

TEXAS CRIMINAL JUSTICE COALITION
PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION FOR THE SUNSET ADVISORY COMMISSION

AGENCY OVERSIGHT & ACCOUNTABILITY

***INTENT** – Increase oversight of the state’s criminal justice and corrections agencies through more frequent Sunset Advisory Commission evaluations; specifically, instruct the Commission to review the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the Board of Pardons and Paroles, the Windham School District, and the Correctional Managed Health Care Committee every 4-6 years, instead of every 12 years.*

Given the enormity of the mission and duties of TDCJ and other criminal justice-related agencies, they should be more regularly reviewed and their policies more frequently modified to incorporate developments in the field.

BACKGROUND

Effective assessments, treatments, and approaches to criminal justice are constantly evolving. As researchers and practitioners understand more about the needs of individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse issues and those with general criminogenic pathologies, methods of treating these issues are continually developing. A comprehensive evaluation of the state’s criminal justice agencies should be required every 4-6 years, rather than every 12 years, to ensure Texas is implementing contemporary evidence-based practices.

A more frequent review schedule will also help Texas criminal justice agencies maintain integrity and trust with members of the public. Currently, Texas has no independent oversight agency to monitor TDCJ policies and operations on a regular basis; the Sunset Advisory Commission serves as this monitor, but must have more opportunities to recommend improvements to the system.

Ultimately, given the significant state funding spent on corrections, Texas taxpayers deserve a criminal justice system that is accountable and transparent, and that operates in the most appropriate and effective manner to increase public safety.