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**XX.**

**TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

The rules are adopted under Texas Labor Code §§301.0015 and 302.002(d), which provide the Texas Workforce Commission with the authority to adopt, amend, or repeal such rules as it deems necessary for the effective administration of Agency services and activities.

# Chapter 847. PROJECT RIO EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

## SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

The rules are adopted under Texas Labor Code §301.061, which provides the Texas Workforce Commission with the authority to adopt, amend, or repeal such rules as it deems necessary for the effective administration of Commission activities and services; Texas Labor Code, Chapter 306, and particularly §306.003, which requires the Commission to administer the project; and Texas Labor Code §306.006, which states the Project RIO director's duties to set standards and guidelines for the operation of the project.

### §847.1 Purpose.

- (a) Purpose. The purpose of Project RIO is to provide a statewide employment referral program designed to reintegrate into the labor force persons sentenced to a Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) correctional institution and persons committed to the Texas Youth Commission (TYC).
- (b) Scope of Rules. The Project RIO standards and guidelines, set forth in this chapter, address the roles and responsibilities of Boards to ensure that Project RIO employment activities and support services are available statewide through the Texas Workforce Centers consistent with 40 TAC Chapter 801 relating to the One-Stop Service Delivery Network. Project RIO employment activities and support services are provided to adult and youth offenders before release by TDCJ and TYC. Post-release employment activities and support services are provided through the Texas Workforce Centers, and are designed to provide ex-offenders with employment activities and support services that promote employment, meet the needs of Texas employers, and help reduce recidivism. The provisions in this chapter are intended to be consistent with Texas Labor Code, Chapter 306; Texas Government Code §2308.312; and the Agency's memorandum of understanding with TDCJ and TYC.
- (c) Funding Integration. The Commission intends, to the greatest extent possible, to integrate all available funding sources in the delivery of Project RIO services, and support and expand Project RIO services by ensuring that ex-offenders and adjudicated youth have access to the full range of employment and training activities provided by the One-Stop Service Delivery Network.

*The provisions of this §847.1 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

### §847.2 Definitions.

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

- (1) Project RIO job seeker -- an individual involved with the Texas criminal or juvenile justice systems that may include the following:
  - (A) Adults who were sentenced to a TDCJ correctional institution, and are within one year after their release from incarceration, or are currently under or within one year of completion of their term of parole supervision by TDCJ; and
  - (B) Adjudicated youth ages 16 through 21, seeking employment activities and support services, who were formerly confined in a TYC correctional institution.

- (2) TDCJ -- the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is the state agency that manages the overall operations of the state's prison, parole, and state jail systems.
- (3) TYC -- the Texas Youth Commission is the state's juvenile corrections agency that manages the overall operations of the state's youth correctional institutions and parole operations.
- (4) Windham School District -- the school district that is responsible for providing academic as well as career and technology education to eligible offenders incarcerated in TDCJ correctional institutions.

*The provisions of this §847.2 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

### **§847.3. General Board Responsibilities.**

- (a) **Role of Boards.** A Board shall ensure that Project RIO job seekers (i.e., individuals referred by TDCJ and TYC, as well as self-referred individuals) participate in employment activities and support services, as appropriate. Boards shall determine the level of staff assistance that Project RIO job seekers require to assist them in obtaining employment. Boards may provide graduated levels of workforce services, as defined in §801.28 of this title, based upon the job seekers' needs. Boards providing graduated services shall ensure Project RIO job seekers who are unable to secure employment through the provision of core services are provided with intensive or training services to assist them in obtaining suitable employment. The employment activities and support services, as defined in this chapter, should meet the needs of local employers, prepare Project RIO job seekers to compete in the labor market, and assist ex-offenders and adjudicated youth in obtaining employment.
- (b) **Board Planning.** A Board shall develop, amend, and modify its Integrated Plan to incorporate and coordinate the design and management of the delivery of Project RIO employment activities and support services with the delivery of other workforce employment, training, and educational services identified in Texas Government Code §2308.251 et seq., Texas Government Code §2308.312 et seq., as well as other employment and training services included in the One-Stop Service Delivery Network as set forth in Chapter 801 of this title.

The Commission's intent is to assist Project RIO job seekers with securing employment as quickly as possible; however, Project RIO - Youth may need basic skills training and education to secure employment. Specifically, Boards shall consider integration with WIA Youth services or other funding sources, as appropriate, for assisting Project RIO - Youth with obtaining the basic General Educational Development (GED) credential or basic skills training.

- (c) **Board Coordination.** The Boards shall coordinate with the following entities to ensure the transition to employment of Project RIO job seekers:
  - (1) **Parole Supervising Offices.** A Board shall coordinate the provision of Project RIO employment activities and support services with the referring TDCJ or TYC supervising office. This coordination shall ensure that the supervising office is made aware of the results of the initial referral for Project RIO services, as well as periodic updates on program participation status as determined appropriate for the individual.
  - (2) **Correctional Institutions.** A Board shall ensure that Texas Workforce Center staff who are assisting Project RIO job seekers coordinate the provision of Project RIO employment activities and support services with TDCJ and TYC correctional institutions by utilizing the data and resources developed prior to the offender's or adjudicated youth's release. This coordination shall ensure that post-release Project RIO activities and services build upon and complement the services provided in the correctional institutions.

- (3) Windham School District. Boards shall coordinate on an ongoing and continuing basis with Windham School District by providing labor market information related to their local workforce development area (workforce area), including current and emerging jobs, in order that Windham School District may better meet the needs of Texas employers through education and training services. Additionally, Boards shall ensure that Texas Workforce Center staff who are assisting Project RIO job seekers fully incorporate in Project RIO job seekers' Individual Employment Plans (IEPs), as set forth in §847.22 of this chapter, the education and training received during incarceration in order to maximize employment referrals that are directly related to that education and training.
- (4) Memoranda of Understanding. Pursuant to coordination efforts, Boards shall develop memoranda of understanding with TDCJ, TYC, and the Windham School District establishing the systems, structures, and processes for the provision of Project RIO services. The memoranda of understanding must include, but are not limited to, procedures for the following activities:
  - (A) Referral coordination for parolees or adjudicated youth;
  - (B) Progress reporting related to job seeker status and services received; and
  - (C) The provision of labor market information to the Windham School District.
- (5) Other Partners. For the purposes of ensuring that Project RIO job seekers have the necessary support services available to them to enable successful entry into the labor force, a Board shall develop cooperative agreements and service arrangements meeting the requirements of Texas Labor Code §306.007(a).
- (d) Service Delivery Strategies. A Board shall develop a Project RIO Service Delivery Strategy, which may include the provision of graduated levels of workforce services, as set forth in §801.28 of this title, based upon the needs of Project RIO job seekers. Boards shall provide intensive or training services, as appropriate, to Project RIO job seekers who receive core services but were unable to secure employment. Boards shall fully incorporate and ensure the following additional elements:
  - (1) The efficient delivery and linkage of Project RIO employment activities and support services within the workforce area's One-Stop Service Delivery Network with other employment and training services funded through the Texas Workforce Centers;
  - (2) A point of contact for TDCJ and TYC supervising offices to facilitate the exchange of information regarding the Project RIO job seeker's progress toward securing employment and related participation information;
  - (3) The outreach of Project RIO job seekers at TDCJ and TYC supervising offices;
  - (4) The participation of the One-Stop Service Delivery Network in job fairs/career days held in TDCJ and TYC correctional institutions;
  - (5) The timely and accurate reporting of data reflecting Project RIO service provision as well as the status of referrals for service;
  - (6) All performance standards are met, as developed by the Commission; and
  - (7) The performance of any other duties, as required by the Commission, necessary to implement the intent of Texas Labor Code, Chapter 306.
- (e) Access to Project RIO Employment Activities and Support Services. A Board shall ensure that the oversight and monitoring of program requirements and participant activities occur on an ongoing basis, as determined appropriate by the Board, and consist of the following:

- (1) tracking and reporting, as required by the Commission, of employment activities and support services, including appropriate data relating to referrals, placements, specialized on-the-job training, and completion of training, such as GED completion, college credit and noncredit course accomplishments, or other data, as applicable;
  - (2) determining and arranging for any referrals to support services needed to assist the Project RIO job seeker in complying with Project RIO employment activities to address barriers to employment; and
  - (3) ensuring progress toward achieving employment and the goals and objectives in the Project RIO job seeker's IEP, as set forth in §847.22 of this chapter.
- (f) TDCJ and TYC Notice. A Board shall ensure that notification to the supervising office is made in a timely manner if Texas Workforce Center staff becomes aware of a job seeker's failure to comply with the job seeker responsibilities, as set forth in §847.11 of this chapter.
- (g) Employer Notice. A Board shall ensure that employers are informed at the time of the employment referral of the Project RIO job seeker's status as an ex-offender and the availability of Work Opportunity Tax Credits and fidelity bonding services.
- (h) Youth Confidentiality. All information regarding the adjudicated status of a youth shall be held in strict confidence and shall not be disclosed to any other entity or person. A Board shall ensure that employment referrals for adjudicated youth are made in accordance with the confidentiality requirements set forth in state statutes, state rules, and Commission policies.

*The provisions of this §847.3 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

## **SUBCHAPTER B. PROJECT RIO JOB SEEKER RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **§847.11. Job Seeker Responsibilities.**

A Board shall ensure that Texas Workforce Center staff who are assisting Project RIO job seekers make Project RIO job seekers aware of the requirement to comply with the following provisions:

- (1) participate in employment activities as described in §847.31 of this chapter;
- (2) comply with the IEP, as set forth in §847.22 of this chapter;
- (3) attend scheduled Project RIO appointments;
- (4) notify the Texas Workforce Center, or the Board's designated service provider, upon securing employment;
- (5) participate in or receive support services as described in §847.22 and §847.41 of this chapter, necessary to enable the Project RIO job seekers to work or participate in employment activities, including counseling, treatment, and vocational or physical rehabilitation;
- (6) be free of outstanding warrants and not in pre-revocation status; and
- (7) be drug-free and comply with other terms or conditions of parole.

*The provisions of this §847.11 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

### **§847.12. Job Seeker Failure to Comply.**

Project RIO job seekers who fail to meet the job seeker responsibilities, as set forth in §847.11 of this subchapter, may be deemed ineligible for Project RIO employment activities and support services, and

such participation status shall be reported to the TDCJ or TYC supervising office when Texas Workforce Center staff becomes aware of a failure to comply. Failure to comply, as determined by the Texas Workforce Center, or the Board's designated service provider, includes but is not limited to:

- (1) failing to report for two scheduled interviews;
- (2) turning down a position of employment that is consistent with the skills possessed by the Project RIO job seeker;
- (3) quitting an employment activity without cause; or
- (4) being terminated from a job for misconduct.

*The provisions of this §847.12 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

## **SUBCHAPTER C. PROJECT RIO SERVICES**

### **§847.21. Job Seeker Assessment.**

- (a) Boards shall ensure that Texas Workforce Center staff who are providing intensive or training services to Project RIO job seekers perform initial and ongoing assessments to determine the employability and retention needs of Project RIO job seekers.
- (b) Project RIO job seekers who are unable to secure employment through core services shall receive an assessment of their knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as potential barriers to securing and retaining employment, such as:
  - (1) information identified in the assessments provided by agency partners, which includes background information relating to education and vocational skills training obtained while incarcerated, employment history, academic achievements, and past skills attainments;
  - (2) other skills and abilities, employment, and educational history in relation to employers' workforce needs in the local labor market;
  - (3) support services needs; and
  - (4) family circumstances that may affect participation, including the existence of domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental illness, or the need for parenting skills training, which, if identified, may require coordination through the parole or contracted parole office, as one of the factors considered in evaluating employability.
- (c) Assessments, as set forth in subsection 847.21(b) of this section, shall result in the development of an IEP, as described in §847.22 of this subchapter.

*The provisions of this §847.21 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

### **§847.22. Job Seeker Individual Employment Plan.**

Boards shall ensure that Texas Workforce Center staff develops IEPs for Project RIO job seekers who are unable to secure employment through core services, documents that Project RIO job seekers have been informed of their job seeker responsibilities, and that IEPs:

- (1) incorporate information provided by the referring agency partner, including any IEPs provided while in a TDCJ or TYC correctional institution;
- (2) identify and coordinate the provision of services available through the Texas Workforce Centers;

- (3) are based on assessments, as described in §847.21 of this subchapter;
- (4) contain any prevocational goals established for Project RIO - Youth participants while in a TYC correctional institution;
- (5) contain employment goals to meet the needs of the local labor market;
- (6) allow Project RIO job seekers to find and secure employment that utilizes their skills;
- (7) meet the needs of employers by linking and matching the skills of Project RIO job seekers to the job-skills requirements of the employers;
- (8) include strategies for addressing barriers identified in the assessment; and
- (9) are signed by the Project RIO job seekers.

*The provisions of this §847.22 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

## **SUBCHAPTER D. PROJECT RIO EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES**

### **§847.31. Employment Activities for Project RIO Job Seekers.**

- (a) Boards shall ensure that employment activities are provided for Project RIO job seekers, as determined by the Texas Workforce Center, or the Board's designated service provider, which may include the provision of graduated services, as set forth in §801.28 of this title.
- (b) Boards may provide self-directed or staff-assisted job search and job readiness services, which incorporate the following:
  - (1) information and referral to employment opportunities;
  - (2) job-skills assessment;
  - (3) counseling;
  - (4) occupational exploration, including information on local emerging and demand occupations;
  - (5) interviewing skills and practice interviews;
  - (6) assistance with applications and resumes; and
  - (7) guidance and motivation for development of positive work behaviors necessary for the labor market.
- (c) Boards shall ensure that staff-assisted referrals to employment opportunities are based on the Project RIO job seeker's assessment, training, skills, and conditions of release. The referrals to jobs may be restricted to certain available employment based on:
  - (1) recommendations from the agency partners, including the applicable parole office or contracted parole office;
  - (2) consideration of factors that may increase the likelihood of success of the individual in retaining employment; or
  - (3) consideration of factors that may help reduce the likelihood of recidivism.
- (d) In order to maximize the opportunities for Project RIO job seekers to secure employment, Boards shall ensure that other employment and training activities available through the One-Stop Service Delivery Network and paid for with funds other than Project RIO funds are considered and

provided as deemed appropriate by the Texas Workforce Center, or the Board's designated service provider.

*The provisions of this §847.31 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

## **SUBCHAPTER E. PROJECT RIO SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **§847.41. Provision of Project RIO Support Services.**

- (a) Boards shall ensure that support services, which address barriers to employment, participation in employment services, and post-employment support services needs, are provided to a Project RIO job seeker as determined by the Boards' policies and IEPs, and the Texas Workforce Centers, or the Boards' designated service providers.
- (b) Boards shall ensure that referrals to support services as specified in the memorandum of understanding referenced in Texas Labor Code §306.004, §306.005, and §306.007 are made for Project RIO job seekers.
- (c) Boards shall ensure that referrals are made, as determined appropriate by the Texas Workforce Centers, or the Boards' designated service providers, to other available support services, including low-income housing, application for food stamp benefits, low-cost medical assistance, substance abuse treatment, counseling, vocational or physical rehabilitation, and other services.
- (d) Boards shall ensure that hiring incentives are made available for Project RIO job seekers, to include:
  - (1) Work Opportunity Tax Credits screening and conditional certification; and
  - (2) fidelity bonding services, which are available through the Agency.

*The provisions of this §847.41 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*

## **SUBCHAPTER F. EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS**

### **§847.51. Use of Funds.**

Boards shall ensure that monies made available for Project RIO employment activities and support services pursuant to this chapter are used solely for the purpose of providing employment activities and support services specified in this chapter.

*The provisions of this §847.51 adopted to be effective June 25, 2006, as published in the Texas Register, June 23, 2006, 31 TexReg 5139.*