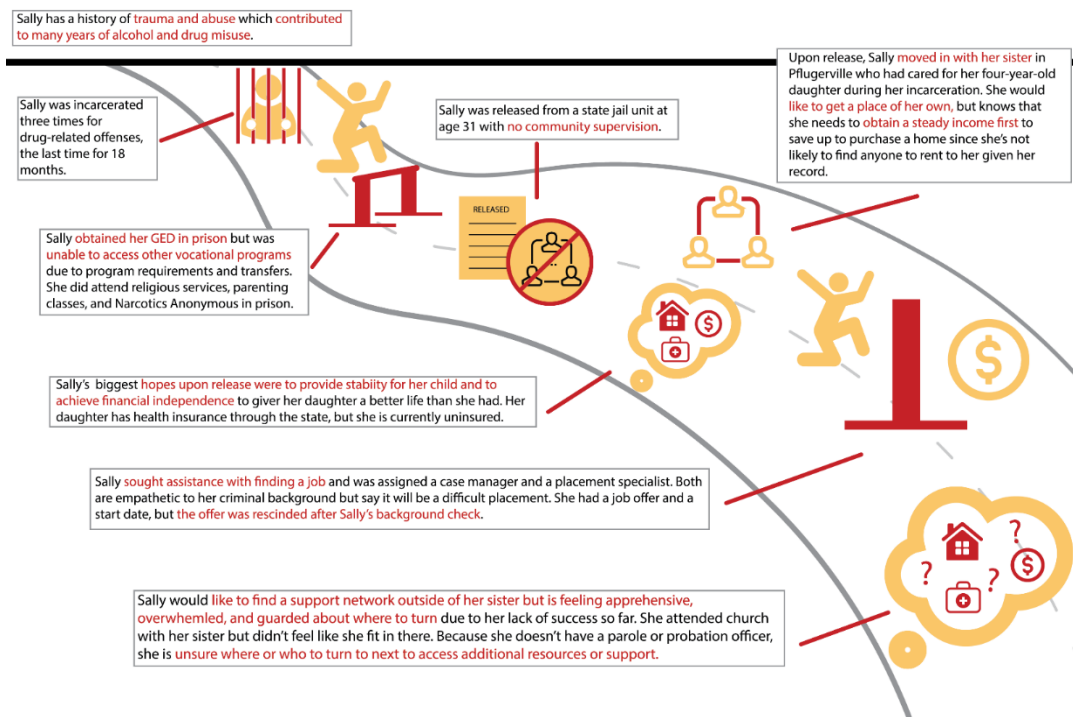
This year, activities included:

- **Reentry Simulation Toolkit.** As part of a grant deliverable for the City of Austin Equity Office, Roundtable Advocacy Fellow Laurie Pherigo conducted research on reentry simulation models and customized a template created by the U.S. Department of Justice for a Texas-based reentry simulation. Although plans to conduct the reentry simulation were postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a toolkit based on the reentry simulation materials was developed and the Roundtable is excited to conduct a reentry simulation event in 2021.
- **Institutional Stakeholder Engagement.** The Roundtable sought to engage the perspectives of persons working within the criminal justice system, including administrators, planners and those providing direct reentry support through interviews with six criminal justice stakeholder entities, as well as by conducting a criminal justice stakeholder meeting to share the results of the

interviews with criminal justice stakeholders and to collect additional feedback on the interests of regional criminal justice partners in supporting successful reentry.

- Mapping Reentry Journeys.** The Roundtable convened a work group of Planning council members, persons with lived experience in the justice system and other concerned community members for a series of sessions to identify the typical patterns of reentry pathways to better understand the needs of persons returning to the Austin/Travis County community. This “journey mapping” work resulted in three composite stories that aggregate similar experiences of reentry from jail or prison to Travis County. The journey mapping work informed recommendations to the City of Austin and Travis County.

Sally’s Journey: Facing the Collateral Consequences of Substance Abuse



Advocating to Support Institutional and Public Policy Change

The Roundtable serves as an intersectional network to build momentum for system change in criminal justice and reentry. This year, we focused on:

- Supporting the City of Austin Fair Chance Housing resolution.** The Roundtable engaged with Austin City Council Member Natasha Harper-Madison to build on the Roundtable’s previous collaborating work in developing the Texas Criminal Background Screening Guide for Rental Housing Providers in 2018. This work culminated in the passage of the City’s Fair Chance Housing Resolution on June 11th that directs the City Manager to work with community partners and bring recommendations on how to reduce rental discrimination based on an individual’s felony and misdemeanor background and eviction history in any city funded affordable housing.
- Developing recommendations and a work plan to improve local reentry coordination.** The Roundtable’s [2020 Reentry Progress Report & Recommendations](#), submitted to the City of Austin

and Travis County in September, provides an overview of reentry FAQ's and a data brief of the Travis County reentry population; offers recommendations during incarceration, addressing immediate reentry needs, and addressing long-term reentry needs; and outlines a work plan to improve reentry coordination in Travis County.

Partnering to Broaden Our Impact

Partnerships allow the Roundtable to maximize its impact. In 2019-20, the Roundtable partnered with the following entities on a variety of projects and initiatives:

- Austin Film Festival
- Austin Justice Coalition
- Austin ROSC
- Building Promise USA
- City of Austin Equity Office
- City of Austin Housing & Planning Department
- Downtown Austin Community Court
- Grassroots Leadership
- Impact Hub/VUKA
- Integral Care
- Latino Justice
- Leadership Austin
- Mt. Zion Church
- New Story Festival
- Recovery People
- Reentry Advocacy Project (RAP)
- Shriver Center on Poverty Law
- Travis County Justice Planning
- Travis County Sheriff's Office
- Texas Advocates for Justice
- Texas Criminal Justice Coalition
- Truth Be Told
- U.S. Department of Justice
- University of Texas School of Law

CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS OF THE ROUNDTABLE ADVOCACY FELLOWSHIP!

2020 marks the fifth anniversary of the Roundtable’s Advocacy Fellowship targeted at individuals with lived experience navigating the criminal justice system and reentering the community. The program was initially funded through the generous support of the Shield-Ayres Foundation in 2016 and 2017 and has been incorporated into the Roundtable’s annual budget. The Roundtable will launch the selection process for the next Fellow in early 2021.

The goals of the Advocacy Fellowship are as follows:

- To advance the Fellows’ leadership capacity through professional skill-building and mentorship opportunities;
- To provide advocacy and policy support for the Roundtable; and
- To expand the capacity and impact of the Reentry Advocacy Project (RAP).

We are so proud of our former Advocacy Fellows as they continue to engage and impact in criminal justice system reform and to improve the lives of those who are currently on their own reentry journeys:

- Lauren Johnson (2016-2017)
- Annette Price (2017-2018)
- Tray Frazier (2018)
- Laurie Pherigo (2018-2020)



Lauren Johnson



Annette Price and Laurie Pherigo



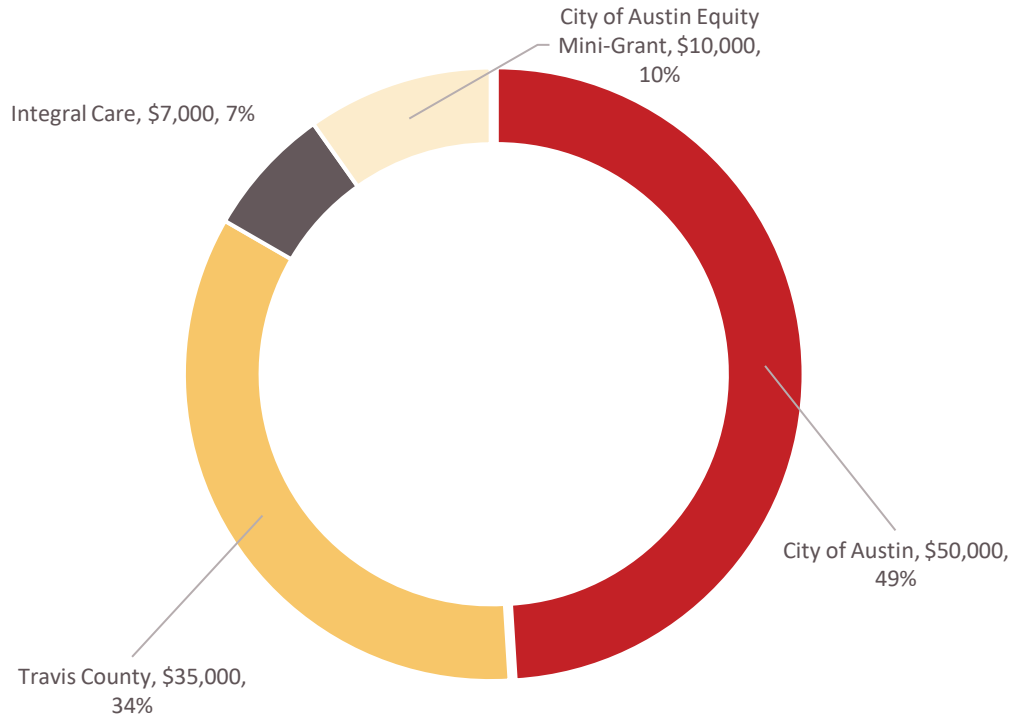
Annette Price, Helen Gabler, Kenneth Thompson, and Tray Frazier



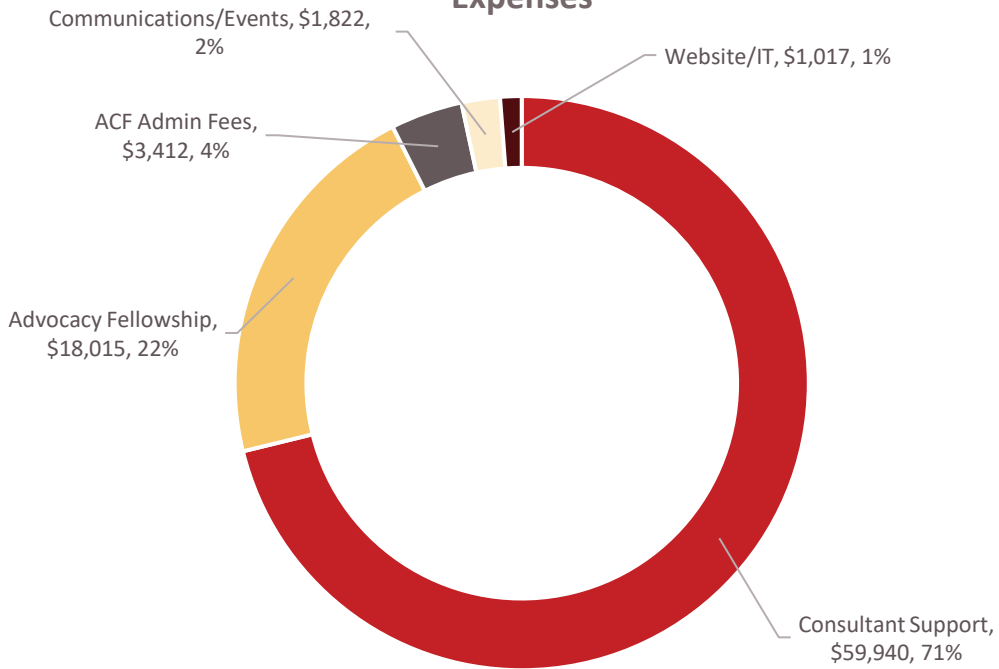
Mia Greer, Michelle Collins, Reginald Smith, Laurie Pherigo, and Carl Hunter

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Income



Expenses



PLANNING COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mia Greer, RN, BSN, CLIA | Chair
Community Coalition for Health



Jennifer Tucker | Vice Chair
Goodwill Industries of Central Texas



Reginald Smith | Past Chair
Community Representative

Carl F. Hunter II, M Div | RAP
Representative
Recovery People



Carolyn Brown
Travis County Correctional Facility



David Clauss, LMSW
American YouthWorks



Sherri Cogbill
Texas Department of Criminal Justice



Helen Gaebler, JD
UT School of Law



Darla Gay
Travis County District Attorney's Office



Marissa Latta
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid



Katy Jo Muncie
Capital Area Private Defender Service



Hank Perret
Community Representative

Rodolfo (Rudy) Pérez, Jr.
Travis County Adult Probation



Kaleigh Phelan
Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)

Kimberly Pierce
Travis County Justice Planning



Joe Ramirez
Texas Veterans Commission



Louella Tate, Ph.D.
Community Representative

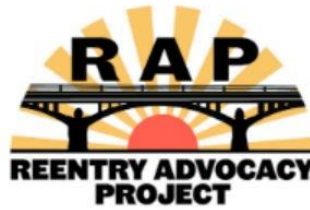
Don Tracy
Austin Community College



Peter Valdez, LMSW
City of Austin Community Court



RAP UPDATE



Focus Group: In Their Own Words

I just refused to be denied when I knew that people had resources.

[Recovery self-help programs] allowed me to see that I can overcome the obstacles that I am going through.

Educational opportunities and things of that nature are inconsistent within the system... You have to look for opportunities to do things for yourself.

[Self-advocated for a transfer to a unit with a CDL program] I bothered them until they finally sent me there.

I am proud of the jobs I had in TDC. I thought I did really well with them.

[My parole officer] is possibly one of the reasons I am talking to you today in the free world. He was encouraging. He was just a nice person. That made a world of difference.

The quotes above, from the focus groups RAP conducted last summer, demonstrate that some things about the current reentry system are working, and that even against overwhelming challenges, many individuals channel their strengths into a positive reentry path.

RAP's role in providing support and fellowship for persons directly impacted by the criminal justice system allows participants to share the assets they utilized during their reentry process with their peers.

The focus groups also uncovered several considerations for improvements to how we currently plan for reentry before an individual is released as well as once someone is reintegrating into the community:

- Some individuals have access to resources and planning, but it is inconsistent.
- Reentry services are typically not tailored to meet individual needs.
- Reentry planning typically does not happen until the final weeks of incarceration.
- Some individuals appear to be discharged on particularly fragile footing, lacking immediate basic needs, including shelter, transportation, medicine and/or access to personal identification documents.
- Families are not often engaged in the reentry process.
- Accessing resources is overwhelming, both for reentering individuals and their reentry counselors.
- Behavioral health challenges threaten successful reentry.

- Barriers to housing, employment and health care are real and must be addressed.