



Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Bobby Lumpkin
Executive Director

Letter of Orientation for Special Volunteers

Welcome to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) volunteer program! Prior to service as a special volunteer with the TDCJ, you are required to read and become familiar with the following rules of conduct. These rules are not inclusive of all TDCJ policies, but will help ensure the safety and security of facility operations as well as the welfare of our volunteers, staff, and inmates. Professional behavior and good common sense are essential to your participation. Because you have requested to participate in a system that promotes positive change in inmate behavior, you are encouraged and expected to demonstrate integrity in everything you do. Please note that as a Special Volunteer, you are allowed no more than four (4) visits/events in a life-time, system-wide. Special volunteers are subject to sanctions for rule violations. We hope that your experience is very rewarding.

ELIGIBILITY

- An ex-inmate or releasee who wishes to participate in a volunteer activity as a special volunteer must have been released from incarceration at least six months at the time of the activity or program and must have the prior approval of the Facility Volunteer Authority/Department Volunteer Authority.
- Special volunteers must disclose if they have an active warrant, pending charge(s) and any current or previous gang affiliation.
- The Special Volunteer Approval Form will be completed by the Facility Volunteer Coordinator, Department Volunteer Coordinator, chaplain or the volunteer or volunteer group and submitted to the Facility Volunteer Authority/Department Volunteer Authority for approval.

RULES OF CONDUCT

- You cannot perform volunteer services at a facility where a relative, friend, victim, or enemy is incarcerated or where an inmate is assigned whose victim is your friend or relative.
- You or a representative from your group must submit a list of items you intend to bring into the facility to the facility administrator for approval prior to the event. Electronic musical devices (including PA systems/components) are allowed, as well as laptop computers that are without broadband capabilities.
- The TDCJ has a zero-tolerance policy for all contraband (cell phones, pagers, smartwatches, pocketknives, alcohol, tobacco products, narcotics, any electronic or wireless device, or any other item prohibited or not approved). Do not bring more than \$25.00 or a credit/debit card into the facility. All individuals entering a secure facility are subject to pat-searches. Anyone found in possession of a prohibited item(s) will be referred for prosecution.

Our mission is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.

P.O. Box 99
Huntsville, Texas 77342-0099
www.tdcj.texas.gov

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- Firearms, or other instruments designed/used as a dangerous weapon or having explosive substance, are not allowed on TDCJ property. The exception is for those persons licensed to carry a handgun under Chapter 411, Subchapter H of the Texas Government Code to possess a handgun on TDCJ property if the unloaded gun is secured in the locked trunk of a vehicle, or locked compartment if the vehicle does not have a trunk, prior to entering TDCJ property.
- You must be dressed in a manner appropriate for the occasion and service. Do not wear provocative/suggestive clothing or any attire that is of extreme design, revealing in nature, or any attire or haircut style that conveys messages of a derogatory or offensive nature through language, logos, or symbols, or jewelry on the facial area. Keep accessories simple and avoid wearing expensive jewelry. Wearing all white clothing at a secure facility is prohibited.
- Cold weather clothing (e.g., coats, gloves, scarves, hats, boots, etc.) shall be secured as determined by facility/department staff. Do not leave clothing or any other personal items unattended.
- If you have a prescription and/or non-prescription drug that you must take during your visit, you must provide a written statement to the appropriate staff beforehand, indicating the name of the drug and prescribing health care provider and possible side effects. You may only carry into the facility the amount needed during your visit. This must be carried in the original container.
- All special volunteers/volunteer groups are under the direct oversight of the appropriate staff. You must stay with your group during your visit. Volunteers do not supervise inmates.
- Do not mail any item, correspondence, etc. for inmates. Do not carry messages from inmate to inmate or to the inmate's family members.
- Do not give money to an inmate or his family, either directly or indirectly. Do not deposit money into an inmate's trust fund account.
- Do not accept personal gifts from or give personal gifts to an inmate.
- Refer all inmate requests to department/division volunteer staff and/or facility staff.
- You are required to immediately report any misconduct that you witness or any information that is revealed to you by an inmate that is criminal in nature.
- Do not disparage the faith of any inmate, nor deliberately seek to influence a change in any inmate's denomination. Religious programs will not be used to proselytize from any group.

ZERO-TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

- In accordance with Section 501.172 of the Texas Government Code, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), the TDCJ has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct. Individuals who violate the rights of an inmate or engage in sexual misconduct will be referred for prosecution.
- The TDCJ has zero-tolerance for sexual abuse or misconduct. Volunteers are prohibited from establishing or continuing personal relationships with inmates, including engaging in, or attempting to engage in, any form of consensual sexual misconduct with inmates, or forcing or attempting to force inmates to participate in non-consensual sexual misconduct.
- Volunteers who violate this policy will not be allowed to continue to perform services for the TDCJ and may be subject to criminal prosecution.

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- A volunteer shall not be subject to harassment, retaliation, intimidation, or coercion for reporting a personal employee-inmate relationship or any incident of sexual misconduct.
- A volunteer with knowledge of any misconduct, either by personal detection or being confided in by an inmate, shall be required to report the misconduct immediately. The volunteer shall report such misconduct or abuse to one or more of the following:
 - Facility Volunteer Coordinator
 - Facility Volunteer Authority
 - CID supervisor
 - Chaplain
 - Warden or department head
 - Facility OIG investigator
 - PREA ombudsman
- Volunteers may report alleged sexual misconduct directly to a facility OIG investigator without reporting such misconduct to a supervisor or chain-of-command.
- It is a felony offense if a volunteer violates the rights of a person in custody or engages in sexual contact, sexual intercourse, or deviant sexual intercourse with a person in custody.
- In the event you are taken hostage, the department will not bargain for your release. Also, the TDCJ will not be held liable and/or responsible in the case of personal injury while you are at the facility.
- In the event that you are sued as a result of performing services, the state of Texas will not indemnify you and will not provide a defense to such litigation.
- Uniformed officers' orders are to be obeyed at all times. They are trained to protect and insure the safety of all individuals (visitors, staff, and inmates) at the facility.
- Information gathered and maintained by the TDCJ in connection with the supervision of inmates is confidential and privileged by statute and shall not be disclosed to anyone other than those persons entitled to receive such information under Texas law.
- Some information related to rehabilitation treatment programming is further made confidential by Federal law and may not be disclosed to anyone except as provided by that law.
- You may not communicate business of the TDCJ to the media without prior approval.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding policy and procedure, or if a situation arises about which you are in doubt, **ASK BEFORE YOU ACT.**

Thank you for your interest and participation in the TDCJ volunteer program. The investment of your time is a generous contribution. It provides valuable interaction between the criminal justice system and the community and is a key element in the rehabilitation process. Should you be interested in becoming an approved volunteer, you can find the volunteer application on-line at www.tdcj.texas.gov, click on "Vounteer".

Sincerely,

Lisa Langley

Manager II, Volunteer Services
Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division

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