

Frequently Asked questions about TDCJ Re-Training

How long is the application process?

For an applicant with a clear criminal history, the process typically takes less than two (2) weeks. If there is a criminal history, additional information, support letters, possibly dispositions for crimes, etc. will be required and will thus require additional processing time.

Can an ex-offender volunteer?

Yes. Ex-offenders may serve as a volunteer provided they have a clear criminal background for the previous 18 months and have demonstrated successful reentry into the community. The Partner Program allows for ex-offenders to serve as a substance abuse volunteer six months after their release. The ex-offender must be sponsored by an approved volunteer and must have a year of sobriety to be eligible for the partner program. Ex-offenders may also participate in the volunteer program as a special volunteer one year after their release. Special volunteers may visit no more than four times.

Can a TDCJ employee (or retiree) become a volunteer?

Yes. Applicants who are currently, or previously, employed by the TDCJ will undergo an employment check through the TDCJ Human Resources Division for disciplinary history and rehire eligibility. The applicant's disciplinary history will be considered when approving the volunteer applicant. Employees will not be eligible to serve on a facility where they are currently assigned unless the facility administrator approves the employee volunteer's assignment.

Can I attend a training class at a unit different from the one I will be volunteering at?

Yes

How long is the training session?

Four (4) hours are scheduled for volunteer training.

How often am I required to retrain?

Volunteers are required to retrain every two years. Volunteers may retrain on-line on an alternating basis (http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/php/volunteer_training/). Every other retraining must be at an on-site location. Volunteers may contact Volunteer Services for a list of available on-site training locations, times and dates.

Can I bring a friend with me to the volunteer training/orientation session?

No. Do not invite anyone to accompany you to the training session that does not have a training letter or has not been approved through proper channels. Neither should you bring children or pets to the training session.

Can my church/ministry group donate books or materials to the units?

Yes. Contact the unit chaplain for guidance on how to make a donation.

What if someone I know is currently incarcerated within the TDCJ?

Volunteer applicants are required to acknowledge on their application if a relative, friend, victim or enemy is incarcerated. Volunteers will not be placed at a facility where a relative, friend, victim or enemy is assigned. In the event a relative, friend, victim or enemy becomes incarcerated after the applicant becomes an approved volunteer, or if a volunteer discovers a friend, relative, victim or enemy is assigned to a facility on which they serve, the volunteer is responsible for reporting immediately to the appropriate authority. The volunteer may be reassigned to another facility.

How many units can I visit?

Volunteers can serve/visit on multiple units based on the unit's needs and space availability.

After becoming an approved volunteer, will I be able to write letters to offenders?

Yes. Volunteers (excluding employee and Victim Services volunteers) may correspond with an offender(s). Correspondence should be encouraging to the offenders in an effort to help them in their rehabilitation. Correspondence shall not include any references that are sexual in nature; refer to criminal behavior or gang-related information; refer to or include contraband; refer to actions that are inappropriate such as soliciting money, or contain records or documents held by the TDCJ (those not listed in the TDCJ Public Information Act Manual). Volunteers shall not reference or include personal information when corresponding with offenders (e.g., personal photographs, personal relationships, personal finances, etc.) or provide legal and/or financial advice.

How do I begin?

Contact the chaplain or volunteer coordinator of the facility on which you would like to serve. Placement of volunteers is based on the needs of the facility, needs of the offender population, space availability, existing program schedules, and the proposed volunteer activity. Volunteers may go to the TDCJ website for a list of units and contact information. <http://tdcj.state.tx.us/stat/unitdirectory/all.htm>

What is a special volunteer?

Individuals that participate in a volunteer program/activity but are not approved volunteers. Special Volunteers are limited to four (4) visits statewide.