

# Mapping Your Future

A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL REENTRY

National Edition



A PUBLICATION OF THE  
EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



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# About Mapping Your Future

*Mapping Your Future* was made by members of the Education Justice Project (EJP). EJP is part of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Since 2008, EJP has taught college courses to people incarcerated at Danville Correctional Center in Central Illinois.

We created *Mapping Your Future* because we care about people like you who are being released from prison. The guide is made by a group of committed EJP members called the Reentry Guide Initiative (RGI).

*Mapping Your Future* originally started as an Illinois reentry guide. Because we receive guide requests from people all over the U.S., we decided to create a national edition.

☆ We have listed a lot of programs, services, and businesses in this guide as resources for formerly incarcerated people and their families. We don't endorse any of these organizations. We also don't guarantee that these resources will be helpful (although we hope they are).

The world is changing all the time. That means we can't be sure everything in this guide is right. We've tried to use the best, most up-to-date information from trusted sources.

## Request Our Guides!

Both *Mapping Your Future* and *A New Path* are free for incarcerated or detained people. They are available in English and Spanish and can be ordered the following ways:

- Get them online through [reentryillinois.net](http://reentryillinois.net). You can download an electronic version for free.
- Request by phone at (217) 300-5150, or by email at [reentry@educationjustice.net](mailto:reentry@educationjustice.net)
- Send a request by mail:

Education Justice Project  
1001 S Wright St  
Champaign, IL 61820

## Cost

We work hard to provide free copies of our reentry guide to all incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals who request them. Each copy of *Mapping Your Future* costs \$11 to print and send. If you or your organization are able to pay, please send a check to the address above, or donate online at [educationjustice.net/donate/](http://educationjustice.net/donate/)

Please help us give *Mapping Your Future* to every person who wants it. Thank you!

Facing deportation to another country after release? Please request *A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities after Deportation*, also from the Education Justice Project.

## Acknowledgments

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# Welcome Home!



We're glad you picked up *Mapping Your Future: A Guide for Successful Reentry, National Edition*. Whether you spent many years in prison or just a few, it can help you start your life on the outside. This guide gives you information about employment, housing, education, healthcare, and more. It has resources for people throughout the US.

If you are the family member, friend, or service provider for someone who is coming home, this book can help you too. We hope you will find the information and support you need as well.

## There Are Four Main Sections in Mapping Your Future:

- **Before You Leave** gives advice about getting ready for release.
- **Once You're Out** helps you set up your life once you're out.
- **Healing and Moving Forward** is about getting used to life after prison.
- **Our Reentry Directory** contains contact information for useful resources.

Getting used to life on the outside is hard. In prison you were separated from your loved ones, and it was expensive to stay connected. Prison life changes you. You may face a lot of challenges because of your criminal record. You may have trouble finding a job. People might treat you differently. Your parole may feel unfair. Sometimes you might feel like there are too many challenges in your path! How can you succeed?

*Mapping Your Future* will help you meet the challenges. Maybe it will even make you want to work for change. We believe in YOU and your ability to make a difference in the world. Don't stop believing in yourself.

In this book, you'll find helpful words from people like you who went through reentry. Many of them are alumni of the Education Justice Project, a college-in-prison

program at Danville Correctional Center in Illinois. It was their idea to produce *Mapping Your Future*. They, and so many others, have successfully reentered the outside world. You can too.

If you have time, we recommend reading the entire guide. You can also skip around to the parts that are most important to you. Are you borrowing this guide from a friend or a counselor? Write to us to request your own copy to take home with you.

Please keep in touch. We'd love to know how you're doing and how we can make *Mapping Your Future* better. Your comments can help those who follow in your footsteps.

Again, welcome home. We're glad you're back.

In solidarity, the Education Justice Project.

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# Myths

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What kind of information will you find in this guide? For one thing, it will show you how some common myths you might have heard aren't true. Here are a few:

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## **No one will hire you if you've been incarcerated.**

**False.** You can find a job. Persistence and patience will be needed. Some states have "Ban the Box" laws that mean employers can't run background checks until after they have offered you the job. Learn more in our Employment chapter.

## **You have to pay for all your own medicine after you leave prison.**

**False.** It is true that you will have to pay for your medication. But some prisons will give you a small amount of medicine when you leave. See the Health Before Release chapter to find out more.

## **You can't get financial aid for college if you have been incarcerated.**

**False.** If you are on parole or probation, you can get most financial aid. For more information about education options and how to apply for financial aid, see the Education chapter.

## **You can't get a bank account if you have been incarcerated.**

**False.** You can open a bank account, though you will still have to meet their requirements. For more information about banking, see our Finances, Credit, and Taxes chapter.

## **You can get Social Security benefits for your time in prison.**

**False.** You cannot get Social Security benefits while you are in prison. But if you were getting Social Security before you went to prison you can start getting it again. See the Resources to Meet Basic Needs chapter.

## **You can't receive VA benefits after being incarcerated.**

**False.** If you are a veteran, you can have your benefits restarted 30 days before your release date. See the "Veterans" chapter.

## **Health insurance costs too much. It is easier to pay healthcare costs out of pocket.**

**False.** Health insurance can be expensive, but there are good options. If you don't have insurance, you'll pay much more if you go to the emergency room. See our Health chapter.



# Part 1: Before You Leave

- Prepare Mentally for Release
- Gather Your Documents
- Prepare for your Job Search
- Find Housing
- Health Before Release
- Prepare for Reunification
- Parole

# Prepare Mentally for Release



It's never too early to get ready to leave prison. Even if you have a very long sentence, keep your eye on life after release. Find ways to learn and grow while you are there.

- Take Adult Basic Education classes or get your GED.
- Take college classes or vocational classes.
- Meditate, play an instrument, draw, join a choir or read a book.
- Start going to religious services.
- Attend substance use programs or anger management classes.
- Get involved in volunteer activities.

These activities can help you meet other people who can support you. They will help you move beyond thinking of yourself as just a prisoner who has nothing to offer. In fact, we think you have a lot to offer!

You can still make a difference in prison. Education Justice Project students created a program to teach English to others behind bars. They run anti-violence discussion groups in the prison. Many incarcerated people donate to local charities like food pantries and Habitat for Humanity. What can you do?

If you're getting released soon, there is a lot more you should do to get ready. Reentry is very hard. It may be hard to find a job or reunite with loved ones.

You will need to accept that things may not be perfect or easy. Forgive yourself if you make mistakes. You will probably have some awkward talks with people on the outside. Let yourself laugh them off. People in the outside world have awkward experiences all the time! You may

think everyone will know you've just gotten out of prison, but they probably will not.

Patience is important on the outside. Everything may not go the way you want it to. Sometimes you will feel confused by how much things have changed since you went away. Go slow. Breathe. It is normal to feel stressed sometimes, but you don't want it to get out of hand.

How will you relax once you're out in the world? Life on the outside can feel very rushed. EJP graduates said visiting Lake Michigan, taking long walks, biking, and gardening have helped. How can you include activities like this into your life?

You might join a group that is learning to practice mindfulness, offered through some hospitals, social services, and a few churches. Our chapter on Mindfulness has a lot of advice on getting started and even has a few guided meditations.

# Connect With Family and Friends

People often isolate themselves during tough times. But it can help to stay connected to positive friends and family members. Think about the people you know. Who are the people you're counting on to be there for you?

Contact family members and friends. Be honest about what you need from them, whether it's housing, help with money, or just support and love. Find out what they expect from you.

Use this "Getting Ready to Get Out" checklist to help you plan your release. You can use this checklist to find out what areas would be useful for you to start working on now.



## Prepare for Challenges

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Before leaving prison, work on practicing patience, both with others and yourself.

What skills do you use to manage stress?

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When things go wrong, or when you're disappointed, what can you do to keep yourself on track and focused?

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## Know Your Strengths

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What have you done in the past to successfully adjust to major life changes?

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What skills, habits, or traits helped you to stay motivated, build positive relationships, and maintain self-respect?

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*Best thing that can reduce anxiety is to have a plan. You don't have to be rigid with that plan because you're going to get out and realize that the world isn't what you expected it to be.*

**—Joe Joe**

<b>Issues you may face upon release</b>	<b>Got this covered</b>	<b>Need to address</b>
Substance Use		
Making Ends Meet		
Family Issues		
Housing		
Medical		
Transportation		
Child Care		
Telephone		
Pending Legal Issues		
Child Support Status		



# Gather Your Documents



You will need your **birth certificate, Social Security card, and ID** on the outside. As your release date gets closer, you should start the process of getting them. It is harder to get them on the outside. Try to begin this process at least **one year** before you are released.

There may be counselors or departments at your facility that can help you get your documents. You will need to reach out to them and ask.



*Find out what programs, classes, or resources are available to prepare for release. Sometimes that stuff is hidden. Make inquiries into what necessary steps you must take to secure documents that would assist you with housing, identification, mental health services, as well as food and clothes shelters in your area.*

—**Kilroy**

*Take responsibility and look for as much information as you can. Go talk to the law clerks, everybody that you can to get information.*

—**Anonymous**



## STEP 1 Verification of Incarceration

To get started, ask for a document that verifies that you are incarcerated (in Illinois, a Verification of Incarceration). You may need this to get your other documents. It's also a good idea to gather any transcripts or certificates from classes you've taken in prison. You can use those documents to get your birth certificate, Social Security card and ID.



## STEP 2 Birth Certificate

Next, you will need a certified copy of your birth certificate. This means a birth certificate that has a state seal and is signed and dated by the county registrar.

To get a birth certificate, you will need to mail a form to the county clerk in the county where you were born. Ask your prison library or a counselor for the form and for the address of the county clerk. You can also go to [usa.gov](http://usa.gov) to find a list of county clerk offices in your state. Fill out the form and mail it to the address on the form.

In some states, your counselor or clinical services department may take care of this for you. You may need your verification of incarceration, proof of address and a fee.

When you get your birth certificate, put it in your master file to keep it safe.

If you cannot get your birth certificate before you get out, you can request it at a county clerk's office after you are released. Call them before you visit to get instructions



## STEP 3 Social Security Card

All US citizens and permanent residents have a Social Security number (SSN). This number is used by the government to keep track of your taxes and Social Security benefits. You will need your Social Security card when you get a job or open a bank account. If you have lost your card, you can apply for a new one. There is no fee for requesting your Social Security card.

To get your Social Security card while you are in prison use the form in the back of this guide to request a card by mail. You can also request a form from your prison library or your counselor. To get a social security card you will need:

- Your birth certificate.
- A document that verifies that you are incarcerated.
- A second document with your name and current address, such as HIV test results, a GED certificate, a transcript from prison education programs, or medical records.

Make sure your Social Security card stays in a safe place, such as your master file, until you are released. Be aware that sharing it with another person could put you at risk for fraud.



*I needed a second form of identification to get my social security card. If you are in this sort of dilemma, you can retrieve a copy of your medical record as a second ID. If you do not have your medical record you can go to a free clinic, take an H.I.V. test and request a copy of the record; you can use this document along with your birth certificate to get your Social Security card.*

**—Antonio**



## STEP 4 State ID

Since the procedure for getting an ID varies by state it's best to ask your counselor or your prison library how to get yours. To get a state ID you will likely need:

- Your birth certificate
- Your Social Security card
- Your verification of incarceration or other document that shows your name and current address
- A fee

If you can't get your ID before you leave, ask your facility if they can offer you an ID verification form or temporary ID card. You will still need to get your state ID once you are out.

**If you are under an alias:** If you are locked up under an alias, it is really important that you start gathering your documents early. First, write to the county where you are convicted or the state's attorney office. Ask them to change the charging document to reflect your real name. The court probably will not change all the court documents to fix this problem. You may need to talk to a lawyer to see if there are any legal steps you can take.

Item	Taken care of	Need to tackle	Not applicable
Social Security Card			
Birth Certificate			
Temporary ID			
State ID or Driver's License			
Marriage License			
Divorce Decree			
Passport or Green Card			
Military Discharge			



# Prepare for Your Job Search

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If you are getting ready to leave prison, you're probably thinking about getting a job. This is an area where you are likely to hit many roadblocks and challenges. The good news is that there are employers who are willing to give you a chance. There are ways you can prepare while still in prison to find a good job. Be hopeful. Many people have found good jobs after incarceration. As long as you're prepared, persistent and have the right attitude you can find one too.

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## STEP 1 Build Experience

In the facility where you are locked up, can you earn certificates, learn new skills, or work? Any experience like this can help you find a job on the outside. They can also make you more confident and help you build skills you didn't know you had.

School is another good way to get ready for work on the outside. Enroll in school programs, from Adult Basic Education to college programs. School records can also show employers you are intelligent and dedicated. Try other things too. Arts, parenting classes, and other programs will give you new skills and confidence.

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## STEP 2 Write Your Resume

Another important thing you can do while you're in prison is to write your resume. A resume is a summary of your skills, strengths, and work experience. You will need a resume to search and apply for jobs. Even if you don't have a computer or typewriter, write your resume out while you are still incarcerated. You can type it out after your release. Your resume should have several parts:

1. Your name, address, and contact information. If you are not sure of your address yet, ask a friend or family member if you can use theirs.
2. Education. Your resume should have a list of schools you've attended. You can add any education you had in prison, especially if you earned any degrees or certificates.
3. Work experience. List your jobs, including volunteer work. Include where, when and for how long you held each job.
4. Other professional skills. This includes certifications, technical skills, and languages you speak other than English.
5. Awards (optional). If you've ever received an award for your work, like employee of the month, or a scholarship, list them at the end of your resume.

Are you worried what people will think when they see school or work you did in prison? You do not have to put those on your resume if it worries you. The sample resumes in the back of the book can show you how other formerly incarcerated people have created their resumes.

For information about how to find and apply for jobs once you are released, see the Employment chapter.



*Be ready to pivot. Be patient with yourself. You're eager to get out, eager to do all of those things. Be realistic with yourself, what you can really do, what is within your control. You're going to be facing a lot of things.*

**—Roberto**

*If you sat at a table playing cards for ten years and now you want to come out and you want to go out and get yourself a job that's paying \$18-20 an hour – well, be realistic. You're not gonna do it. You're not going to have that job because you didn't do anything to prepare. What are you going to put on your resume, that you played cards for ten years?*

**—Anonymous**



# Find Housing

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## Transitional Housing

If you are not able to live with family members or friends upon release, you may live in a halfway house or transitional house. Some transitional houses allow people to stay six months, others up to two years. Some are free. Others might ask you to pay some of your income if you are working.

Many transitional housing programs provide support services, such as employment help, case management, life skills training, and medical referrals. Some programs help people recover from drug and alcohol addictions (often called “recovery homes”). Transitional houses usually have strict rules. They might have a curfew, or you might have to have a job or attend religious services.

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**Note:** the terms halfway house and transitional housing often mean the same thing.

## How to Find Housing

In many states, counselors will call to place you in a halfway house a few days before your release. A lot of people need the spots. It’s hard for them to know ahead of time what will be available. This can create a lot of stress. It may be useful to bring a list of transitional housing/halfway houses to your counselor.

For help finding housing our directory provides a list of different reentry organizations organized by state that may be able to connect you to housing. Here are a few websites that can help

- [Transitionalhousing.org](http://Transitionalhousing.org)
- [Homelesshelterdirectory.org](http://Homelesshelterdirectory.org)
- [Shelterlistings.org](http://Shelterlistings.org)
- [Soberhousedirectory.com](http://Soberhousedirectory.com)

## Finding the Right Fit

There is a lot of good and bad transitional housing out there. Here are a few questions you can ask your counselor or the people at the transitional house to see if it is a good fit for you:

- Who do you serve?
- How long can I stay?
- What is the cost?
- What programs and services are offered? What will I be doing when I live there?
- Do you provide mental health or substance use treatment?
- What restrictions will I have while I am there? What freedoms will I have?
- Is this a faith-based program? Will I be required to attend services?

Almost all transitional houses do not let in people who have been convicted of sex-based offenses, and some do not let in people who have been convicted of violent offenses

# Health Before Release

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Planning for healthcare before you leave prison saves money and helps you avoid problems. There are a few steps you should take before you are released.

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## Enroll in Medicaid

Depending on your state and facility, you may be able to apply for Medicaid before you leave. Ask your counselor to help you get started. If you have a loved one with internet access, they may be able to help you apply at [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov). Once you submit your application, it takes 30 days to get insurance, so get started early! This is especially important if you have a health problem that requires treatment



## Get Your Health Records

Ask your counselor about how to get your health records. You may need to fill out a form. We recommend that you start this process a few months before your release.



## Get Your Exams

Request a dental exam, an eye exam, and a physical exam before you leave prison. Start early (a year before release) in case they find something you will need to address.



## Make a Birth Control and Sexual Health Plan

If you plan to be sexually active after release, discuss birth control and safe sex during your physical exam. This may help you avoid unwanted pregnancy and STDs. Women should request a gynecological exam with a PAP smear and ask for a mammogram if over age 40.

Consider your options carefully. Some forms of birth control, like condoms, are easy to get and are fairly cheap. They need to be used every time you have sex and may not as effective as other options. Other kinds of birth control require a prescription from a doctor or a medical procedure. When you have your physical exam, you may be able to request longer-term birth control options, like pills, patches, or intrauterine devices (IUDs). Implants or IUDs can protect you for several years from unwanted pregnancy.

No doctor should pressure you into a permanent or long-term birth control or sterilization procedure. Unfortunately, some doctors at prisons have pressured women to have hysterectomies (sterilization) and men to have vasectomies. While vasectomies are reversible, hysterectomies will prevent you from ever conceiving. Take time to ask questions and decide what is best for you. If you are feeling pressured, remember: it's your right to say no.



## Make a Medication Plan

Many prisons offer people a 30 to 90-day supply of medication upon release. Generally, you will pick up your medications the day before you are released, but you may want to request these medications ahead of time, just to be safe. The doctor will usually give you a prescription so you can get more. Make a plan to get more medication after you leave. Set up an appointment with a doctor on the outside so that you don't run out. This can help you avoid going to the ER to get medications filled, which can be costly.



## Plan for Doctor Visits After Release

Before you are released, ask for a list of healthcare providers that accept Medicaid or low-cost community clinics. If you have a serious mental or physical health issue, be proactive and set up appointments ahead of time. A counselor or family member may be able to set up the appointment for you.

You may have been in a drug or alcohol treatment program while in prison. Continue treatment after release to make sure you don't relapse. Ask your doctor, clinical services, or a family member to help you find a treatment center. Try to schedule the appointment for a few days after your release.

**A warning:** The first few hours, days, and weeks after release are often the hardest. People are at greater risk for suicide. Many return to old habits, like drug or alcohol use. People are at greater risk for overdose because their bodies aren't used to drugs anymore. If you can, be proactive and schedule appointments with health care providers ahead of time. You may not need them, but you'll have a plan just in case.

For more information, see our Health chapter, our Trauma and Mental Health chapter, and our Substance Use chapter.



# Healthcare Checklist

Before You Leave

	<b>Taken care of</b>	<b>Need to tackle</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>	<b>Where to get help</b>
Enroll in Medicaid				
Enroll in SNAP				
Get health records				
Physical exam				
Eye exam				
Dental exam				
Contraception plan				
Medication plan				
Set up doctor visits after release				
Set up mental health treatment after release				
Set up substance use treatment after release				

# Preparing for Reunification

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This chapter covers the following topics:

- Staying Close to Loved Ones While in Prison
  - Preparing for Reunification
  - Preparing to Reunite with Children
- 



## Staying Close to Loved Ones

For many, the hardest part of being locked up is the strain it places on relationships. The separation is hard for both you and your loved ones. While you may feel love, concern, and care, there may also be feelings of guilt, loss, frustration, anger, and grief.

*"If you have any emotions at all, you're going to have guilt about making your family suffer the pains that you're going through. Because you're not suffering alone. They suffer with you while you're in there."*

**—Tony C.**

Healthy relationships are open, honest, and deep. Try to maintain regular, open lines of communication through letters and phone calls, when possible. Staying in touch with your loved ones will make reunion smoother.

*"The complexities of being in prison can startle any relationship. That's why understanding, and communication is key. In reality no one wants to be a burden; however, everybody needs someone. The pressure of maintaining a healthy relationship is hard for two people in the free world. When I was doing time, I had to understand the sacrifices I needed to make to maintain a healthy relationship with the people that mattered the most to me. I had to remember what it was like to be free, and I had to educate my family and friends of what it was like to be incarcerated."*

**—Antonio**

*"A lot of times people get discouraged when family don't take their phone calls. They don't get a response, and they get discouraged. They think, 'To hell with it, they don't want to hear from me.' Even if they don't respond, you still have to try to cultivate those relationships. A lot of times people are super busy out here. It's not that they don't want to talk to you. Keep cultivating those relationships because they are what's going to help you when you get out."*

**—Anonymous**

*"It's hard, but you have to make your kids understand that you don't want to be away from them... You love them and you're going to do everything you can to make sure you're in their life."*

**—Tony C.**

During incarceration, some relationships may end, and all relationships will be challenged. Some find it so difficult that they distance themselves as a form of self-preservation. Be aware that this distance can be very hard to overcome upon release.

*"You spend so many years in there and so much time keeping people at an arm's distance. You never let anybody get close... But when you come home, you've gotten so used to keeping people at a distance that you just continue to do it. It's hard to make new friends."*

**—Tony C.**

*"You don't want to worry your family with those issues. You get on the phone, and you grind your teeth. Regardless of what you're feeling, you're going to tell them that everything is going to be OK. You get in this habit of keeping things bottled up, and you're dealing with some degree of loneliness and emptiness, because you're not sharing it with your family."*

**—Roberto**

Explore other ways to maintain relationships. While it's painful to not be physically present in your loved ones' lives, there are other ways to be present. Talk, listen, and provide emotional and mental support when and how you can.

*"Try to find ways to make it easier for them to accept you being gone. Because if you just sit and tell them how horrible it is and you bark at them every time they come to visit you or you yell at them in letters or on the phone, then they're gonna get frustrated with dad and say, 'Well hey, you're not even here, so what can you do?'"*

**—Tony C.**

Relationships aren't a one-way street. Family members can also do a lot to maintain relationships. They can help those who are incarcerated feel included. Share everyday things to help them feel connected.

*"I send him a little bit of money, enough to keep phone calls going, you know, and pictures and stuff and try to set up options for him so he knows he doesn't have to go back to the same stuff. Just let him know that there's help, there's better things in life. I try to talk to him about the good stuff, about working and going to church, when we're playing games with his little sister and stuff like that."*

**—Heather B.**



## Preparing for Reunification

You might be scared, worried, or excited about reuniting with family and friends. You can prepare by reflecting on your relationships. Be honest about who is likely to be a positive, supportive influence in your life. You and your loved ones can also set realistic expectations. You are all in transition. A period of adjustment will be necessary.

It is hard to be left at home and hard to come home, even if you were only away for a few months. For loved ones, having the person come home can take some getting used to as well.

You might begin by letting your loved ones know what you are hoping for and what you will need from them during your reentry. This could include both emotional and financial support. Never be afraid to ask for patience.

Listen to the needs and concerns of your loved ones, too. Reuniting will be easier if you can talk ahead of time and learn to compromise.



*"The key thing is honesty. [If] you come out being honest with yourself and with [your loved ones], you can't go wrong, because you're not feeding them a fairy tale. You're giving them you."*

**—Keke**

*"Keep in mind that you are entering somebody else's space. You must be mindful of the relationships around you."*

**—Pablo**

If you were locked up for a long time, you'll need to relearn who you are and who your loved ones are. Children who were young when you left may be teenagers or even grown up with children of their own. You may have different ideas of what the new relationship should look like.

*"Don't come in like they're supposed to know you or even respect you a little bit, because you've been gone. You gotta gain that respect and that trust back when you've been gone so long."*

**—Keke**

*"Recognize that we haven't been part of that house for years, so I can't come in and put down my dominance, something we're used to doing when we're in the cell. We're used to carving up space and making it our own."*

**—Joe Joe**

Acknowledge the ways you have changed. You and your loved ones have both grown. Allow for this growth. Be open to the person before you and who they are now.

*"First you gotta get yourself together, mentally. Because you might think you know them because they're part of you, but you really don't know them and what they've been through. You know what they tell you. Same thing with you."*

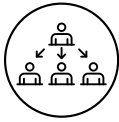
**—Keke**

*"Never expect anyone to evolve at your pace. When you are dealing with people you haven't lived with in a while you have to be analytical, you have to examine the structure of your own character. And the character of those you live with. Once you are fully in tune with the compound presence of your household you should become as flexible as a bamboo stick, but it won't be easy. So, get an evaluation and accept some help from those who can help you with your transition."*

**—Antonio**

*"Oftentimes when people are anticipating going home, they have ideals and expectations on how their reunification with family will be. There's the dream and there's the reality. It's good to have these great expectations, but don't set yourself up for disappointment if people don't live up to the expectations you have of them. People have lived experience that might color the way they interact."*

**—Joe Joe**



# Preparing to Reunite with Children

You may have young children you are looking forward to being with. You may be excited to see your kids again or you might be nervous and stressed. It's OK to have mixed feelings. There's no right way to feel.

There are things you can do to parent from prison and prepare yourself for regaining custody of your kids, if that's your goal. Show your commitment to your children. This will make it easier to get them back when you are out. Here are some ideas:

Before Your Release	After Your Release
Stay in touch with your kids through regular phone calls and letters. Record the dates and times so that you have evidence of your involvement.	Prioritize getting safe and stable housing.
Attend all hearings about your child. It's your right!	Follow all parole rules and requirements.
Take parenting classes if offered.	Visit your kids as often as you can. Record details about the visits.
Take job training as well as academic and technical classes.	Continue to attend parenting, job training or other classes. This shows your commitment to providing a stable home for your child.

If you've been separated from your children, you may be eager to reunite with them as soon as you can. But don't rush things. First you need to have a stable job, safe housing and sobriety. Getting your kids back too soon can cause more harm than good if you are unable to provide a healthy and safe environment for them.

If your parental rights have been terminated, you will need the court's permission to get your children back. To find legal aid in your area, search for the name of your city and terms like "child custody" "legal aid" or "pro bono."

Even if you don't get your kids back as soon as you would like, you can still make changes and be involved in decisions about them. If getting your kids back is what's right for your family, don't give up, even if there are roadblocks!

# Parole

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When you are released from prison, you will probably be on some form of parole or probation. This means you will be supervised by the Department of Corrections for your state until your parole period is over.

While on parole, you'll have to follow some rules. We realize that it is frustrating to know that even though you are getting out of prison, you will not be completely free. Hang in there. Parole is difficult, but many people have gotten through it. You can, too.

This chapter covers:

- Preparing for parole
  - Parole after release
  - Parole rules and violations
  - Registries (sex offense registry)
- 

## Preparing for Parole

The parole process varies by state but usually begins around six months before your release date.



### STEP 1

#### **Educate yourself about the conditions of your release.**

This may mean communicating with a parole board that will make plans for your parole conditions. For example, you may have to go to an anger management class, or you may be placed on electronic monitoring for a while.



### STEP 2

#### **Find a place to live.**

In your parole plans, you will likely have to submit the address where you plan to live which will need to be approved. A parole officer may have to visit the home and decide if it is OK for you to stay at, especially if you will be doing electronic monitoring.



### STEP 3

#### **Talk to the people you will be living with.**

Many of the parole rules you'll follow will affect the people you live with. Talk to them early and clearly. Let them know what your parole rules will mean for them. They can contact your state's department of corrections with their questions.



## STEP 4

# Complete paperwork.

The people you are living with may have to complete a document that allows them to host you in their home. It may come in the mail, or the parole officer may bring it when they visit the home.

**Transferring parole to another state.** If you plan to live in another state, talk to your counselor about transferring your parole. They can let you know what to do to transfer.

## Parole After Release

When you arrive at your host site, you will usually be required to call your parole officer right away, often within 24 hours. Before you leave, make sure you have your parole officer's name and phone number. It is your job to get in touch with your parole officer. If you cannot reach your parole officer or do not know who they are, contact a nearby parole office for help.

When you call your parole officer, they may set up a visit with you in the next few days. Do not leave your home until your parole officer visits. This will usually happen within three days.

### Electronic Monitoring

Many people are given Electronic Monitoring (EM) with their parole. If you have EM, you will have to follow some extra rules.

You will likely be given instructions before you are released. You may need to go straight home and check in with your parole officer. A technician will generally come to your home to set up the electronic monitor. The

monitor may have an anklet and a box that plugs in the wall. Make sure the monitor stays plugged in. Once the monitor is set up you and your parole officer will decide what times you will be allowed to leave your home.

You will be required to check in regularly with your parole officer. Remember, it's very important you answer the phone when the parole agency calls. Not answering could get you in trouble.

Electronic monitoring can be hard for everyone in your house. Until you find a job, you will be home most of the time, which can cause stress. If you need rides during your movement times, you will need to work that out. Talk clearly with the people you will live with. Let them know what you need from them, what they need from you, and how you will address problems

## Parole Rules & Violations

Parole officers have the final say for parole rules. These rules are written on a legal document. Make sure you understand all the rules and instructions before you sign. Ask questions! Some of the most common rules include:

- Do not commit any criminal acts.
- Report to your parole officer on a regular basis.
- Do not possess firearms.
- Allow the parole officer to inspect and search you and your residence.
- Refrain from using drugs.
- Do not leave the state.

If you break the rules of parole, you may be sent back to prison. Sadly, this happens a lot. Follow the rules of your parole very carefully so you can stay on the outside. If something happens that makes it look like you broke your parole, call your parole officer right away to explain what happened. If you haven't broken any rules, your parole office can ask that you not be charged.

If you are charged with breaking parole, you may be able to appeal. You may be assigned a lawyer. The lawyer can show evidence and bring witnesses to help you make your case.

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## Registries

Your state may require you to register after release, depending on your conviction. Many states have sex offense registries. There may be other registries such as those for violent offenses or arson. These registries are online databases that anyone can see. They have photos and information such as your name, address, birthday, place of work, crime conviction history, age, and victim gender.

If you have to register, you will likely face many challenges. People will make hurtful comments. It will be very hard to find housing and a job. Focus on your self-worth. You are more than your conviction. We believe in you.

Ask your counselor before you are released if you need to register. You can also ask someone you trust to contact the authority that maintains the registries. Make sure you know and understand the rules. It's easy to make a mistake and go back to jail. You may be charged with "failure to register" because you missed a deadline or didn't know you needed to register again.

**Where will I register?** Typically, you will register at your local police or sheriff's department. This is something you will likely need to do right away when you get to your host site.

**How often will I need to register?** It depends. You may have to register every 90 days or once a year. Keep a calendar of all your deadlines and dates to re-register. Call ahead and make appointments if you can.

**What should I bring when I register?** It varies by state. You will likely need proof of address (rent or utility bill, official document with address) and your state ID. They will take a photo of you and post it on the sex offense registry website. They may also take fingerprints or a DNA swab. You will have to sign registration documents. Be sure you understand what you are signing. Keep your documents in a safe place so you

can get to them easily. Hold onto documents that explain the conditions of probation or parole, your registration documents, and certified receipts.

**How long will I have to register?** It depends on your conviction and the state you live in. You may be required to register every year for a few years after release. For more serious convictions, you may have to register for the rest of your life.

**Do I have to register every time I move?** Yes—though, if you move out of state, check to find out their requirements. Some states do not have a registry. Generally, you have a few days to let law enforcement know that you have moved. You may also have to re-register if you have a change of job or if you change your email address or your online identifiers.

**Will I have to pay to register?** Check with your state. Illinois requires a fee of \$100 or 100 hours of community service per year, and failure to pay is a felony.

**What other restrictions may I face?** Common restrictions, especially for those convicted of child sex offenses, include not being allowed to go in school buildings or on grounds, or live near a school, playground, or childcare facility. You may not be allowed in parks or public park buildings. You may not be able to use social media, like Facebook or Instagram.

**Where can I get help?** You don't have to figure it out alone. There may be organizations in your state that can support you. The Sex Law and Policy Center publishes a reentry guide called *Registering with Dignity*. Check it out here: <https://narsol.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RegisteringWithDignity-Handbook.pdf>

☆ It is against the law to harass or threaten people on the sex offense registry or their families. If this is happening to you, call the police or your probation or parole officer.



## Part 2: After You Get Out

- Getting your ID
- Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs
- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Health After Release
- Trauma and Mental Health
- Substance Use Disorders
- Transportation
- Technology
- Legal Matters
- Finances, Credit, and Taxes
- Voting
- Veterans

# Getting Your ID



Congratulations, you're out! If you weren't able to get an ID while you were incarcerated, this will be your first priority. Hopefully, you already have your birth certificate and Social Security card. If not, here's how you can get them:

- Call or go to the county clerk's office in the county where you were born. They can help you get your birth certificate.
- Go to a Social Security Administration Office to get your Social Security card. Call before you go to set up an appointment and find out what you need to bring.

★ You can get marriage licenses and divorce decrees at the county clerk's office in which you were married or divorced.



## State ID or Driver's License

Once you have your birth certificate and Social Security card, you can get a state ID or driver's license. These are the most common forms of ID. To get either a state ID or a driver's license, you'll need to visit the Department of Motor Vehicles, sometimes called Driver Services, in your state.

Do you plan to get a driver's license? Read your state's rules of the road booklet first. You can pick up a copy of this booklet at any public library or download from your state's DMV. If you've been incarcerated for a long time, we recommend getting a learner's permit. A learner's permit lets you practice driving until you feel comfortable taking the driver's test. To get a permit, you will need to pass a written test and a vision test. Once you get the permit, you can drive with another driver who has a license.

Visiting Driver Services can take a long time, so be sure to bring everything you need:

- An original document with your written signature (credit card, court order, or Social Security card)
- An original document with your date of birth (birth certificate, passport, high school transcript, college transcript from classes you have taken at prison)
- An original document with your Social Security number (Social Security card, IL driver's license record, or military service record)
- Proof of address (bank statement, credit report, utility bills, medical record, HIV test)
- Payment

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*It took me seven months to get my Social Security card and ID; this time would have been cut in half if I would have been given the information shared here.”*

—Antonio

## Suspensions

Is your license suspended? A license can get suspended for many reasons:

- Not paying traffic tickets, parking tickets, or tolls.
- Driving while drunk or using drugs. This is called Driving Under the Influence, or a DUI.
- If you do not make child support payments.

If your license was suspended, you can get it back after the suspension period is over.

## Revocations

Revoked means your driver’s license is taken away. Driver’s licenses are often revoked for more serious DUIs. For example, if someone was injured or killed because the driver was drunk or using drugs. If your license is revoked, you can get a new one. But you will have to wait for some time.

If your license was revoked because someone was killed while you were driving, you may not be able to get a new one. But you should still check to be sure.

★ If you choose to drive without a license, you may face more serious penalties (more time without a license, jail time, car seizure).

## Getting Your License Back

How do you get your license back if it was suspended? First, contact your state’s Department of Motor Vehicles or Driver Services. Ask them how long before you can apply for a new license. You should be able to find more information on this process at your state’s DMV website, including hearing information

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*If you go with the frame of mind that you are going to spend a hell of a lot of time in that place, it helps. Go with the right frame of mind, otherwise you’re going to be miserable.*

—Anonymous

## Signing up for the Selective Service

Did you know you may have to sign up for “the draft”? The draft is called the Selective Service. It is a program that lets the US military call men to serve in the military. You need to register for Selective Service if you are:

- Male
- Between 18-25
- Are a US citizen or an immigrant

Registering with the Selective Service does not mean you are in the military. It means you may be called to the military if there is a crisis.



If you are 18-25 you need to register for the Selective Service right away. If you don't, you could be fined or go to jail. You also cannot get a job with the government or get government training. You can register online at [sss.gov/register/](https://www.sss.gov/register/). Or pick up a form at any post office.

You don't have to register if you were incarcerated the entire time you were 18 to 25. You will need to request a status information letter at <https://www.sss.gov/verify/sil/>

What if you weren't incarcerated but you still didn't register? You can also request a status information letter. The letter should say that you did not "knowingly or willfully" fail to register for Selective Service. You could mention if you were incarcerated shortly after your 18th birthday, left school early, or any other things that might have made it hard to register.



*Make appointments for anything and everything. Don't wait until you have all the requirements in your hand. Just make the appointment. You can always reschedule if you need to.*

**—Roberto**



# Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs

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Leaving prison is exciting, but not always easy. Many people have trouble finding a place to live or buying food after they leave prison. Other people struggle with drug or alcohol use or mental health issues. Be patient with yourself. Take your time as you figure things out. There are places you can go for help.

This chapter has two main sections:

- How to apply for government benefits to meet your basic needs
  - Other places to go to meet your basic needs
- 



## Apply for Benefits

Did you know the government can help you with some basic needs? One of the first things you should do after release is apply for government assistance programs. If you need help, go to a Department of Human Services (DHS) office. You can also visit a hospital, non-profit organization, church, or other service provider and ask for help applying for benefits.

To get these benefits, you'll have to meet certain qualifications. For some programs, you have to be a certain age. For most, you must meet income requirements (not make a lot of money).

Many benefit programs are offered by states. You can find more information on the following programs by searching for the name of the program and your state.

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** This used to be called food stamps. Each month, money is put onto a special debit card called a LINK card. You can use the card to buy food from most grocery stores.
- **Medicaid.** Medicaid is a program for people who make little or no money. It helps people pay for medicine, hospital visits, doctor appointments, and more.
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).** Provides money for families who need it.
- **Aid to the Aged Blind and Disabled Cash Assistance (AABD).** Provides money for people who have disabilities or who are blind.
- **Medicare Savings Program (MSP).** This program helps pay for the costs of Medicare for older people and people with disabilities.

When you sign up for benefits, ask if there are other services, too, like programs to help with rent and utilities including internet or childcare.

# Social Security Programs

The Social Security Administration has other benefit programs that you may be able to use now that you are out of prison. These include:

- **Medicare.** This program provides health insurance to people older than 65 and people with a disability. See [www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/](http://www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/)
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI).** This program helps people over 65 and adults and children who have a disability. It gives people money every month to help with things like food, clothing, and housing. See <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/ssi/>
- **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).** This program gives money to adults and certain family members with disabilities. To use this program, you need to have worked for many years.

- **Social Security Retirement Benefits.** These payments are for people older than 62. To get the money, you must have to have worked before you went to prison.

**Note:** Almost all disability applications are rejected at first. If you don't qualify, don't give up. Keep trying.

Learn more and apply at [ssa.gov](http://ssa.gov), or call (800) 722-1213 for help. Get in-person help by making an appointment with your local Social Security office. Go to <https://www.ssa.gov/locator>

## Benefits Checklist

Program	Description	Do I qualify?	Have I applied?
SNAP	Money for food, LINK card		
Medicaid	Healthcare help		
TANF	Money for families in need		
AABD	Money for those who are blind/disabled		
Lifeline	Help with phone and internet payment		
LIHEAP	Provides help with utility bills		
Medicare	Health insurance for seniors, those with disabilities		
SSI	Monthly payments for those with disabilities		
SSDI	Monthly payments for those with disabilities		
Social Security Retirement Benefits	Monthly payments for those who are retired		

## Places to Go For Help

I need help with...	Where to get help	Website or phone number
Food	Food pantries, soup kitchens	Find one at <a href="https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank">https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank</a>
Healthcare and dental care	Community health clinics and dental clinics are cheaper or even free. You can use them even if you don't have insurance. Go to an emergency room if you have an emergency.	Find one at <a href="https://nafclinics.org/find-clinic/">https://nafclinics.org/find-clinic/</a>
Substance use treatment	Support group, treatment programs	Call the SAMHSA National Helpline at (800) 662-4357. For a support group, go to <a href="http://aa.org">aa.org</a> (Alcoholics Anonymous) or <a href="http://na.org">na.org</a> (Narcotics Anonymous).
Housing	Emergency housing, transitional housing	Go to <a href="https://www.hud.gov/findshelter/">https://www.hud.gov/findshelter/</a>
Mental health (Emergency)	Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, hospital emergency room.	Call 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Call 911 if you are having an emergency.
Mental health (Non-Emergency)	Mental health clinics that offer free or low-cost services	Go to <a href="https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov">https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov</a>



*I came home after ten years, I went to a homeless shelter and three days later I had a job. A week and a half later, I had an apartment. My first paycheck, I got a cheap studio apartment. So you can do it. Don't let your feelings from being incarcerated judge who you are and what you can do. Because you can make it.*

—Tony C.

*The advice I would give is to be patient. Things in the outside world move very quickly and I think that you have to be aware and accepting that you don't have to catch up.*

—Edmund B.

# Housing After Release

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Finding a place to live is one of the most important parts of the reentry process. It can also be one of the hardest parts. The challenge is to find housing that is accessible, low cost, and stable.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Transitional housing (halfway houses)
  - Emergency housing
  - Public & subsidized housing
  - Private housing
  - Help with rent
  - Your legal rights
  - Housing for people on the sex offense registry
- 

## Transitional Housing

Many people who leave prison go to a halfway house or transitional house. Some transitional houses allow people to stay three months, others up to two years. If you are looking for transitional housing, please see the Housing chapter in Before You Leave.

## Emergency Shelters

If you find yourself without a place to stay, there are emergency shelters. Some shelters are for men only. Some are for women and children. Most do not allow people on the sex offense or violent offense registries. Many shelters offer food, laundry, and support services to help you find more permanent housing. Look for emergency housing in your state at [www.shelterlistings.org](http://www.shelterlistings.org)

## Subsidized and Public Housing

There are several different subsidized and public housing options. These options are supported by the government and have rent that is cheaper than in the private market.

- **Public housing** is owned by the government. People who meet income requirements can live there. Contact your local Public Housing Authority (PHA) to find out about public housing in your area. Go to <https://resources.hud.gov/> to find your PHA.
- **Section 8 housing** is a program where the government provides housing vouchers to help cover rent. You can live in a private apartment or house of your choice, and they will give you a voucher to help you pay for it. Section 8 housing is offered through your local Public Housing Authority (PHA). If you qualify, your PHA can provide a list of places where your voucher can be used.
- **Project-based subsidized housing**, or affordable housing, is housing that is owned by private property owners. They receive subsidies from the government to make their housing cheaper for low-income people and families.

Go to this website to find this type of housing: <https://ilhousingsearch.org/>. Your local PHA may also have a list of project-based subsidized housing.

- **Permanent supportive housing.** If you are a senior, veteran, or if you have a disability, mental illness, or HIV/AIDS diagnosis, or if you have been homeless, you may be able to get permanent supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing includes support services, such as medical care and counseling. There is no limit to how long you can stay there. To find this type of housing check with your state’s Department of Human Services (DHS). Your state’s local HUD (Housing and Urban Development) office may be able to provide information about this type of housing as well.

**Can I stay in public housing if I have a record?** This varies by state. In some places people with criminal records cannot get public or subsidized housing. In states like Illinois, this is changing. The recently passed Public Housing Access Bill allows most people released from prison in Illinois to live in public housing upon reentry.

To find out if you are eligible for public housing, ask reentry organizations in your state, your parole officer, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Housing and Urban Development in your state.

**How much does subsidized or public housing cost?** How much you pay for housing depends on how much money you earn. Many places will require you to pay 30% of your income to rent.

**How should I apply?** Public and subsidized housing programs often have long wait lists. You should apply as early as you can. Call your local Public Housing Authority and ask for instructions, or apply online. To find your local housing authority visit [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/pha/contacts](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts). Once you have applied, they will let you know when there is a place available. You can call and check to see where you are on the waiting list

## Private Housing

Private housing can be easier to find than public housing because there is more of it. However, it also costs more. Private housing can be found online and in the classified section of newspapers. Some websites include:

- [www.apartments.com](http://www.apartments.com)
- [www.zillow.com](http://www.zillow.com)
- [www.forrent.com](http://www.forrent.com)
- [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)
- [www.trulia.com](http://www.trulia.com)

You are likely to run into barriers because of your background. It may take a while to find a landlord who will rent to you. Large property management firms almost always conduct background checks, so you may have better luck with units in smaller complexes or in private homes. Sadly, we are not aware of any lists of landlords that rent to people who have been incarcerated.

Others who have come home from prison before you may be your best source of information. If you are part of a reentry program, use it as a resource. Use your network of friends and family. They may know of places where you can stay.

## Renting an Apartment

Once you’ve found an apartment, call the landlord and set up a time to view it. Arrive on time and dress nice. You want to give a good first impression.

At your visit, you may be asked to fill out an application and pay an application fee. The application will ask for information such as your employer, rent history, and current address. You may also be asked for references—people who can vouch for you, like employers or church leaders.

The application may also ask about your criminal history. Many landlords conduct background checks. You may worry that if you share your history, you may hurt your chance of getting the apartment. Even though this may be true, we suggest that you be up front if they ask. It may not disqualify you.

**Warning: If anyone asks you for money before you have even seen the apartment, you are probably being scammed. Do not pay anything before you have seen the apartment.**

If a landlord agrees to rent to you, you will sign a lease or a rental agreement.

- A **lease** is usually a year-long commitment, and you agree to pay a certain amount each month for the whole year.
- A **rental agreement** is typically month-by-month. After 30 days, both you or the landlord are free to back out or change the agreement.

Read it carefully before signing or paying any fees. It is legally binding. You won't be able to back out once you have signed. Keep a copy in a safe place.

**Security deposits.** Many landlords require one to two month's rent as well as a security deposit before you move in. The security deposit shows that you are serious about renting the apartment. If you choose not to move into the apartment, the landlord keeps this money. Ask for a receipt for the security deposit and any other fees you pay.

When you move out, your security deposit will be used to cover any damages to the apartment that you caused. It's a good idea to take pictures of anything that is damaged when you move in so that you can show that you didn't cause it. Your landlord should not use your security deposit to pay for regular wear and tear of living in your apartment, but for items like a broken light fixture or carpet damage. You should receive a receipt for damages when you move out. Any leftover money from the security deposit should be mailed to you within 30 to 45 days.

**Breaking a lease.** If you need to move out before your lease ends, you can do so, but you will have to pay a fee. The amount that you pay should be listed in the lease, so read it carefully. You may have to keep paying rent until they find someone else to rent the apartment.

## Help With Rent

If you need help paying rent or utilities, there may be programs in your community that can help.

Check with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to see if they offer rental assistance programs. Here's a link to a list of rental assistance programs across the country: <https://nlihc.org/rental-assistance>. You can also get information on this type of resource and others by calling 211.



# Your Legal Rights

## Important Housing Laws

Below we've listed some of the housing laws to be aware of. If a landlord breaks one of these laws, you can file a complaint. These laws apply if you are renting or buying a home, getting a mortgage, or seeking housing assistance.

### Federal Fair Housing Act

- Cannot discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), family status, and disability.

### HUD Fair Housing Act Guidelines

In 2016, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) added guidelines for how the Fair Housing Act applies to people who have records.

- Arrest records and convictions *can* be used to deny people housing, but landlords *cannot* automatically refuse someone with a criminal record.
- The landlord must prove that they are refusing someone to protect their property or the safety of people living in their housing.

### State and City Specific Laws

Depending on where you live there may be additional laws that protect you from discrimination.

## Eviction

Are you worried about getting kicked out of your apartment? There are probably organizations in your community that can help. Do a search for the name of your community and key words like "eviction help" or "housing resources." HUD offers information about eviction here: [https://www.hud.gov/rent\\_relief](https://www.hud.gov/rent_relief) and you can find your local office in their online directory here: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/field\\_policy\\_mgt/localoffices](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/field_policy_mgt/localoffices)

## Housing Discrimination

If you have been discriminated against, there are several ways you can file a complaint:

- You can file a complaint through the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency. Submit the complaint as soon as possible. Call them toll-free at (800) 669-9777 or (800) 877-8339, or email [ComplaintsOffice05@hud.gov](mailto:ComplaintsOffice05@hud.gov)
- You can file a complaint with the state where you live, possibly the Department of Human Rights.
- You can file a complaint in the city where you live. You may be able to file a grievance at your city's Human Relations Commission or similar agency.

## Legal Assistance

Here are a few resources to help:

- Legal assistance for at-risk renters <https://localhousingsolutions.org/housing-policy-library/legal-assistance-for-at-risk-renters/>
- Eviction laws database: <https://lsc.gov/initiatives/effect-state-local-laws-evictions/lsc-eviction-laws-database>



# Housing for People on the Sex Offense Registry

Sadly, there are very few housing options that will accept people on the sex offense registry. We wish we had better news, but the reality is it is hard for people on registries to find housing.

We know of many people who are required to register who have not been able to parole because they could not find housing. Some people have even stayed past the end of their prison sentence because they don't have a place to stay.

Many people on the registry are homeless and are required to register frequently because they don't have a permanent address. People on the registry are at greater risk of returning to prison—not because they have reoffended, but because they violate parole, often because of lack of housing options.

Still, there is hope. You may be able to live with family members, or there may be transitional houses in your state that serve people on the registries. You also may be able to find private housing.

**Help and advocacy:** If they exist, we encourage you to reach out to organizations in your community for people with sex offense convictions. Here are a few to get you started:

- Information and Tips on finding housing in different states: <http://www.sexoffenderresource.com/housing/>
- "Registering With Dignity" handbook for people who are forced to register: <https://narsol.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RegisteringWithDignity-Handbook.pdf>



# Employment

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You will hear a lot of discouraging talk about getting a job with a record. While it is hard, there are companies that are willing to hire people with records. Don't give up.

The good news is that there are lots of job openings right now. Many employers are having a hard time filling jobs. This doesn't mean it will be easy to find work, but you may have more options than you expect.

There is a lot involved with finding a job, so this is one of the longest chapters. It covers these topics:

- Employment resources
  - Make a plan
  - Popular job options
  - Women and employment
  - Apply for jobs
  - Your legal rights
  - Unemployment benefits
- 

## Employment Resources

Finding a job and building a career is hard, especially with a criminal record. We strongly suggest that you find people or programs to help you. Here are a few places to start.

- **American Job Centers** help people search for jobs and find training. Go to [careeronestop.org](http://careeronestop.org) to find a location of an American Job Center near you. This website has many resources to help you with your job search. Call (877) 872-5627 for help.
- Your state may have a Department of Employment Security or other agency that helps people find jobs.
- **Reentry programs.** Reentry and transitional housing organizations in your community may offer employment services.
- Your **parole or probation officer** may have ideas about jobs and training you could apply for.
- Go to <https://guides.loc.gov/reentry-resources/employment> for a list of helpful resources about employment for people who have been incarcerated.

## Make a Plan

For many people who leave prison, the goal is to get any job that pays, even if it isn't ideal. The job may not be something you want to do forever, but it can help you get back on your feet. It can lead to a better job in the future.

Even as you look for jobs to meet your basic needs, it's good to explore different careers. Find out what careers match your interests and skills. Look for careers that are in demand where you can earn good money. Learn about the training that you will need.

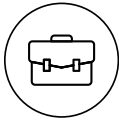
Take time to make a plan. Talk to a career counselor about your skills and interests and the kind of job you are looking for. You can use the worksheet on the following page to explore some of your career interests.

Here are a few of the many websites that can help you explore different careers:

- [careeronestop.org](http://careeronestop.org). Explore careers, find training, check out their toolkit, search for jobs, and more.
- [mynextmove.org](http://mynextmove.org). Explore careers and get information about what you can do to get a job.
- [myskillsmyfuture.org](http://myskillsmyfuture.org). Find out how your skills, experience and interests can lead to a new career.

We also recommend reading "Take Charge of Your Future." This guide for formerly incarcerated people will help you take steps to get education and training for a career. It was developed by the US Department of Education. Request a FREE copy by calling (877) 433-7827 or emailing [edpubs@edpubs.ed.gov](mailto:edpubs@edpubs.ed.gov). You can access it online here: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf>





# Job Planning Worksheet

FILL OUT THIS WORKSHEET ALONE OR WITH A CAREER COUNSELOR.

**What am I good at?** Knowing your strengths is an important first step.

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**What are my weaknesses?** What kinds of things are hard for you to do? What things don't come naturally to you?

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**What do I know how to do?** Take some time to think about your skills. This could include skills you learned on the job, in prison programs, or by caring for family members.

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## CHECK SOME OF THE THINGS YOU LIKE TO DO.



- I like to work with people.
- I like working with food.
- I like working with animals.
- I like routine.
- I like using my hands.
- I like working with computers.
- I like solving problems.
- I like building things.
- I like being creative.
- I like communicating with others.
- I like making a difference.
- I like helping people.
- I like caring for people who are sick.
- I like being part of a team.
- I like being my own boss.
- I like being a leader.
- I like variety in the things I do.

Jobs that match my skills and interests	Are there lots of openings?	Special training needed?	What is the average hourly wage?

**How will my criminal record impact my ability to get a job in these fields?**

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**Based on my interests and skills, what is my short-term career goal?**

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**Based on my interests and skills, what is my long-term career goal?**

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**How can I reach my goal? What do I need to do?** List the training or experience you may need.

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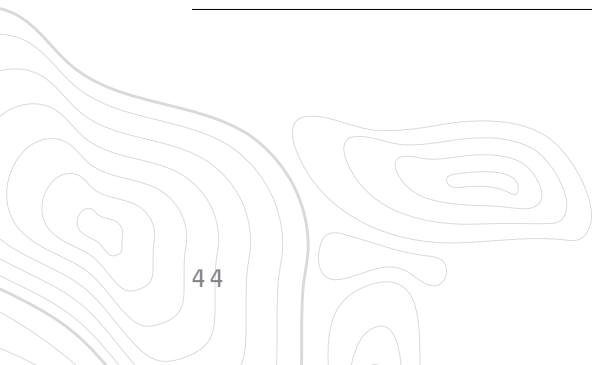
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**Where can I go for help to reach my goal?** List any family, friends, job centers, training programs, reentry programs, or community colleges that can help.

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# Popular Career Options

In the next few pages, you will find information about popular career options for people with records. These options are just a few of the many options that are available.



## Commercial Drivers

Commercial drivers transport goods, people, and materials. They drive buses, delivery trucks, diesel trucks, and more.

Job facts at a glance	
Wages	Earn \$40,00 to \$60,000 per year
Employment	Very large, with lots of openings
Education needed	High school diploma or GED (usually) Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
Other requirements	Have a good driving record, strong customer service skills for some positions

**Prepare in prison:** If you don't already have your GED, get it! Some reentry organizations offer programs to get your Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

**Outside of prison:** Here's how you can get started in this field:

- **Apply for a temporary commercial learner's permit.** If you have had a CDL in the past or in a different state, speak with the Vehicle Services Department to find out what you need to do to get a license.
- **Complete CDL training.** If you have not already had training, you may want to take a class at a commercial driver's training facility. Many community colleges offer this training.
- **Take the road and written tests.** Find a copy in your prison's library or resource room or online through your state's DMV website.
- **Get your CDL.** You will need to pay for the license and it will need to be renewed regularly.





## Construction and Landscaping Jobs

There are many different construction and landscaping careers. People in these careers build and repair homes, buildings, roads and more. They maintain yards and parks. They install and service heating and cooling (HVAC) systems. They install solar panels. Jobs include:

- Road worker
- Painter
- Heating and air conditioning technician
- Welder
- Solar installer
- General laborer
- Landscaper
- Building maintenance jobs

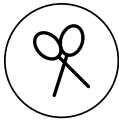
**Note:** Some construction jobs (such as plumber, electrician, carpenter, or mason) may require an apprenticeship with a trade union. Some of these unions have restrictions about hiring people with criminal records. It's a good idea to check before applying.

Job facts at a glance	
Wages	Earn \$40,00 to \$70,000 per year, depending on the job
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	High school diploma or GED. Some jobs require formal training, certificates, or an apprenticeship. Most jobs require on-the-job training.
Other requirements	Driver's license, OSHA certification

**Prepare in prison:** If you have the opportunity, take construction, building maintenance, or horticulture training while in prison. Some prisons may have these programs.

### Outside of prison

- **Some jobs don't require any training at all.** Look for entry level jobs. You'll get training on the job.
- **Community college certificate programs.** Many community colleges offer training in the construction trades.
- **Women in trades** organizations may offer opportunities to women who are looking to enter either construction or welding. Search online for your city or state and terms like "non-traditional occupations for women" and "programs."



## Barbering and Cosmetology

Job facts at a glance	
Wages	34,000/year
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	To work for a company, you will likely need a GED or high school diploma and some training. Some jobs require a license. Others just want experience.
Other requirements	Tools, if you're starting your own business, though you might be able to share these costs with a business partner.

**Prepare in prison:** If you can, get training while in prison.

**Outside of prison:** There are lots of ways to get started.

- **Training.** Search for "Barber College" or "Cosmetology schools" in your community.
- **Self employment.** If you already have the skills and equipment, you can begin working for friends and build up a client base by word of mouth. Think about what you might be able to offer that others won't. Can you work outside of regular business hours? Are you willing to do house calls? Eventually, you may have to incorporate and pay taxes. You can read more about the process of starting your own business later in this chapter.







## Computer or Information Technology Jobs

There are many jobs for people who like to work with computers. Jobs include help desk technicians, computer network support specialists, computer programmers, computer systems analysts and more. This industry is constantly growing and well paid. Many of these jobs require only a small amount of training and are in great demand.

Job facts at a glance	
Wages	Wages range widely, from about \$35,000 for entry level jobs to \$80,000+
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	High school diploma or GED (associate or bachelor's degrees required for some jobs) Formal training program (such as CompTia A+) On-the-job training
Other requirements	Strong computer skills, customer service skills

**Prepare in prison:** Take advantage of any opportunity to use computers while in prison and learn some basic skills, such as how to use Microsoft Office.

**Outside of prison:** There are many different training programs you can take.

- **Libraries, adult education and community centers** often offer basic computer classes. Goodwill career centers offer training in computer and digital skills, and some classes are online.
- Go to **Northstar** at [digitalliteracyassessment.org](http://digitalliteracyassessment.org) to test your digital literacy skills and build your skills. You can access classes online or find a Northstar location where you can attend classes. They offer certificates for skills you have mastered.
- Most **community colleges** offer IT certificate programs and degree programs. Many are very affordable.
- If you are a good self learner, try taking computer and IT classes online. **Hackbrite Academy** offers a free online course on Python (a popular programming language). **Skillcrush** teaches other important programming languages like CSS. If this is unfamiliar to you, don't worry, you will have the chance to learn. Programming languages create instructions to tell a website what you want it to look like and do. **Edx** and **Coursera** also have a lot of free courses for learning skills like coding or data entry.
- **Columbia University's Justice Through Code** program is a free semester-long intensive coding program for formerly incarcerated people. There are openings each semester, and you can complete the course online. The program helps people find jobs after they complete their training.



## Dining and Hospitality Jobs

There are many good opportunities in the dining and hospitality industry. Right now, the industry is also seeing major shortages, which means that you might be able to move into a more advanced position more quickly.

There are many different kinds of hospitality companies, and many different kinds of roles within those companies. For a typical restaurant job, there is front of house, back of house, and bar. There are also positions in fast food chains, bars and clubs, hotels, and catering companies.

Many of these jobs require unconventional hours. This may put a strain on your personal relationships, if you are gone most evenings and weekends. These hours can be good if you are available to provide childcare during the regular working day.

Job facts at a glance	
Wages	Wages range widely, from about \$22,000 for entry level jobs to \$80,000+
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	High school diploma or GED (associate or bachelor's degree required for some jobs) For some jobs, formal training program (if you work in an establishment which serves liquor, you must complete Safe Serve Certification, for example) On-the-job training
Other requirements	Customer service skills, ability to be calm under pressure, ability to do several things at once, ability to work well with a team

**Prepare in prison:** Many facilities have food service programs where you can get experience.

### Outside of prison

- Many community colleges and other training programs offer food services certificates.
- The **COLORS Hospitality Opportunities for Workers** operates a **CHOW Institute** in several major cities in the US and offers comprehensive free training opportunities for restaurant industry personnel.
- **Hospitality Opportunities for People (re)Entering Society (HOPES)** also “connects adults of all ages with current or previous justice-involvement to career opportunities in the restaurant, food-service, and hospitality industry.” They operate in Massachusetts, Illinois, and Virginia.



## Human Services and Advocacy

Many of EJP's alumni work in human services to help others who have been incarcerated. They are caseworkers, counselors, educators, social workers, mediators, and program managers. They advocate for change and better policies.

We need people who have been incarcerated to help make our systems better! You have experience and wisdom that others can learn from!

Social service careers can be a meaningful way of moving on and helping others. But they can also be stressful. Be aware that working with others who are struggling may be difficult as you cope with your own challenges and past trauma.

Job facts at a glance	
Wages	Wages range from about \$30,000 for entry level jobs to \$60,000+
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	High school diploma or GED Some jobs require short-term, on-the-job training. Many positions require an associate's or bachelor's degree or a license.
Other requirements	Strong people skills, ability to work in stressful situations. Most positions require basic computer skills.

### Prepare in prison

Find ways to get involved in programs that help others. Can you help lead workshops? Tutor others? Be part of a peer support group? Help teach a reentry class? These opportunities will give you a taste of what it's like to work in human services.

Most jobs require some education. Get your GED and take college classes if you can. Take some basic computer classes if they are available.

### Outside of prison

- **Get involved & volunteer.** Get involved in reentry programs or other services that interest you. Ask the people who are helping you about what they do. Volunteer to help out. We know of people who got jobs after volunteering for a while. Even if you don't get a job at that organization, they may be able to help connect you to another similar job.
- **Take advantage of leadership/advocacy training.** Reentry organizations often offer training for formerly incarcerated people. Check out our directory of reentry organizations organized by state in the back of this guide.
- **Go to school.** Depending on what your career goal is, you may need an associate or bachelor's degree or an advanced degree. See our education chapter for advice.

## Self-Employment

Being self employed has its merits. You can set your own schedule and the money you make is yours (after you pay taxes). You might buy some equipment to do landscaping in your community. You might rent out a small booth to cut people’s hair. You might repair people’s homes. You might offer computer support. We interviewed David T., a formerly incarcerated individual who started his own business. He offered the following advice.

To get started, you’ll need:

1. **A good idea.** Jot down a few ideas on paper first. Ask yourself, what am I good at? What services can I provide? Is there a clear need for this in the community?
2. **Training.** Get all the training you can. Take business or computer classes. You will need strong finance skills. You will need math skills, customer service skills, and more.
3. **Equipment.**
4. **Space for work and storage.** You may be able to work at home or rent a storage shed or small booth.

Seek feedback from others. They might see a challenge or a good idea that you initially overlooked.



*Starting a business can put a strain on your relationships. Talk about your plans with the people you care about. Keep them in loop. Take care to maintain your relationships even when things are busy.*

—Anonymous

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## Growing Your Idea into a Business

Some people who are self employed decide to grow their idea into a business by hiring a few more people and getting a more permanent location. You might start your own barbershop, a tutoring business, an HVAC business, or a restaurant.

Starting your own business takes a lot of work. Here are the basic things you’ll need to turn your self-employment into a small business:

- Capital. You’ll need money to start your business
- More space. Maybe you rent an office space or garage
- Employees. Who will be part of your team?
- Marketing plan. You’ll need to be able to grow a client base
- Information. Do lots of research. What other businesses offer these services? What technologies do they use? How do they get clients?

We recommend that you seek out professional business help. There will be lots of paperwork to manage. You’ll have to do taxes and finances for your business. You will likely need to file with the state to make your business official. Talk with someone who understands the ins and outs of loans and taxes. Lawyers who advertise experience with incorporation can file your paperwork, but they also charge a fee.

Free resources do exist in communities. Seek out your local business association or Chamber of Commerce to get help.

# Women and Employment

It can be especially hard for women to find jobs after release. They are more likely than men to be unemployed. When they do find jobs, they often get paid less or work fewer hours. They are more likely to get hired in temp jobs and entry level jobs, even when they have skills and training for more advanced jobs.

As a woman, here are a few things you may face.

- Greater discrimination. People don't expect women to be locked up and often judge them more harshly.
- Difficulty balancing family and jobs. Perhaps you have young children, parents, or grandparents you are caring for. It's hard to work a job and care for your family at the same time. It's hard to find childcare.
- Many of the popular job options for those with criminal records hire mostly men. You may feel uncomfortable if you are the only woman on the crew.
- You may feel unsafe at your jobs, or unsafe getting to the job.

Despite these challenges, we recommend that you approach your job search with patience and hope. There are barriers that you will face, but many women have found jobs after prison. You can, too.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Get as much education and training as you can while in prison.
- Find reentry and job programs that serve women. They can help you access childcare and get the emotional support you need. We have listed a few in our directory.
- Be confident! Sometimes women think that they are not qualified. Don't pass up a chance to apply, even if you don't meet all of the requirements.
- Don't be afraid to look for jobs in fields with mostly men, such as construction or IT. In fact, these fields need and want more women! There are free training programs to bring more women into these jobs.
- Be realistic. You will probably have to apply for a number of jobs. You've already dealt with a lot of difficult things, so try to be patient and open minded to the opportunities that arise.

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## Look for Jobs

Look for jobs that you qualify for. What experience, education, and training do they require? Is the job a good fit for your skills?

Even if you don't meet all of the requirements, think about applying anyway. Don't sell yourself short! Be confident in your skills and abilities. Sometimes, you can get the training you need on the job.

It's important to be realistic. You will probably have to apply for a number of jobs before you get hired. Be confident in your skills. You've already dealt with a lot of difficult things, so try to be patient and open minded to the opportunities that arise.

**Networking.** Networking is the best way to find a job. Talk to family, friends, acquaintances, and professionals. They may not have a job for you right now, but they could have advice. Maybe they know someone else who is hiring.

**Online.** These days, many people find jobs through websites like [monster.com](http://monster.com), [careerbuilder.com](http://careerbuilder.com), and [snagajob.com](http://snagajob.com), and [indeed.com](http://indeed.com). It collects job postings from employer websites, job boards, and more. While these sites can be good if you want to work for a large employer, you may have better luck looking at company websites. Often, you will find a link to "Current Jobs," "Careers" or "Employment" on the home page. The website "Jobs that Hire Felons" has a long list of companies whose hiring policies include people with a background: [jobsthathirefelons.org](http://jobsthathirefelons.org)

When searching for a job online, be careful to avoid scams. Scammers may request money or ask for information like your date of birth, Social Security number, or debit/credit card number. We advise that you never give this personal information on the internet.

☆ Need to use a computer? Visit your public library.

**Attend a job fair** to meet employers, recruiters, and schools. You may learn about a new field or opportunity that you didn't think of.

☆ Keep a record of all the places you have applied to: online applications, visits made in person, initial phone calls, follow-up phone calls, interviews.

**Job application forms.** The purpose of a job application is to get an interview. Most hiring managers will review your application for 15 to 30 seconds. They'll want to see a form that's neat and complete.

Many job applications need to be filled out online. If you don't have access to a home computer, visit a local library or community center.

If you will be filling out a paper job application at a job site, bring notes about previous jobs and training: dates, job titles, former employer contact info. This is better than trying to remember the details and making mistakes.

**Tips for filling out job applications**

- List your past jobs and describe what you did. What skills did you develop? What things did you do during your shift?
- Focus on what you have to offer. Downplay the negatives.
- List work experience from your personal life. Were you a caregiver for your siblings, children, parents, or grandparents? What skills did you develop? Did you learn to communicate, resolve conflicts, manage people's health, take care of finances?
- Consider the skills they are looking for. If they want good customer service skills, explain how you worked with customers in your past jobs.
- Use examples from your personal life to explain your passion for this work. Maybe when you were a young child, you took care of your sick grandmother. This inspired you to become an excellent home health aid.
- Do not list your wages from past employment. Instead, write "will discuss at the interview."
- We suggest you list the jobs you held while incarcerated. You gained relevant experience and skills. For in-prison jobs, you can list your employer as the state of where you were incarcerated.
- If they ask you for your "Reason for Leaving" give a positive reason, if possible, even if you were fired or

let go. Here are a few positive reasons for leaving:

- You relocated (you left because you went to prison, or you were transferred)
  - You wanted a career change
  - You became a full-time student
  - The work was seasonal
  - You wanted to advance or make more money
- In some states, most employers are not allowed to ask about felonies on job applications. Some still do. If they ask, "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" we recommend that you check "Yes." Write, "Will discuss at interview." If you lie, you may get the job, but you could get fired later if they find out.
  - The application may ask you for references, people who can vouch for you. These should not be family members or friends. Be sure to ask people if they are willing to be your reference before writing their names down. Good potential references include:
    - Former or current employers
    - Supervisors
    - Teachers
    - Social workers
    - Religious leaders
    - People you volunteer with

**Resumes and cover letters.** Many job applications require a resume and cover letter. A resume maps out past jobs, your skills, and your interests. Your cover letter is an actual letter from you to the employer. It tells a short story about who you are—why you want the job, your background, and what's important to you. Keep your letter to one page.

Writing good resumes and cover letters takes time. Examples of resumes and cover letters can be found in our forms section. Here are a few online resources:

- <https://hbr.org/2014/02/how-to-write-a-cover-letter>
- [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)



*I thought I'd be prepared because I had my resume in hand. As it turns out, you need several resumes, adjusted to different jobs, and the ability to write cover sheets on the fly.*

—Pablo

**Interviews.** Once you've submitted your job application, wait to be contacted. Hopefully, they will be interested in interviewing you. Most applications do not lead to interviews. Be patient. Continue to apply to other jobs until you have a job offer.

Many job seekers are nervous about interviews. They want to say the right things and make a good impression. Here are a few tips:

- **Practice.** [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/top-interview-questions-and-answers) has a list of common interview questions that you can practice with a friend, counselor, or family member. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/top-interview-questions-and-answers>
- **What to bring.** Bring your resume and contact information for your references. Bring copies of work licenses, your driving record, and your Social Security or immigration cards. Bring a pen and notebook to write down information.
- **Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early.** This shows you are responsible and eager to be there.
- **Wear nice clothes.** Wear something a bit more formal than what you would wear for the job.
- **Consider your body language.** Make good eye contact, stand and sit tall, and smile.
- **Test your equipment.** If your interview is online, test your video and internet connection beforehand. Make sure you're in a place without disruptions.
- **Come prepared to ask the employer questions.** Here are some examples:
  - What is the organization's plan for the next five years?
  - How will I be evaluated, and in what timeframes? By whom?
  - What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
  - What computer equipment and software do you use?
  - When will a decision be made about this position?



*Interview tips? Look good, smell good, speak good.*

—David T.

**Talking about your criminal record.** You may have a hard time answering questions about your criminal record. Here are a few tips to increase your chance of getting hired:

- **Own It.** "At that time I was making some bad choices and I was convicted of...(state your offense)." Address any concerns they have.
- **Redirect.** Steer the interview back to your skills and what you bring to the job. "I can see why that might concern you. But that was several years ago. Since then, I have had a solid work record. I come to work on time. I am a hard worker and quick learner."
- **Unrelated to job.** If your felony conviction is not related to the job you are applying for, you might say, "Yes, I was convicted of a felony, but it was not job related."
- **Keep it positive.** "I thought a lot about where my life was going and I decided to make some changes." Talk about your current activities and future career goals. Mention education and job training, community work, and other activities.
- **Encourage the employer.** "I am a good worker and I want to work, I just need an opportunity to prove my skills to an employer." Tell them that you want the job!



*If you're scared to tell an employer, hey, I've been to prison, just tell them. What's the worst thing they can do? Say no, we're not going to hire you. And you go to the next door. Knock on the next door. Say hey, are you hiring?*

— Tony C.

## Advice from an Employer

We reached out to Tanja, an employer who has hired many people who have been incarcerated. In the interview below, Tanja explains what employers are looking for. She gives advice about how to talk about your criminal history with employers.

**What are the most important qualities you look for in a job candidate?**

For me, the most important quality is reliability. I also appreciate it when people are eager to learn and respond well to constructive criticism. The fit between the person and the position is also critical.

**How much do you need to say about your criminal background?**

I think it really depends on the position. It is a mistake to come in and tell me your whole life. That is too much too soon. But being super vague will make me wonder if you are trying to hide something. For me, honesty is critical. I let people know I am not here to judge and as far as I am concerned, they have done their time. What I care about is the present and the future. Can they do this job now? How much training and supervision will they need? What are their skills?

**What impresses you about candidates?**

I am usually impressed when I see someone who has done their homework. They know what the position is, they Googled the company and they know what we are looking for. It is ideal to tailor your history to the position and capitalize on your skills. Link these skills to the job announcement and tell me how these skills will be used to help me. Also demonstrate enthusiasm for what the company does. If it is the restaurant industry, tell me how much you enjoy the food and why. If you do not enjoy the food, find something you like about the company and share with me.

**What questions should the interviewee ask the employer?**

Do your homework about my company, the job description, and ask me questions as if you had the position. Ask details about logistics: How many hours, what days and times do you need me? What qualities are you looking for in a worker? What would a typical day be like in the job? What are the opportunities for growth? Do you offer training, and if so, how does that work? Who will be my supervisor? What is their management style? These questions will make me believe you are serious about the job. In my case, I provide reentry services. I want to see you know the reentry process and that you are passionate about this issue.

**What questions can they expect in an interview?**

- Why are you applying for this job now?
- What is your availability? Convince me that you will be available and reliable. Make sure you can make the work schedule work.
- What are your best skills? What skills would you like to develop?
- What were you doing before? This question can be tricky if you have a big gap in your resume. If you were just released, be honest, but capitalize on the skills you have that make you right for this position. Point me to your references and how they will assure me that you are worth taking a chance on.



## Your Legal Rights

### Equal Employment Laws

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a federal agency that administers and enforces civil rights laws for the workplace in all states. Their guidelines address the following issues:

**Background Check.** Employers who wish to do a background check must:

- Get the applicant’s written consent ahead of time.
- Tell the applicant if they will not be hiring them based on the content of the report.
- Give the applicant a copy of the report.

- Notify the applicant after the employer makes a final decision not to hire them based on the report.

**Employment Denial.** In order to legally deny you employment based on a conviction, employers must consider:

- The nature and gravity of the criminal offense or conduct.
- How much time has passed since the offense or sentence.
- The nature of the job (where it is performed, supervision & interaction with others).



If there isn't a direct relationship between the job and your offense, employers cannot legally use the offense to deny you employment. For example, it would be legal for a bank to deny someone convicted of credit card fraud or theft. But, it would most likely not be legal for them to deny someone who was convicted of drug possession.

Employers can still choose candidates with more or better experience, but irrelevant criminal history should not be a deciding factor in hiring. If you believe you have been discriminated against, you can file a complaint by mail, telephone (800) 669-4000, or in person at an EEOC office: <https://www.eeoc.gov/>

## Certificate of Rehabilitation

A criminal record can prevent you from getting a license in certain fields, including education, transit, and childcare. You may be able to get a Certificate of Rehabilitation. This allows you to apply for jobs that require these licenses. It does not remove any offenses from your record, but it may allow you to get a license. See the "Legal Matters" section.

## Work Opportunity Tax Credits

If employers seem reluctant to hire you, you may want to tell them about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. Employers who hire people with convictions receive a tax credit of up to 40% of the employee's yearly wages. The tax credit is only for employers who hire people who have left prison within the last year.

## Federal Bonding Program

When interviewing for a job, you may also want to tell the employer about the Federal Bonding Program. It is an insurance policy that protects employers from employee dishonesty or theft. They offer six months of free insurance for employees with past convictions. Learn more here: <https://bonds4jobs.com/>. Some states have bonding programs as well.

## Ban the Box

Some states have laws that prevent employers from conducting criminal background checks until after an interview is conducted. This law is called "Ban the Box" because it prohibits employers from asking you to check a box on your application if you've had a criminal conviction. You may submit a complaint against an employer who violates this rule.

These states have Ban the Box laws: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Vermont.

## Conflicts and Safety

If you are being harassed or discriminated against because of your race, gender identity, or sexual orientation, your civil rights are being violated. If you are comfortable enough where you are working, you can speak to Human Resources about what you have experienced. Sometimes it's better to seek help elsewhere.

There are resources that can support you. If you have been sexually harassed, you can contact **RAINN**, the National Sexual Assault Hotline at (800) 656-4673 for personal support. They can help you file a complaint.

It is a good idea to get a lawyer before starting a lawsuit (there are pro bono lawyers who can help— see our Legal Matters section). If you are ready to file a complaint on your own, you may do so at the **US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division**.

If you are working in a place that is unsafe, you can file a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) by calling (800) 321-6742 or online at <https://www.osha.gov/workers/file-complaint>. If you think that something may be unsafe, but don't have proof, you may notify your employer in writing. If they do not resolve the issue, you may then file a complaint with OSHA.

Of course, it is hard to address these problems if you are in an insecure position and need to keep your job. If you are able to talk to a pro bono lawyer, they might be able to give you advice so that you are not put in a worse situation. See our Legal Help chapter for more information.

# Unemployment Benefits

Most people who leave prison are not able to get unemployment benefits, but you may be eligible if you have been working for a while. You must have lost your job through no fault of your own, such as a layoff, and you need to have made at least \$1600 in the last 12 months before you filed your claim. You cannot receive

unemployment directly after you return home if you lost your previous job due to your incarceration or if you were in prison for more than twelve months.

Check with your local Department of Employment Security office or Work Net Center. These names may vary by state but a search for "Unemployment" and the name of your state should yield results.



# Education

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A lot of people think about going back to school after they leave prison. Going to school helps you learn more about the world. It can also help you meet new people and get better jobs.

This chapter has information about different education programs, like:

- ABE and high school diploma equivalent/GED programs
- Vocational training and apprenticeships
- College
- Paying for college

It is never too late to learn or go to school or college. Learning can even make you feel happier and more fulfilled. You can go to school part-time or full-time. If you are still in prison, take classes before you leave.

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## ABE and High School Equivalent Programs

Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs can help you get better at reading, writing, math, listening, and speaking. Usually, you can find ABE programs at adult schools, career centers, libraries, and community colleges. They are free or cost only a little. Agencies like Kaplan and ELS Language Centers also offer ABE, but they charge more money.

ABE programs can also help you learn English or prepare for your state's high school equivalent test.

The General Education Development (GED) test is like a high school diploma. If you did not graduate from high school, you can take this test (in most states) and it will count on your resume as a diploma. The test will have questions about things you would learn in high school. A GED or high school diploma is a requirement for many jobs. If you don't have your GED, you should try to get one.

You can register online to take the GED test at [ged.com](http://ged.com). You will probably take the test on a computer at an official GED testing site.

The GED is not an easy test. You will probably need to study. A lot of places have free preparation programs that can help you get ready:

- Community colleges
- Adult learning centers (Find one using this directory: <https://www.nld.org/>)
- Online study programs

A lot of programs will let you sign up at any time. They can also give you a study plan to help you get better in harder subjects.

Do you need help learning how to use new technology? Go to **Northstar** at [digitalliteracyassessment.org](http://digitalliteracyassessment.org) to get help. They have online classes and in-person ones at different locations. They will give you certificates when you gain new skills.

# Vocational Training and Apprenticeships

Vocational programs help you learn how to do a job. They can teach you things like welding, car repair, plumbing and more. You can go to community and technical colleges, as well as trade schools to take vocational classes.

A lot of prisons have vocational classes. Take them if you can. Vocational classes help you get some experience and see if you like the work. Once you leave, you can get an entry-level position or an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships help you get training and experience. You'll also get paid through an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships are usually offered through trade unions.

The American Job Center is a good place to look: [usa.gov/find-a-job](https://www.usa.gov/find-a-job)

For more information on apprenticeship programs, go to <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-job-finder>



*Consider seeking simple certifications, like CDL, sanitation, limo driver, or forklift.*

—Earl W., EJP Alumnus

Degree Type	Information
Vocational certificates	Certificates that prepare you for specific jobs or tasks. Offered by community colleges, technical schools, or workforce programs.
Associate degree	2-year degree granted by a community college, university, or technical school.
Bachelor's degree	4-year degree granted by a college or university.
Master's degree	2+ years, after earning a bachelor's degree. Typically requires research.
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	4+ years, after earning a bachelor's or master's degree. The highest academic degree to earn.
Professional degrees (MD, JD, MBA)	Degrees required to practice in certain professions (doctors, lawyers, business), after earning a bachelor's degree.



# College

**Community college.** If you haven't been in school for a while, you might want to start at community college. Community colleges are inexpensive and offer many different classes. A lot of them offer programs where you can get a GED and college credit at the same time. Community colleges usually offer associate degrees, certificate programs, and workforce training.

**4-year college.** Many people who want to earn a 4-year Bachelor's degree start by attending community college for a year. Then they transfer to a 4-year college to finish. You'll save money for the first two years because community college costs less than 4-year schools.

You must earn a certain number of credits to get a 4-year college degree. Some credits have to be in general subjects like science, math, and history. If you finish these credits at a community college and then transfer to a school that offers a 4-year degree, your credits can transfer over too. Make sure to check that your new school will count your transfer credits.

To learn more, visit the websites of the schools you are interested in, or you can call, email, or visit an admissions counselor or academic advisor at these schools.

## Applying for College

**Step 1: Get the Application.** For almost all colleges, you will apply on their websites. If you need help with this a librarian at a public library will likely be able to help you.

**Step 2: Gather Your Information.** To apply for college you will probably need:

- Your Social Security number.
- A state driver's license or identification card.
- The dates of high school and previous college attendance.

- Unopened transcripts from high school, GED, and/or college transcripts, whichever you completed most recently.
- Many four-year colleges will also ask for ACT or SAT test scores.

Some applications may ask about your criminal history. If you tell them you have been convicted of a felony, some schools will ask for more information. Just because they are asking for the information doesn't mean you will be rejected, but different schools have different policies about backgrounds. You can also ask to speak with an admissions counselor about this.

**Step 3: Take the SAT or ACT exam.** Is this your first time applying for college? Many four-year colleges require you to take the ACT or SAT college entrance exam. An admissions counselor can give you more information. It helps to study. You can buy study guides or get them from your public library. Khan Academy offers online SAT test prep for free at <https://www.khanacademy.org/sat>

**Step 4: Complete the Essay.** Most four-year colleges require a "statement of purpose" essay. This might be the hardest part of the application, but these essays let you shine. Make sure you put your goals in the essay. Ask a few people you trust to check your statement for mistakes. Ask them to also make sure you sound purposeful and confident.

**Step 5: Submit the Application.** You'll probably hear from a community college within a few weeks. They'll let you know by phone or letter if you've been accepted. Four-year colleges can take longer. If you have questions, contact the school's admissions office.



# Paying for Your Education

Paying for your education can be hard. Below we describe how you can get money for college.

**Free Tuition Programs.** Some colleges offer free tuition if you meet certain income requirements. Check with the college where you are interested in attending. Veterans can also get money for college. See [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/military](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/military)

Even if you have tuition covered, you'll need to pay for living expenses, books, and fees.

## Financial Aid: FAFSA

Do you need financial aid for college? The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the place to start.

**How do I apply?** You can find the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.gov](https://www.fafsa.gov), or you can request a paper copy from 800-4-FEDAID ((800) 433-3243). Applying for federal student aid is free. But it can be complicated. If you're worried or have questions, ask for help. College financial aid offices can help you over the phone or email or in person.

**When is it due?** Check on the form to see when it is due for your state. You should also ask your college when it is due. They might want it much earlier. Look at the school's website or call the financial aid office. Turn in your FAFSA as soon as you can because some financial aid runs out fast. If you can, turn in your FAFSA while you're in prison. That way everything will be ready in time for you to start school.

**What kind of aid will I get?** The aid you get will depend on how much money you make and the cost of your school. Your aid package may include the following:

- **Pell Grants** are government grants that are based on financial need.
- **Scholarships** can come from the college or from other organizations. Ask your financial aid office about scholarships. Scholarship information can also be found at public libraries and online.
- **Loans** have a lower interest rate than banks, and you won't have to start paying it back until after you graduate. Be aware that if you take out student loans, you will have to pay them back. Think carefully how you will repay your loans. Your loans will impact your decisions about money and jobs.
- **Work study positions** allow you to pay for college by working for the school. You can say you are interested in work-study when you fill out the FAFSA. Work-study is a good way to make money and get more work experience. They are often offered first come, first served.

Your financial aid package may include several kinds of aid. You don't have to accept the whole package. You can choose the parts that work for you. For example, you could accept a grant but not a loan. Reach out to the office if you have questions or want help understanding your package.

**Can I get federal student aid if I have a criminal record?** In most cases, yes. There are two exceptions. You cannot get federal student aid if:

- You were convicted of a drug offense (a misdemeanor or felony) while you were receiving financial aid in the past. And it still might not affect you if enough time has passed, or if you have completed drug treatment. Drug convictions from before you started college shouldn't have any effect. Ask your school financial aid staff for more information about this.
- You were subject to an involuntary civil commitment after completing a period of incarceration for a forcible or non-forcible sexual offense. If this is the case, you cannot receive Pell Grants.

For more information on financial aid for those with a felony conviction, see [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](http://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions). It would also be helpful to speak with a financial aid officer at the schools you are applying to.

If a grant, loan, or scholarship offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. There are many for-profit companies that take advantage of people who are looking to go to college. Applying for financial aid should be free, and you should research the agency or company before applying.

Remember to keep copies of all applications and related paperwork in your portfolio.

☆ For useful information about how to get your education after incarceration, see [Study.com](http://Study.com)'s guide, "How to Earn Your Degree and Get Hired After Incarceration." You can access it here: <https://bestaccreditedcolleges.org/resources/formerly-incarcerated-education-career-guide>

## Other Resources for College Students

**Tutoring centers.** Do you need extra help with your classes? A lot of people do. Many college campuses offer free tutoring to their students. Your tuition pays for such services, so be sure to get your money's worth.

**Mentoring and student support programs.** Some colleges offer mentoring programs to new students. College mentors are other students or people who give support to new students. Some colleges even have mentor programs for people with records!

**Career center.** Most colleges have career centers that can help you find a job while you are in school and when you graduate. Career centers also offer help with resumé writing, getting ready for interviews, and more. Again, your tuition pays for these services, so use them!



*A full-time, work-study student with Link benefits can bring in \$800 a month plus free transportation. That is a game changer.*

—Earl W., EJP Alumnus

# Health

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When you leave prison, you will need to manage your own health. This can be a welcome change, but it is also stressful. There are many different options for health insurance. There are many different kinds of clinics, hospitals, and doctors to choose from. There are paperwork, applications, and bills to figure out. Don't be afraid to ask for help from family and friends as you figure things out.

In this section, we cover:

- Staying healthy during COVID-19
- Health insurance
- Regular and specialty doctor visits
- Dental and vision insurance
- Paying for medications
- HIV prevention, testing and treatment

See also our Trauma and Mental Health chapter and Substance Use Disorder chapter.

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## Staying Healthy During COVID-19

At the time of this publication, the COVID-19 pandemic was still disrupting life. US deaths from COVID-19 have reached one million. There are now new variants of the virus that spread more easily and quickly, though most are less serious.

Here are the most important things to keep yourself and others healthy:

1. **Get a vaccine and booster shots.** Even if you aren't at high risk, a vaccine will protect you and those around you. The vaccines have been tested on thousands of people. They are safe and effective at preventing serious COVID-19 infection. You should get a vaccine even if you already have had COVID-19. You can get a free vaccine at most pharmacies. If you are eligible for a second dose or a booster shot, get them! They will help keep you safe.
2. **Wear a mask** when you are with large groups of people, especially indoors.
3. **Isolate** if you are sick or have been around someone who is sick.
4. **Wash your hands** often.

### If you get sick

COVID-19 can look like a lot of different illnesses. The most common symptoms are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. You might feel tired or achy. You might vomit or have diarrhea. Some show no symptoms while others become very sick and end up in the hospital on a ventilator.

If you have mild symptoms, you can treat the virus at home. Rest, drink plenty of water, take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for the fever and drink a warm tea with honey for a cough.

★ **Emergency warning signs.** Do you have trouble breathing, pain or pressure in the chest, or confusion? Are you too sleepy for someone to wake you? Go to a hospital emergency room right away or call 9-1-1.

If you think you might have COVID, you can get a COVID-19 test at many places. Call 2-1-1 or a nearby health clinic to find a testing location or purchase a test at a pharmacy.





# Health Insurance

Getting medical care is costly! Health insurance can help pay for doctor’s visits, medications, vaccines, laboratory tests, and emergencies. Health insurance can also be expensive, but medical care can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars if you are not insured.

**Getting care if you are uninsured.** If you don’t have health insurance but need care, there are public and community health programs and clinics that offer free or low-cost services.

These community clinics provide:

- Vaccinations and immunizations
- Full physicals
- Nutrition and food stamp programs
- STD screening, cancer screening, HIV/AIDS services
- Dental care
- Pregnancy and maternity assistance
- Programs to quit smoking
- Hearing tests and eye exams

Find a public health program or clinic at <https://freeclinicdirectory.org/>



*Go to a community medical center. You can get a free full physical when you get out of prison. We have to make sure there are no underlying conditions that we aren’t aware of.*

—Joe Joe

## Medicaid and Medicare

Medicaid and Medicare are federal programs that offer assistance with healthcare costs. Most hospitals and health clinics accept Medicaid payments.

- **Medicaid:** Program for people who meet income requirements
- **Medicare:** Program for those 65 years old or older

To see if you qualify, visit [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

You can apply to Medicaid or Medicare one of four ways:

1. You may be able to apply in prison before you leave. Talk to your counselor or clinical services.
2. Apply online
3. You may be able to apply in person at a hospital or at a Department of Human Services center or another place that offers case management.
4. Apply by mail or fax. You can call your state’s Department of Human Services to mail you an application. Complete the application and mail or fax it back in.

Before applying you need to have a few documents ready:

- Income verification. This could be pay stubs, a financial aid award letter, a written statement from your employer, or a copy of your check stub showing your total income before taxes.
- Your Social Security number
- Proof of residency—any official document that shows your address and name together will work.

When you fill out your Medicaid application, you can also apply for other benefits, such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). See Resources to Meet your Basic Needs for more information about these and other assistance programs.

If you are receiving Medicaid or benefits from any of these other programs, report any changes to your income or dependent status as soon as possible. If you begin making more money than is allowed, you may no longer qualify for these programs. You will start to lose parts of your tax refund on a monthly basis. You can report these changes to your local food stamp authority (often called the Department of Human Services or Department of Health and Human Services depending on the state).

## Other Health Insurance Options

If you do not qualify for Medicaid or Medicare, there are a few other options.

- Your state may have its own low-cost health insurance program. Contact your local Department of Human Services office for more information.
- You may be able to get insurance through your employer or your school, if you are in college. If you are under 25, you may be able to still be on your parents' insurance.
- The Healthcare Marketplace is an option for anyone who needs to get health insurance, but may not be able to get Medicare, Medicaid, or insurance through their employer. It is a federal program that works with health insurance companies to offer plans for

individuals and families. After you are released from prison, you have 60 days to enroll. You can also enroll right after major life events or during the open enrollment period. Go to [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) or call (800) 318-2596 to talk to someone who can help you complete your application.



*You have to be in charge of everything yourself. You're not going to get called in later for a physical. The onus falls on you.*

—Pablo



## Dental Insurance and Vision Insurance

Get your teeth cleaned and examined regularly. Oral health is important for your overall health. Teeth problems can lead to bigger health problems in the future.

Get your eyes checked regularly, too. If you have vision problems like glaucoma, cataracts, or retinal tears it is especially important to take care of your eyes.

### Low-Cost Dental and Eye Care

Here are some options for dental care:

- Go to <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/finding-dental-care> to find low-cost dental care.
- Find a dental school in your area by visiting this website: [www.ada.org/en/coda/find-a-program](http://www.ada.org/en/coda/find-a-program) Dental students can do dental work for a lower cost while gaining experience.

There are several programs that offer free or low-cost eye exams and glasses:

- Walmart and Target have stores with eye shops where you can get an exam and glasses for cheap.
- Eyecare America (eye exams) - [www.aao.org/eyecare-america](http://www.aao.org/eyecare-america)
- InfantSEE (free eye exams for babies 6-12 mo.) - [www.infantsee.org](http://www.infantsee.org)
- Sight for Students (glasses for children) - (888) 290-4964
- New Eyes (free glasses program) - (973) 376-4903
- Purchasing glasses online for cheap: [Zennioptical.com](http://Zennioptical.com) and [www.goggles4u.com](http://www.goggles4u.com) offer frames starting at around \$10. You will need a prescription.

You may be interested in a healthcare plan that covers dental or eye care. Some dentists will accept Medicaid payments—ask them to find out. Dental and vision are not always included in health insurance plans, so think about your needs and check each plan before you enroll. There may be separate dental or vision plans that you can get.

Some health insurance plans offer vision care, which covers yearly eye exams and some of the cost of glasses and contacts. Check your health insurance plan to see what is covered because you may have to buy a separate plan for eye care. Medicare does cover eye exams, and Medicaid covers vision care for children.



## Doctor Visits

It's a good idea to establish a regular relationship with your doctor. Most health insurance plans require you to pick a primary care provider. This person will serve as your "medical home" and is usually a family physician, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or internal medicine physician. Having regular visits with a primary care provider is the best way to manage your health. Go see this person instead of going to the emergency room or urgent care. This will save you money and time and keep you healthy.

A primary care physician can give you a full physical exam, perform lab work, and provide prescription renewals. It is recommended that you have a full physical at least once a year and complete routine exams. Below are age and sex-based recommendations for health screenings.



## Routine Exams That Can Keep You Healthy

Age	Men	Women
18-39	Blood pressure, cholesterol, flu shot, syphilis screen, TDAP shot, HPV shot, chlamydia/gonorrhea, HIV, skin exam	Blood pressure, cholesterol, flu shot, TDAP shot, HPV shot, breast exam, after 21 PAP test, chlamydia/gonorrhea, HIV, skin exam
40-64	Blood pressure, blood sugar, colonoscopy (over 50), stool test, flu shot, shingles shot (over 60), prostate screen (over 50), lung cancer screen (only if you smoke), skin exam	Blood pressure, blood sugar, colonoscopy (over 50), stool test, flu shot, shingles shot (over 60), breast screen, mammogram (over 40), lung cancer screen (only if you smoke), postmenopausal bone screening, PAP test, pelvic, HPV, skin exam
65+	Blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, colonoscopy until 75, hearing test, aneurysm screen (if smoker), prostate and lung screening (only if you have risk factors), pneumonia shot x2, skin exam	Blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, colonoscopy until 75, hearing test, mammogram until 75, bone screening, PAP test until 65, pneumonia shot x2, skin exam

Your primary care provider can also refer you to specialists for some health concerns. One way to contact your primary care physician is by signing up through your hospital network's online portal. This will allow you to access your medical records, send messages to your doctor and schedule appointments.

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*Going to the office of my primary care physician was actually a pleasant experience. It was nothing like it was on the inside.*

—Pablo



## Pharmacy

Some insurance plans will help you pay for expensive medical prescriptions, while others do not. If you are having trouble paying for your prescriptions, here are a few options:

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if there is a generic version of the drugs you need. Generic drugs are much less expensive.
- Go to [Goodrx.com](https://www.goodrx.com) to compare prices of prescription medications. It tells you where you can go for the best price. You can download their app on a smartphone.
- Stores like Target, Walmart, Costco, and Sam’s Club often have special programs where you can purchase generic drugs for very cheap (\$4 for 30-day quantity or \$10 for a 90-day quantity).
- Go to [www.rxassist.org](https://www.rxassist.org) to find out if the medication you need is offered for free to people who qualify.



## HIV/AIDS and Other Diseases

Being in prison increases the risk of getting some diseases. After release from prison, you should be tested for HIV, Hepatitis C (HCV), Hepatitis B (HBV) and tuberculosis. HIV, HBV and HCV can be detected by a blood test. Tuberculosis can be tested by blood or by a skin test; if these tests are positive, the disease is confirmed by a chest X-ray. Locations for HIV testing can be found by using the CDC’s HIV Test Locator at: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/hiv>

If you test positive for HIV or another serious disease, know that you can still live a long and meaningful life. You should make an appointment to see a healthcare provider to stay healthy and possibly begin treatments.

You should still be cautious if the test comes back negative. It is possible that the tests cannot yet detect the virus in your body. You can request another test at a later date.

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*Make sure that there’s not something wrong with you that they didn’t test for or detect while you were inside. When I first got home, they ran all these tests. I got called a few days later asking if I could come in again to see the doctor. When I came in, she went over the results, and she said, it doesn’t look bad but you have chronic kidney disease. She wrote me a referral to go see a kidney specialist and she gave me some literature to read about the disease and how I could have gotten it.*

—Shaun W.

## What does having HIV mean? Risk

HIV is a virus that spreads by attacking and killing healthy cells in the body. This happens all over the body, destroying cells or forcing them to create new infected cells.

HIV targets immune system cells, known as T-cells. T-cells fight off infection by killing cells that have been infected by germs. As more T-cells start dying, the immune system is open to attack. If the number of T-cells drops too low, the risk of infection increases and can lead to AIDS. When someone has AIDS, their immune system becomes too weak to fight off other infections. If untreated, people can die of AIDS.

Fortunately, people who have HIV today can live long and productive lives as long as they take steps to stay on top of their infection. HIV can be managed with daily medication, regular testing and doctor visits, and healthy lifestyle changes (exercise, stopping smoking, getting enough sleep, etc.).

Sometimes HIV testing is offered as part of the prison intake process. We suggest you take advantage of this free testing, as knowing your status is very important.

The most common way for HIV to be transmitted is through sexual contact, but infected and untreated mothers are able to pass it on to their children. Avoid contact with blood, semen or vaginal fluid of sexual partners who are HIV-positive. Do not share needles or syringes and make sure to use protection (condoms) for any sexual contact.

Know the risk of spreading HIV to a sexual partner who is not HIV positive. Being treated with antiretroviral medications can reduce your chances of transmitting HIV to a partner. Taking antiretroviral medications regularly lowers the levels of HIV in your blood. This does not mean that the virus is completely gone, so take precautions and use condoms even though the risk of transmission is low. If you do not have HIV but are in a relationship with someone who does, you can take PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), which reduces the risk of being infected.

There are also certain sexual activities that can increase your chances of transmitting HIV. For more information about HIV transmission and risk factors, visit: [www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics](http://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics)



### Reflect

1. What are my health insurance options?
2. Who is my health point of contact--the doctor or nurse practitioner who I can call if I need help?
3. What are some ways I can stay healthy?

# Trauma and Mental Health

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Know that if you are struggling with trauma or mental health problems, you are not alone. Most people who are incarcerated have experienced trauma. Most also have a mental health disorder or have had one in the past. Being in prison can trigger mental health problems or make them worse. Your time in prison may cause trauma that affects your mental health long after you leave.

If you have mental health issues, seek treatment as soon as you are released. Reentry is hard. Mental health problems can make reentry much harder. Sadly, people who do not get treatment are more likely to return to prison.

There are mental health professionals who can help you. They can provide talk therapy and medication, if needed. They can help you learn to better handle stress and life problems.

You matter! Make your mental health a priority. When you do, you will experience deep personal growth and be able to better help others. You can learn to become stronger so that you can bounce back from hard things.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Trauma
  - Bouncing back
  - Treatment for mental health
  - Types of treatment
  - Attitudes about mental health
  - Common mental health disorders
- 

## Trauma

Just about everyone who has been to prison has experienced trauma. Trauma is a mental health issue that many people face.

Trauma is the emotional response you have during a stressful and possibly life-changing event. It can also be the result of toxic stress that builds up over time. Trauma is more common than people think, and its effects can be very serious. Traumatic events that you had as a child can have effects throughout your life.



*Trauma is something that all of us go through. You have to get to the point that you realize that what you've been going through is trauma. Nothing you went through is normal. It's not normal to be secluded. Even before prison, we were on the streets, experiencing trauma and violence to the point that it became a natural thing. We became desensitized to those things. We didn't think, 'Oh wow, this is abnormal.'*

—Anonymous

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*The residue of prison stays with you. Keys rattling means it's a guard coming. You wake up with a heightened sense of alertness. You are late and you worry you have missed your chance. You can't calm down. You have a pattern of sleeplessness. You are easily annoyed. Tense situations escalate into violence.*

—Kilroy

Trauma can come from lots of things, such as:

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Witnessing violence
- Having a loved one with substance use or mental health issues
- Parent separation or divorce
- Poverty
- Being incarcerated or having a family member who is incarcerated
- Living in unsafe neighborhoods

People in prison, especially women, are more likely to have experienced trauma. There are strong connections between trauma, poor mental health, and incarceration.

**Where to get help.** If you have experienced trauma, you may benefit from treatment or counseling. Counselors can help you understand the effects of trauma on your well-being, your emotions, and your behaviors.

Trauma-focused treatments provide you with skills to better understand what happened to you. You can learn to cope with the emotions and memories connected to these scary experiences. The goal is to help you reach a healthier new meaning of what took place in your life.

Here are a few places you can go for help:

- Go to this directory to find a mental health provider: [https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt34657/National\\_Directory\\_MH\\_facilities\\_2021.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt34657/National_Directory_MH_facilities_2021.pdf). When calling to set up an appointment, ask if they provide trauma-focused treatment.
- Contact your state's Department of Human Services

- Your primary care provider may be able to connect you to a mental health consultant located in your clinic, so ask if one is available.
- Many reentry programs provide trauma-informed care. Ask what services they provide.

## Recovering from Trauma

When you face trauma or stress and overcome it, you can strengthen your ability to bounce back from hard things. Being able to bounce back instead of getting stuck is called resilience.

Being resilient does not mean that stress is not hard for you. It means you have taught yourself to better cope with hard things. Resilience can be learned. It is not a trait that only some people have. It is something that everyone has the ability to strengthen, like when you build muscle. It takes time and work, but it can be done. There is hope!

If you feel stuck or are not making progress, seek help from a mental health professional. Seeking help is an important part of building resilience.

According to the American Psychological Association, there are four main areas of resilience. Work to improve your resilience in these four areas.

### 1. Build your connections

Connect with people you trust and who understand you. Remind yourself that you are not alone. If you have experienced trauma, it is common to want to isolate yourself. Fight that urge. Find a group to join and get active in the community.

### 2. Foster wellness

*Take care of your body.* Your body needs good food, sleep, water, and exercise to fight off stress. When you take care of your body, you will feel better. There is a big connection between your physical and mental health.

*Practice mindfulness.* Mindfulness is being in the present moment without judgment. It can be practiced in many different ways. See our mindfulness chapter to learn more about.

*Avoid negative outlets.* When things are stressful it is tempting to want to turn to drugs, alcohol, or other negative ways of coping. This is like putting a bandage on a large wound. Instead, try to focus on healthy things you can give your body to help you cope.



*Having a support group provides you with a reminder that there are other ways to cope.*

—**Kilroy**

*In prison I had ways to cope with trauma. I would exercise, draw. This allowed me to escape that mental state for a little while.*

—**Anonymous**

### 3. Find purpose

*Help others.* Find meaning and purpose by helping others. Get involved with a community organization or help a friend who is struggling.

*Be proactive.* Ask yourself, “What can I do about this problem?” Set achievable goals and break them down into smaller steps. Start working on these steps.

*Look for opportunities for self-discovery.* Self-awareness can help you grow. Think about how you have grown as a result of a struggle, like being locked up. How have you become a better person? You may find that it helps you increase self-worth and appreciate your path in life.

### 4. Embrace healthy thoughts

*Keep things in perspective.* You do not always have control of events in your life. But you do have control of how you make sense of things and respond to them. How you think about your situation impacts how you feel, so move those negative thoughts aside.

*Accept change.* Being able to accept change is a part of life. There may be some things that get in the way of your goals. It is OK to accept some things. Focus instead on the things that are in your power to change and control.

*Maintain a hopeful outlook.* It is not realistic to be positive all the time. Allow yourself to feel upset for a little bit, but then focus on what gives you hope. What do you want and how can you make that happen?

*Learn from your past.* Look back at what has helped you in the past during hard times. Remind yourself of what has helped you find strength before. What have you learned about yourself from your past experiences?



*Advice for socializing outside? Learning coping skills and anger management. Being less abrasive and open-minded.*

—**Earl W., EJP Alumnus**



## Reflect

1. What has helped you “bounce back” from hard things in the past?
2. What are some things you would like to try to strengthen your resilience muscles?



# Seeking Treatment

**Everyone can benefit from mental health support during reentry.** Reentry is stressful. Even if you do not have a mental health disorder, you may benefit from talking to someone to help you adjust.

It is a good idea to schedule an appointment with a mental health provider *before your release*. Many community mental health centers have long waiting lists, so set up an appointment ahead of time. This will help you have the support you need when things are tough.

There are several different options for care, depending on what your needs are.

## Crisis Care

Are you in a crisis? Are you worried about hurting yourself or others? Do you have suicidal thoughts? Are you seeing and hearing things that aren't there? Are your symptoms so bad that you are having trouble functioning? Get help right away.

If you are in crisis, you may need an emergency evaluation to see if you need to be hospitalized. The types of treatments you get during a crisis are very brief. They are meant to keep you safe and get you stable. You'll get connected to on-going treatment for when you leave the hospital. Be sure to follow up with a mental health professional in your community after a crisis.

Here are a few places you can turn to:

- **National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Call 988 or go to [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org) to get help and chat with someone.
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text "HELLO" to 741741, available 24/7
- **Call 911 and ask for a C.I.T. (Crisis Intervention Trained) officer** if you or someone you know is in immediate danger or go to the nearest emergency room.

## Non-Crisis Care

If you need help, but it's not an emergency, find a community provider for treatment. When you call, ask for a mental health assessment or intake with a therapist or counselor (for talk therapy) or psychiatrist (for medication).

These resources will help you find a community provider near you:

- **Directory of mental health care providers:** [https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt34657/National\\_Directory\\_MH\\_facilities\\_2021.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt34657/National_Directory_MH_facilities_2021.pdf)
- **Your primary care provider** may be able to connect you to a mental health consultant located in your clinic so ask if one is available
- **Treatment Referral Helpline:** Call (800) 662-HELP (4357) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- **Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator:** <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

## Who Provides Services?

There are different mental health professionals who can make a diagnosis and provide treatment.

- **Counselors, Social Workers, and Family Therapists** offer assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health problems through talk therapy or counseling.
- **Clinical Psychologists** diagnose and treat mental health problems through talk therapy. They also can also offer testing of behaviors, emotions, and thoughts. This testing can be helpful for making a diagnosis.
- **Psychiatrists** also assess, diagnose, and treat mental health problems, but they take a medical approach and can prescribe medications.

Most mental health professionals have different specialties. If you are able, find someone who has training and experience working with the problems you face.



# Types of Treatment

Mental health professionals offer many types of treatment. Often, it's helpful to combine different types of treatment, like therapy and medication.

**The most important part of treatment is not the type of treatment you choose but the relationship you have with your mental health provider.** Make sure that you feel safe and connected to your provider so that you can benefit from treatment.

**Individual therapy or counseling.** Talk therapy involves working one-on-one with a mental health professional. Therapy can help you heal, grow, and move toward a more productive and healthy life. A therapist will help you learn to live your best life with a mental health disorder. Sometimes you will be able to overcome your mental health disorder.

**Group therapy or counseling.** This is similar to individual treatment, but you will do therapy with other people. These are not self-help groups. A mental health professional will lead the group. You will likely attend weekly sessions. The power of group treatment comes from the group members. It can be really helpful to have a support network of others who have similar challenges. Many groups target a specific problem, but some may be more general.

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*I benefited a lot from [my support group]. Everybody in those meetings had a similar experience. We are at a place now where we can reflect on some of the things we went through. Maturity comes with age. They have been part of my unofficial therapy.*

—Anonymous

.....

**Family therapy or counseling.** The goal of family therapy is to improve relationships and resolve conflicts. It can include your romantic partner, children, and other family members. It is often used with other types of treatments.

..... ” .....

Many conflicts arise because your family has no idea what you've gone through in prison. Or they don't understand your diagnosis. Families need a guide for what it's like for those of us who have been through prison, who have experienced trauma.

—Kilroy

.....

**Medication.** Just as medication can treat heart disease and diabetes, medication can treat mental health problems. Medications are not always needed, but most people with severe mental health problems benefit from medication.

Some mental health disorders require medication because they are so serious. Bipolar disorder and schizophrenia symptoms cannot be managed without the help of medication. If you have these disorders, make sure you take your medication every day. Don't skip doses. If you have severe anxiety or depression, you will also likely benefit from medication. Taking medication can help relieve symptoms so that you feel better. Combined with talk therapy, medication can help you lead a healthy and productive life.

Medications are prescribed by a psychiatrist after an evaluation. The evaluation will last between 30 and 60 minutes. After that, appointments will be brief (about 15 minutes). Your psychiatrist will monitor your medications and side effects. It takes time for your body to adjust to medications. It also takes time for your provider to find what works best for you. Many medications have side effects, especially when you first take them.

☆ **Warning:** Don't quit taking medication once you start feeling better. Feeling good may be a sign that the medication is working, not that you don't need it anymore! Always consult with a psychiatric practitioner before stopping your medications. Stopping medications all at once can be very dangerous. Your psychiatrist can help you decide if it's OK to stop. They can help you stop gradually and safely.

**Paying for Treatment.** Medicaid will cover mental health treatment. If you need to apply for Medicaid, the Health chapter tells you how you can apply for Medicaid. Not all mental health treatment programs accept Medicaid. Make sure to ask if the program accepts Medicaid when you call to make your first appointment. Some programs will also offer services on a "sliding fee scale" so you can pay what you can afford if you do not have insurance. Keep in mind that most programs that do accept Medicaid may have long waiting lists, so plan ahead. If possible, make your appointments before your release.

If you are enrolling in private insurance, make sure to select a plan that includes mental health treatment. When you make an appointment, ask if they accept your insurance. You may be able to see a mental health professional in private practice. This may decrease your waiting time for an appointment.

## Attitudes about Mental Health

Some people feel embarrassed or ashamed of having a mental health disorder. These attitudes may have come from your family, your community, or from the media. These attitudes can make it hard for you to get better.

Everyone has a role to fight against these negative attitudes! The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers some suggestions about what you can do to help:

- Compare physical and mental illness. Lots of people have mental health disorders, just as lots of people have physical health disorders like diabetes and heart disease. Getting treatment is a positive thing.
- Talk openly about mental health. Share your experience with people you trust.
- Educate yourself and others. Respond to negative comments by sharing facts and experiences.
- Be conscious of language. Remind people that words matter. Try to avoid words like crazy, or maddening that are all too common in our daily language.
- Show compassion for those with mental health problems, including yourself.
- Be honest about treatment. Getting mental health treatment is normal, just like other health care treatment.
- Choose empowerment over shame.



*In prison, people tend to mock those who go through a mental health episode. Everyone knows who's taking pills. You condition yourself to not talk. You don't want to express your feelings or admit something is wrong.*

— Kilroy

*When I first met with the group, guys would just sit there. They wouldn't open up. So I opened myself up. I'd tell them, this is what's been bothering me. Break the ice. Then someone else would talk about their experience.*

— Kilroy

*It's all right to show your emotions. It's a natural thing to vent, to cry.*

— Anonymous



## Reflect

1. What negative attitudes do you have about mental health disorders and treatment?
2. Where do these negative attitudes come from?
3. What are some things you can do to fight these negative attitudes?

## Common Mental Health Disorders

Several mental health disorders are common in people who spend time in prison. We describe them here so that you can know what they are and when you may need to get help. If you think you might have one of these health disorders, talk to a health professional who can evaluate you and provide a diagnosis.

**Major depressive disorder.** Everyone feels sad once in a while, but not everyone feels depressed. Symptoms include:

- Feeling sad or uninterested in things most of the time
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Feeling low energy and having a hard time focusing
- Feeling tearful, empty, hopeless, or angry and irritable
- Feeling pretty miserable but not understanding why
- Some people have chronic pain or digestive issues

Do these symptoms last for at least two weeks? Do they get in the way of your everyday life? You may be depressed. Talk therapy or medicine can help.

If you are **severely depressed**, you may also have thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself or die (this is a big concern for women who are recently released). Severe depression may also cause you to hear or see things that are not there. If you have these severe symptoms, go to the nearest emergency room right away or call the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

**Bipolar disorder.** Most people have changes in mood at times. If you're stressed, you might feel angry or scared. If you lost someone you love, you might feel sad. Hormone changes can also affect moods.

If you have intense mood swings that last for several days, you may have bipolar disorder. People with bipolar disorder have extreme shifts in mood, energy, and ability to function. These mood shifts include episodes of depression (above) and mania. Signs of mania are:

- Increased self-esteem and feeling like you are on top of the world
- Less need for sleep
- Talking a lot and often fast
- Having so many thoughts that you cannot keep up with them
- Being distracted easily
- Feeling restless. You might pace the room or bounce your leg.
- Doing things that are risky and can cause harm: spending a lot of money, having unprotected sex with various partners, and using drugs or alcohol.

For some people, manic and depressive episodes can be very extreme. Symptoms can include seeing and hearing things that are not there. This can really impact your ability to function. If your symptoms are severe, get help right away. Less severe episodes of mania (known as hypomania) and depression may not impact your life as much.

Managing bipolar disorder requires help from medicine and talk therapy. Keep a record of your mood changes so that you know if you need to seek help.

**Generalized anxiety disorder.** Feeling anxious or stressed once in a while is a normal part of life. If your anxiety feels out of control, you might have an anxiety disorder. Generalized anxiety disorder is when you worry a lot and are nervous about everyday things, even things that you have no control over, for no apparent reason. You might feel like something really bad is going to happen. Anxiety leaves you feeling restless, tired, irritable, and tense. It can impact your ability to focus and sleep.

If these problems do not go away and begin to impact your relationships and responsibilities, get help. Talk therapy can help. Medication can help when symptoms are severe.

**Schizophrenia.** Some people can have a distorted sense of reality. This is known as schizophrenia. It is a severe mental health condition that requires medication to manage. Talk therapy can help you build life skills to cope. Schizophrenia involves a range of problems with thinking, behavior, and emotions. Signs of schizophrenia can vary, but it usually involves:

- Problems with thinking (having a hard time organizing your thoughts, forgetting things, not being able to focus, struggling to make decisions)
- Delusions (false beliefs that are not based in reality)
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't really there)
- Disorganized speech (not being able to put words or sentences together)
- Lacking skills that people usually have (the ability to express emotion, be part of activities, and engage with others)

These symptoms can have a big impact on your life. If these symptoms are present for at least a month, get help.

**Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).** Some traumatic events are so shocking, scary, or dangerous that they can change the way we think and feel long after the event has passed. It's natural to feel scared, nervous, or depressed after something bad has happened. If these feelings last for over a month, you may have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

#### Common symptoms of PTSD include:

- Having nightmares or flashbacks
- Avoiding people or situations that remind you of the event
- Feeling on edge and anxious a lot
- Feeling depressed
- Trouble remembering things
- Feeling emotionally detached

Medications and talk therapy can be useful in working through these symptoms.

**Personality disorders.** Your personality is who you are: the thoughts, patterns, feelings, and behaviors that define you. Sometimes people can develop personality disorders—patterns and traits that are harmful to themselves and others. For people in prison, the two most common personality disorders are:

- **Borderline personality disorder:** Having unstable moods, behavior, and relationships. Feeling emotionally unstable, worthless, insecure, or impulsive. These feelings or behaviors can hurt your relationships with others.
- **Antisocial personality disorder:** Acting in ways that show a lack of care about other people. For example, lying, breaking laws, or acting impulsively. Not caring about their own safety or the safety of others.

Since personality traits are pretty stable over our lifetime, these disorders can be hard to treat. Despite that, it is not impossible. Often treatment includes long-term therapy. Medications tend to not work as well for these disorders.

**Multiple disorders: Mental health, substance use, and personality disorders.** Many people who are in prison have more than one mental health disorder. People who have depression are more likely to have anxiety, too. Many people who have a mental health disorder also have a substance use problem. Some people have a mental health disorder, a personality disorder, and a substance use disorder.

If you have more than one of these disorders, **let your providers know about everything you are struggling with.** If you address one problem and not the other, you may find it difficult to fully recover.

# Substance Use Disorders

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Do you have difficulty controlling your use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or medications? If so, this is one of the most important chapters you will read. As you know, drug and alcohol problems can make it much harder to get a job, form healthy relationships, find housing, and stay out of prison.

We urge you to get help. Your reentry success depends upon it! As you begin to recover, your mind will clear, and you will be better able to rebuild your life.

For many, prison is a time to get clean from drugs or alcohol. But just because you were clean in prison doesn't mean that you are fully recovered. Many people find that problems with drugs or alcohol return when they are released.

Reentry can be a time of stress, anxiety, and fear. You're trying to rebuild your life while also dealing with the trauma of being locked up for years. Perhaps you have used drugs and alcohol to cope with difficult feelings in the past. Recognize that this puts you at greater risk of relapse.

There is hope. Know that many people recover from substance use disorders, and you can, too. We honor your efforts. Recovery isn't easy and you may have setbacks. We believe in YOU and your ability to recover.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Where to get help
- Safer drug use
- Treatment programs
- Peer support groups
- The road to recovery



*What ends up happening is you get out and you realize your issues don't end. Now you have to deal with other issues. You get hit with all this stuff. You start to get into bad habits again, revert to old coping mechanisms. You have alcohol available, you have drugs. The bottle becomes more available than the gym.*

**—Anonymous**

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# Where to Get Help

Let's be honest. The first few days, weeks, and months after release are really challenging. This is why it's a good idea to make plans to get help before you are released.

It's best if you can set up a time to meet with a treatment provider within 2-3 days of release. Join a support group, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, right away or make an appointment to see a counselor. Don't wait to get help.

Here are a few places you can start:

- **Call 911** if you have overdosed and need immediate help.
- **National Helpline:** Call (800) 662-4357 for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's national helpline. Get confidential free help from public health agencies to find substance use treatment and information. See their website: <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>
- **National sober house directory:** <https://soberhousedirectory.com/>
- **Peer support groups:** Find an Alcoholics Anonymous support group by calling 855-977-9213 or going to [aa.org](http://aa.org). Find a Narcotics Anonymous support group by calling 1-818-773-9999 or going to [na.org](http://na.org). There are also non-religious support group options.
- **Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator:** <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

## Safer Drug Use

Many substance use treatment programs focus on getting clean or sobering up. You may need to pass drug tests as a condition of your parole. Many jobs require drug testing.

Some people find that quitting completely is the only thing that works for them. If they start drinking a little, this quickly turns back into drinking a lot. Groups like Alcoholics Anonymous encourage quitting completely and provide peer support to reach this goal.

Quitting isn't easy. Many people are able to quit for a while, but then return to drug use on and off. If this is your experience, there are things you can do to reduce the harm of drug use in your life. There are ways to manage your drug use so that it doesn't take over your life. Moderating your use of drugs or alcohol is also a worthy goal. Work with a counselor or program that offers substance use management.

★ **Warning:** Did you know that people who have recently returned from prison are at greater risk for overdose? If you stopped using drugs or alcohol while in prison, you may have a reduced tolerance for these drugs. This means that your body can't handle the same amount of drugs that you took before. This can lead to overdose or even death.

Here are a few safety tips:

- Learn how to inject safely and care for your veins to avoid getting HIV or another disease. <https://anypositivechange.org/better-vein-care/>
- Find out if there are organizations in your area that offer safer injecting equipment.
- Learn the signs of overdose and how to respond. Teach your friends and family to recognize these signs, too. Check for organizations in your area that can provide injectable naloxone, a drug that reverses opiate overdose.

### Signs of an Overdose:

- Unresponsive or unconscious
- Slow or stopped breathing
- Snoring or gurgling sounds
- Cold, clammy skin
- Blue lips, discolored fingernails

**What to do:** Try to wake the person up. Call 911 if you can't wake them. Start CPR if their breathing is slow or they have stopped breathing. Provide Naloxone (NARCAN®) if available.



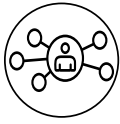
## Reflect

Whether your goal is safer drug use or quitting entirely, take time to reflect on your drug or alcohol use. Here are a few things you should reflect on, either alone or with a counselor:

- Where do you use and when? Can you find ways to separate drug use from driving or working tasks?
- Who do you use with? How are your relationships helping or hurting your recovery? How can you navigate these relationships to quit or be safer?
- What are your personal rituals around drug use? Can you modify those rituals so that you use less or use in safer ways?
- Think about your attitudes and emotions about drug use, such as shame and guilt. How are these emotions getting in the way of your recovery?
- What are your emotional triggers? What are some more helpful ways to deal with difficult emotions?







# Treatment Programs

There are many different kinds of treatment programs. You may need to enroll in an in-patient intensive treatment program or live in a recovery home. If your disorder is less severe, you may be able to receive outpatient services, therapy, or join a support group. Treatment should last long enough to change behaviors and thought patterns. For those with severe drug problems, at least three months of intensive treatment is recommended. After that, follow-up support can be helpful for months and even years.

There are three main types of treatment. Often, treatment programs combine all three.

- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy.** Meet with a therapist to learn how to manage stress and triggers that have led to drug use in the past. The therapist can help you find ways to motivate yourself.
- **Medication-assisted treatment.** Some medications can reduce your cravings and help you stop using. Doctors can prescribe medications such as methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone to help you overcome an addiction.
- **Peer support.** Many people find that a peer support group can help. Alcoholics Anonymous ([aa.org](http://aa.org)) or Narcotics Anonymous ([na.org](http://na.org)) are two of the most common.

A good treatment program should also:

- **Empower you.** It should build upon your strengths. It shouldn't shame you. It should help you take an active role in your recovery.
- **Provide mental health treatment.** Many people who have substance use disorders also have mental health problems. It is essential to treat both mental health issues and substance use issues together.
- **Address past trauma.** Many people use drugs to cope with past trauma. A good treatment program will help you develop effective coping strategies and recover from the effects of trauma and violence.
- **Provide support services.** Recovery is about more than getting clean. Good treatment programs offer services to help you rebuild your life. They may help you find employment and safe housing.

**Are you pregnant? Do you have children you are caring for?** For the sake of you and your children, reach out and get help. Many women are afraid their children will be taken away if their substance use becomes known. But continuing to use drugs or alcohol also puts you and your children at great risk.

As you are surely aware, society is not kind to mothers with substance use problems. You have likely sensed how harshly people judge you. You may have intense feelings of guilt and shame. We recommend that you seek out a treatment program that can help with the unique challenges women and mothers face.

Always let your doctor know if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant before starting medical treatment for a substance use disorder. Some medications are not safe to take while pregnant or nursing.

**Paying for Treatment.** Medicaid covers the cost of many substance use treatment services, such as counseling, therapy, medication management, social work services, and peer support. Our Health chapter explains how to apply for Medicaid. Not all treatment programs accept Medicaid. Before starting services, ask if they accept Medicaid.

If you are enrolling in a private insurance plan, choose a plan that covers substance use treatment. When making an appointment with a service provider or clinic, check that they accept your insurance.

Even if you do not yet have insurance, there are affordable clinics and programs that you can go to for help. Look for "sliding scale" services where you pay reduced fees depending on your income.



## Finding a Peer Support Group

If you are struggling with drug or alcohol use, join a support group to get help and encouragement from others. These groups are usually free.

In *Becoming Ms. Burton*, Susan Burton describes how her first Alcoholics Anonymous group meeting gave her hope:

People stood up and shared their stories... I rose, took a deep breath. "Look what drugs and alcohol have done to me," I said, my voice quivering. My hands were shaking so much the styrofoam cup of coffee I held was wasting on me. But no one seemed to judge my piteous condition. The immediate compassion, the empathy, the love that rolled off these strangers was enough to put a sizable dent in my pain, my shame, my guilt, and all that sorrow. In that room, I found hope.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are the largest peer recovery organizations and have chapters throughout the country. Visit [aa.org](https://aa.org) or [na.org](https://na.org) to find a meeting or online group. AA and NA use a religious approach, though they are not tied to a specific religion. Their 12-step process begins by asking members to admit that they no longer have control over their drug or alcohol use. Members are asked to turn themselves over to a higher power to find the strength to change.

There are non-religious support group options, too. These options focus on helping people find motivation within themselves. People learn to control themselves instead of looking to a higher power for help. Here are a few popular options, with in person and online meetings throughout the US:

- **Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART)** peer support groups help participants resolve problems with any addiction. Go to [smartrecovery.org](https://smartrecovery.org) or call 440-951-5357 to find a meeting or online community.
- **Women for Sobriety** is a peer-support program for women overcoming substance use disorders. Go to [womenforsobriety.org](https://womenforsobriety.org) or call 215-536-8026 to find an in-person or online meeting.
- **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** is a network of peer groups to help people maintain sobriety/abstinence from alcohol and drug addictions, food addiction and more. Go to [sossobriety.org](https://sossobriety.org) or call 314-353-3532 to find a meeting.

- **LifeRing Secular Recovery** is an organization of people who share practical experiences and sobriety support. They focus on empowering you to overcome your addiction. Go to <https://lifering.org/> or call 800-811-4142 to find a meeting.

Ask your primary care provider for recommendations. Many community centers and churches also sponsor support groups or can direct you to others.

Approach your first meeting with an open mind and try to find out all you can. You may need to attend several meetings before you feel things are "clicking." If you don't feel you have found "your" group, keep trying. Chapters can be very different, and members come and go. Look for:

- Regularly scheduled meetings
- Warmth and friendliness
- Some focus and structure to meetings
- Some time to mingle informally





## Reflect

1. What treatment (medication, therapy, peer support group) have you tried in the past?
2. How have these treatments helped you? What worked and what didn't work?
3. What kinds of treatment would you like to try?
4. Where can you go for help?



## The Road to Recovery

The road to recovery can be a long one. Don't be too discouraged if you relapse. A relapse doesn't always mean that the treatment isn't working. Give it another chance. Recognize that if you stopped using once, you can again. You have developed skills that will help you next time. Ask if there is a different treatment that may work better for you. Sometimes multiple periods of treatment are needed.

Recovery isn't just about stopping using. It's about change. It's about improving your overall health and wellness. It's about living up to your full potential. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) lists four main aspects of recovery:

1. **Health:** Overcome or manage one's disease or symptoms
2. **Home:** Find a stable and safe place to live
3. **Purpose:** Take part in meaningful daily activities (job, school, family caretaking, etc.)
4. **Community:** Build relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope



## Reflect

1. What does recovery look like to you?
2. Where are you on your road towards recovery?
3. What are some good short term goals you can work towards?

# Transportation

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How are you going to get around? Transportation is important for your job, for spending time with friends and family, and for living a meaningful life. Unfortunately, it can cost a lot.

If you return to a large city, you'll have many transportation options. In small towns, your only choice might be a car. Below we discuss the options you might have so that you can decide what will work best for you.

This chapter covers:

- Transportation options (buses, trains, taxis, bikes, cars, and more)
  - Buying a car
  - Driving legally
- 



## Transportation Options

### Buses and Metro

Save money by using public transportation. If you use the bus or metro often, you can buy a pass for a month or a year. This will make the cost of each ride cheaper. Students, older people, veterans, or persons with disabilities can get discounts. Here are a few ways to get started:

- Do a google search for "public transportation" with the name of your city. Many systems have route maps and discount programs for riders.
- Visit the website [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps). Enter where you plan to start your trip and where you'll end. The website will give step by step instructions of what public transportation you can use.

### Trains and Long-Distance Buses

Here are a few good options for longer trips:

- Amtrak. It has service around the country. Go to [amtrak.com](http://amtrak.com) for more information.
- Greyhound, BoltBus, and MegaBus are a few long-distance bus companies.

It is always a good idea to compare prices between trains, planes, and buses, as well as between bus companies.

### Ride-hailing Apps and Taxis

If you have a smartphone and a credit or debit card, you can get a ride-hailing app like Uber or Lyft. They can take you on short trips in your city. Ride-hailing services are just like taxis, but the drivers use their own cars. Before you ride, read these tips on how to be safe at [uber.com/us/en/ride/safety/tips](http://uber.com/us/en/ride/safety/tips)

You can use taxis in all major cities. They usually cost more than ride-hailing apps.

### Biking

Biking is a good way to save money and exercise while you get to places. In some cities you can rent bikes. In other places, look for second-hand bike stores. If you bike, make sure you know the rules of the road. Usually, bicycles follow the same rules as cars. They have to stop at stop signs and stop lights. You must use hand signals to turn or switch lanes. And you must yield to pedestrians. Wear a helmet for safety.

# Carpool, Rideshare, and Carshare Programs

Another option for saving money is to carpool. You can look up carpool programs online (see [pacerideshare.com](http://pacerideshare.com)) to carpool with strangers. Or you can ask someone you know if you can carpool and share the cost of gas.

If you don't need a car very often, join a carsharing program like Zipcar. Zipcar lets you reserve a car when you need it. You won't have to pay for insurance, repairs, or any of the things that make owning a car so expensive.



## Buying a Car

If you do buy a car, buy one you can afford. Don't buy a fancy, expensive car unless you can afford it. Instead, buy a less expensive used car. A few tips:

1. **Budget.** If you are taking out a loan to buy a car, make a budget. Decide how much you can spend on monthly payments. See the "Finances, Credit, and Taxes" for more information on buying with credit and budgeting.
2. **Research.** Do some research on the types of cars that will meet your needs. Think about what will be safe and reliable. [Edmunds.com](http://Edmunds.com) and [Consumerreports.org](http://Consumerreports.org) are great places to start. You can look at how much the cars are worth by going to Kelley's Blue Book ([kbb.com](http://kbb.com)).
3. **Buy from a place you can trust.** Don't go to car dealerships that say they sell to people with bad credit. Be suspicious of companies or people who push you into buying a vehicle before you are ready. Buying from a person can be cheaper, but it is also riskier than buying from a trustworthy dealer.
4. **Check out the history.** Once you've found a car you like, ask the dealer if you can see its history report. Ask for the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). You can check a car's history online at websites like [autotrader.com](http://autotrader.com).
5. **Mechanic.** If you are buying from a dealer, make sure that the car passes a mechanical evaluation. If you are buying from a person, ask a mechanic to look at it before you buy it.
6. **Negotiate the price.** Check prices on cars like yours and go to more than one place to compare cars. This can help you negotiate a good deal.
7. **Read the fine print.** Understand the contract before you sign anything. Remember, what counts is what is in the contract, not what the salesperson promised. Make sure that you fill out all of the paperwork you need, especially if you are buying from an individual owner.
8. **Title and registration.** Make sure to get the title and registration before you give them any money.



## Driving Legally

### Car Insurance

In many states you must have car insurance and a driver's license to drive. If you are pulled over and you don't have insurance, you may have to pay a fine. You can also get charged.

When you have car insurance, you pay a monthly fee, and then the insurance covers some of the costs if you get in an accident. Check if your state requires both types of insurance outlined below.

- Liability insurance: This covers the costs if you cause an accident.
- Uninsured and underinsured motorist insurance: This covers costs for you and your passengers if you get in an accident with someone who doesn't have insurance, or not enough insurance.

Some insurance plans cover most or all of the costs if you are in an accident. Some do not. Some have different costs if you caused the accident or if someone else did. If you get in an accident, you may have to pay more money each month for insurance.

Buying insurance can be confusing. Here are a few tips:

- Talk to an agent by phone or in person. Don't sign up online.
- Find out what the maximum amount of coverage is for the plan. This is the amount they will pay if you hit a car, compared to the amount you have to pay.
- Your state's DMV website may provide more information on insurance and prices.

## Car Registration

In many states you have to register your car. You will have to renew this registration every year, for a fee. If you don't register your car or renew it you can get a big ticket. You may be able to register your car online, or you may have to go to your local DMV. Check their website to find out what you need to bring.

## Car Inspection

Your car also may need to get inspected for emissions and safety. Not all cars need to be inspected in all states. To find out if your car needs inspections, check with your Secretary of State. Some states allow you to check online by typing in your vehicle VIN (Vehicle Identification Number).

## Rules of the Road

Be safe when you drive! We care about you! Don't drink alcohol. Don't text or use your phone while driving. Pull over to make a call. Wear your seatbelt; it reduces your chance of death in the event of a serious accident by 50%!



## Reflect

1. What transportation options do I have right now?
2. What do I need to do to prepare to get a car?



# Technology

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Technology has changed a lot in the last few years. If you have been inside a long time, you might feel stressed by all the new technology. Don't worry! You'll be able to figure it out.

You will need phones and computers for a lot of things after you leave prison. You will use them for work, banking, communicating with family, making appointments, meeting with parole officers, ordering pizza, watching TV shows, paying bills, shopping, applying for jobs, and much more.

Ask your family and friends to help you learn how to use a cellphone, smartphone, or computer. Learning how to use them can be fun! Play around with games, news, sports or even watch cat videos! Playing can help you learn to use them. Take your time and get used to the technology that you use—soon it will feel like second nature.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Getting a phone
- Technology basics
- Using the internet
- Email accounts, passwords, and security
- Smartphone apps
- Social media
- Video conferencing



## Getting a Phone

We recommend getting a phone when you get out. You will need a phone to keep in contact with family, friends, your employer, and your parole officer. There are three types of phones:

- **Basic cell phones** let you call people and send text messages. They are inexpensive and easy to use.
- **Smartphones** can make calls and send text messages, and they can also get on the internet (more about the internet below). Smartphones have programs (called "apps") that can do things like play music, give driving directions, check the weather, take pictures, and go on social networks like Twitter and Facebook. A smartphone can help you find jobs, look up services, find your way around, and more.
- **Landline phones** are phones connected to people's homes or businesses. They can't move around. Fewer people are using landline phones these days, but they are still one of the cheapest kinds of phone.

## Lifeline and SafeLink

Do you have Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, or Public Housing Assistance? If you do, you should also be able to get a free or discounted phone or internet. SafeLink will provide you with one of these for free:

- Smartphone
- SIM card. If you buy your own phone, they will give you a SIM card to put in it. A SIM card lets your phone connect to their mobile network.
- Phone plan. A phone plan lets you text, make calls and use data. Their basic phone plan limits how much you can do, but you can add more for a fee.

Lifeline is a program that works with SafeLink to lower the monthly cost of phone and internet. If you qualify, you can get up to \$9.25 toward your bill. Lifeline can be used for phone or internet, but not both.

**How to apply.** When you apply for public benefits (such as SNAP or Medicaid), ask if you can apply for SafeLink and Lifeline as well. Ask a friend, family member, case manager, or counselor to help you apply for SafeLink at [safelinkwireless.com](http://safelinkwireless.com). You can also get help by calling (800) 723-3546. You can apply for Lifeline at [lifelinesupport.org](http://lifelinesupport.org). To apply for these services, you will need your contact info, mailing/home address and Social Security number. You will also need proof that you meet the income requirements. These services are typically limited to one person per household.

You can find SafeLink phones and service plans at many stores around the state, including Walgreens, CVS, Family Dollar, and Schnucks.

## Phone Services and Plans

What if you need to buy your own phone? EJP graduates have suggested MetroPCS and Family Mobile (Walmart) as good, cheaper choices. They aren't the best phones, but they won't be too expensive. If you had a cellphone before you were incarcerated, ask your family if they still have the phone. It might still work, and you may want to use it again or change the number. Contact the phone service provider for help with this.

Cellphones come with service plans that you have to pay every month. You have two basic options for service plans:

- **Prepaid phone plans or no-contract plans.** You pay at the start of each month. You can stop your service at the end of each month or switch to a different service.

- **Post-paid phone plan with a contract.** You enter a contract to pay a monthly fee for service. They add up your costs at the end of each billing cycle and charge you.

Phone plans have different options. Generally, the services will cover the following:

- **Talk:** How many minutes you can talk on the phone each month. Many plans these days have unlimited talk time.
- **Text:** How many text messages you can send each month. Many plans these days have unlimited text.
- **Data:** Data lets your phone go on the internet when you don't have access to Wi-Fi (see Technology Basics below). If you only need a phone for calls, you may not need to purchase a data plan. You can use the internet on your phone for free at the library and many other public places and restaurants. If you do need data, start with a small amount, like 1 or 2 GB. You can always get more if you need it.

Phone service companies like T-Mobile and MetroPCS have different plans and rates. Some offer deals for sharing a cell phone plan with family members. Think about what you will use your phone for and how much you can afford to spend on it. Some phone or internet service providers may also offer discounts.



## Technology Basics

Here are some technology basics to help you get started.

**Internet or world wide web:** A network that connects computers and phones all over the world. Through an internet connection, people can share information, access resources, and communicate. Sometimes people call the internet the world wide web, or they will say, "you need web access," which means you need to be able to connect to the internet.

**Online:** When you are "online" you are connected to the internet. People might say, "Get online to access this resource." This means that you can access the resource on a computer or smartphone through the internet.

**Smartphone:** a phone that does a lot of the things a computer can do. It usually has a touchscreen surface, internet access, and you can download **applications (apps)**. Apps have different tools to help with work, entertainment, money and more. Most people these days have a smartphone.



**Wi-Fi:** To access the internet, you need to be connected to it. One way to do that is through Wi-Fi access. Wi-Fi access allows you to connect to the internet without using wires. You can access Wi-Fi for free at public libraries and some restaurants (McDonalds, Starbucks), or you can buy Wi-Fi access for your home.

**Data:** Another way to connect to the internet is through a smartphone data plan. Data allows you to connect to the internet on your smartphone if you are in a place that doesn't have Wi-Fi. Data plans can be expensive, and they usually have limits to how much data you can use every month.

**Web browser:** A web browser is a program that allows you to access the internet on your phone or computer. Examples of web browsers are Google Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari.

**Search engine.** A search engine is what you use when you are trying to find information on the internet. First, you will open a web browser. You should see a bar at the top with a little magnifying glass. This is how you can use the search engine. You can type a question or web address into the bar, and it will search for the information you need. Google, Yahoo, and Bing are examples of search engines.

**Website:** All types of organizations have "websites" where you can find information, resources, entertainment and more. There are millions of websites on the internet of all different types.

**Web address or URL:** This is the "address" or location of the website or resource on the internet. You type this address into the search engine bar to go to the website or resource. We have included many web addresses to websites in this guide and in the directory. Web addresses usually look like this: <http://www.examplewebsite.com>. When you type in a web address, you can leave out the `http://` or `www`.



*I need assistance with the most basic things. That does make me somewhat defensive, and I'll end up trying to do things on my own and then I crash and burn.*

— Pablo



## Using the Internet

Make sure you have a way to get on the internet when you need to. Until you have your own device, you can borrow one from a family member or use a computer at the public library.

Do you have a smartphone, laptop, or tablet? Free wireless internet is available at the library, as well as many restaurants, coffee shops, hotel lobbies, chain technology stores, and even parks! You may have to ask what the password is before you can log on with your device.

Most things on the internet are found using a search engine like Google. Open up a web browser such as Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, or Safari. The home page will have a search box where you can type in what you are looking for. Here are some tips for good searches:

- Start with the basics. Start with a simple search like "Where's the closest Amtrak?" or "Pizza in Chicago." You can always add more words if you need.
- Don't worry about the little things. Even if you spell things wrong, it should still work.

### Getting Help

- Ask a librarian to help you figure out the basics. They are there to help.
- Go to **Northstar** at [digitalliteracyassessment.org](http://digitalliteracyassessment.org) to test your skills and learn more. You can access classes online or find a Northstar location where you can attend classes. They offer certificates for skills you have mastered.
- GCF global has a lot of free courses on how to use technology. Type this address in your search engine and click on a topic: <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/topics/>
- Wikihow also has lots of resources to help you figure out how to use technology. Type "wikihow" in your web browser, and then enter your question in the search box at the top of the page.
- Many community colleges, libraries, and adult basic education programs offer lessons on everything from basic word processing to programming code.



## Email, Passwords and Security

You will need your own email address. Email is now used more than paper mail. One way to do this is through Gmail, because Gmail accounts are free. Type [gmail.com](http://gmail.com) into the web browser and click "Create account."

You will select your own email username. It should be something easy for you to remember, like your own name, or some combination of your name, initials, and numbers. You will probably use your email to apply for jobs, so make sure your email address is professional.

Your password should also be something easy for you to remember, but hard for other people to figure out.

You will probably use the internet to set up accounts for things like paying bills or accessing files for school

or work. Protect your information by keeping your password secret and changing it every so often. Don't use the same password for every account you have. If you forget a password, you can usually change it by following instructions on the website. If you had email and other online accounts before you were incarcerated, you may want to reactivate them or close them. Change the passwords to keep everything safe.



If possible, do not put in sensitive personal information (like your Social Security Number or credit card information) at a public computer or over public internet.



## Smartphone Apps

Most smartphones come with these basic apps:

- Text messaging
- App to make phone calls
- A camera
- A clock
- A map service
- A browser (for example, Safari or Chrome)
- A calendar
- A calculator
- An address book

You can also download more apps. They can be found in your phone's 'store' (the app store or play store). Many useful apps are free. You will need to have either data or a Wi-Fi connection to download apps. You may have to enter your phone's password to buy it. It should show up on your home screen in just a few minutes. If an app costs money, your phone should give you the option to enter your credit or debit card information and will ask you to confirm the purchase before downloading.

Here are some apps you may want to use:

- Facebook Messenger is a text or video messaging app where you can communicate with family and friends.
- Facebook, Instagram and Twitter let you share and view photos and comments
- Spotify lets you listen to music. It will shuffle the music and also play advertisements, like a radio
- Banking apps help you manage your money and pay bills

- Transportation apps, like Citymapper, can help you use public transportation or find your way around.
- Many parole officers use the **BI SmartLink App**. With this app your Parole Officer can connect with you without having to come to your house. See our Parole chapter for more information.

Be careful with apps. Use careful judgment about what you'd like to keep private. Be aware that apps can use up your phone data.



## Social Media

Many people stay in touch with others and get news through social media. Social media are websites that allow people to talk and share photos. Some social media sites are used mostly for friends and family while others are used for jobs. Here are two popular social media platforms:

- **f Facebook** is the most popular social media company in the US. People use this site to share photos, updates, and articles. It helps people stay in touch with family and friends; others use it for work. You can comment publicly on posts created by others or message users individually. You can also join Facebook groups to meet other people and get support. Signing up for Facebook is free. To sign up, type [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) into the search bar and click "Create Account."

- **in LinkedIn** is a social network created for finding jobs. You can use it to talk with employers and share your resume. To create an account, type [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com) into your web browser and click "Join Now." Search "How to Create a LinkedIn Account Wikihow" to learn more.

## Staying Safe on Social Media

Be careful when sharing information on Facebook or other social media apps. You can change the privacy settings so that only your friends see your posts. Public posts can be accessed by parole officers and employers. Social media sites track what you do and they can use that to try to sell you things. Remember, the information that you see on social media may not be trustworthy. It's a good idea to check with other sources.



## Video Conferencing

Many people use video conferencing to talk to family, friends, and co-workers. With video conferencing, you can talk to multiple people at the same time and see people's faces. Video conferencing apps can be a great way to stay connected to family members and friends. Lots of meetings these days aren't in person; instead, they use video conferencing. Many job interviews also use video conferencing.

Here are a few video conferencing options:

- Facetime
- Google Chat
- Skype
- Zoom

If you have a computer or phone you can download an app for these video conferencing services. Some are free.

In most cases, you will be a guest in a video conferencing meeting. This means you will get an invitation to your email with the link that says "Click to Join." When the webpage opens, you may join via the app or your web browser. There may also be an option to call in with your phone.

#### Video conferencing etiquette tips:

- If you are in a group, mute yourself when you're not talking (click on the microphone).
- Be aware of your backdrop. It's nice to turn your camera on so people can see you, but you can also turn your camera off (click on the camera icon) or use a virtual backdrop if you don't want people to see you or your living space.



## Reflect

1. What technologies do I know how to use?
2. What do I need help with?
3. Where can I go for help?





# Legal Matters

After you are released, there may be times when you need to go to court or get legal help. For example, you might want to get your record sealed so you can get a better job. Maybe you want to get back custody of a child.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Getting legal help
- Child custody
- Child support
- Fees and fines
- Sealing records
- Certificates of rehabilitation
- Executive clemency

☆ Please note that we are not lawyers and do not provide legal advice. We try our best to help you understand your legal options. Ask a lawyer if you need more help.

## Getting Legal Help

**Pro bono.** Figuring out the courts can be frustrating. It is best to get the help of a lawyer. Lawyers understand the rules and know how local judges and courtrooms work. Lawyers are often expensive, but there are lawyers who will work on your case for free (pro bono). These services are available through legal aid programs.

Some cases can be handled without lawyers. These are called pro se cases. Things like sealing criminal records, family law, and small claims matters often don't use lawyers. This is cheaper, but it is almost always better to hire a lawyer or find one who will work for free.

**Pro se help desks.** If you decide to file pro se, most counties offer pro se help desks. The service is free. There are workers who can help you with pro se forms, courthouse directions, and legal consultations. Call your county circuit clerk's office for information.

## Child Custody

Child custody responsibilities vary by state. In general, they involve:

- **Parental Responsibilities:** If you have Parental Responsibilities it means you can make choices about your child's future. For example, where they go to school.
- **Parenting Time:** If you have Parenting Time it means you can spend time with your child. The court will decide how much time they will spend with you. Even if you don't have Parental Responsibilities you can still have a good amount of Parenting Time.

Custody can be complicated. Many people hire a lawyer to help them. If you choose not to have a lawyer you will

need to file a petition to modify custody. Petitions can be found online, or by visiting your county's circuit clerk office. There will usually be a fee. Once your petition is filed and read, a hearing should be set to change custody.

## Foster Care and Reinstating Parental Rights

What if your child is in foster care or with a relative? What if your parental rights have been terminated? You may still be able to get your rights restored. The first step is understanding how the process works. The second step is understanding where you are in your own case.

After your case has started, your child may be removed from your home. If this happens, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) (or similar authority in your state) will try to place your child with family members, or people who act like family members. DCFS may not know of all your family members, so let them know if there is someone they don't know about.

You will need a lawyer if your child is taken by DCFS. Let the judge in your case know you can't afford a lawyer. The judge will assign one to you.

DCFS has to try to help you get your child back. They will give you a list of things you need to do for your child to come home. This list may include:

- Parenting classes
- Counseling
- Continuing education
- Anger management
- Drug or alcohol classes
- Minor changes to your home

You will have to show the judge and DCFS that you are making "reasonable efforts" and "reasonable progress" to finish everything on the list.

It is very difficult to show you are making reasonable efforts while incarcerated, but it is not impossible. It is important to try to do the things on your DCFS list as well as you can. Try to keep records of this for your lawyer.

Once you leave prison, you can work to finish your list. DCFS does have to fairly let you complete their list. But the judge is the one who decides whether you get your child back.

If your child is out of your care for a certain amount of time (15 months in Illinois), the judge can terminate your parental rights. This means you would not legally be your child's parent anymore.

If you no longer have parental rights, it is possible to get them back. But it may be hard. You can file something called a motion to reinstate your rights. You can hire a lawyer to do this or do it yourself.

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## Child Support

If you don't live with your child, you may need to pay child support. Child support is money that you pay to the person who is taking care of your child. Child support lasts until children turn 18, or 19 if they are still in high school. You will pay a certain amount of your income in child support. The amount you pay depends on how many children you have. A judge may order you to pay for other things too, like healthcare, child care, or school costs.

### Reducing Payments

It is very important to pay your child support. If you don't pay, you might have money taken out of your paycheck. You may be able to get your payments lowered, if you:

- Are suddenly making less money
- Are incarcerated
- Have large healthcare costs

If one of these things happens to you, you need to let the court know as soon as you can. You'll need to file a petition with the court. You can hire a lawyer to do this or do it yourself. Once you file the petition you'll probably need to go to court to talk about your case.

If a court has ordered a suspension of your driver's license for failure to pay child support, it is important to petition to reduce that payment. Many judges allow you to make payments according to your income. They will remove the suspension as long as you are doing so.

### Getting Payments You are Owed

Are you getting child support? If your child care expenses have gone up, you can ask for more child support from your child's other parent. Child care expense changes include things like:

- Medical bills for the child
- New education expenses
- A big change in your household's cost of living
- If the other parent is making a lot more money recently you can also ask for more

If you are not getting the child support payments you believe you are owed, contact your state's child support enforcement office.

# Fees and Fines

There are many different fees and fines you may have to pay. You might have court fees or fines, like:

- Traffic tickets
- DUI fees
- Payments to the victims of the crime you were convicted of
- Other fines related to the crime
- Fines and debt for failing to pay child support
- Parole or probation fines, such as fees for anger management or parenting classes, and fees for any required registration

Even small fees can make it hard to get back on your feet. Still, it's important to plan for how you will pay them. Not paying your fees or fines can get you in more trouble.

- Officials can hold those fees against you if you return to jail.
- Sometimes people are returned to jail for not paying fees, especially if they "willfully" do not pay them.
- Sometimes fees have a high interest rate, meaning the amount you owe will get larger the longer you wait to pay.



*It's hard to make a decision between paying fines and staying out of jail, or paying bills and having somewhere to live.*

—Anonymous

But there is good news. There are programs that can help you with your fees.

**Waivers for court fees.** In some states, there is a waiver program for court costs for people who live significantly below the poverty level. Check with your state to see if a waiver program exists.

**Removal of past child support debt.** Check in your state to see if this is an option. In Illinois, for instance, the Clean Slate program removes your child support debt if you agree to pay regular child support payments moving forward.

# Expunging or Sealing Records

Sealing your record means employers can't ask about your record. This could make it easier to find a job. Ask your parole officer or reentry organization to see if this is an option for you. You may be able to get your record sealed once you are off of parole, depending on the charge. Some states even have automatic record clearing for certain convictions or infractions.

Sometimes it is also possible to get a record expunged. An expunged record is erased. This means nobody can see it anymore. This usually only happens if your charges were dismissed.

# Certificates of Rehabilitation

These are official documents that can restore rights you lost because of your conviction, for example, the right to earn an occupational license or serve on a jury. Certificates of rehabilitation allow you to apply for jobs that require licenses issued by the state. These jobs include ones in child care, education, and transit.

Check to see if your state offers Certificates of Rehabilitation and what the requirements are.

# Executive Clemency

Another way to attempt to remove barriers in your way after incarceration may be to petition the governor for executive clemency, or a pardon. You will need to explain why you are seeking a pardon, including opportunities that were denied to you because of your criminal record. You can also submit character reference letters from friends and family and former teachers and employers. You will likely have the right to a hearing but we can't say what's true in your particular state. Do your research. Many people chose to hire a lawyer to represent them as they file for executive clemency.





# Finances, Credit, and Taxes

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Thinking about money can be stressful. Take small steps toward managing your money, especially if you're doing it on your own for the first time. Making smart decisions about your money can help have control over your life. Having control over your finances will help you avoid money troubles in the long run and feel more secure about the future.

In this section, we cover banking basics and how to open a banking account. Then we address budgeting, financial planning, and credit. At the end of this section, we go over filing taxes.

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## Banking

It's a good idea to open a bank account so that you have a safe place to put your money. A bank account also helps you avoid the fees that come with check cashing and money transfer services.

There are two basic types of bank accounts: checking and savings accounts. A **checking account** keeps your money safe. It also gives you easy access to your money so you can buy things and pay bills. When you open a checking account, you get checks and a debit card. You can use these to buy things, pay bills, or get cash from your account using ATMs. Some checking accounts have monthly fees while others do not, so make sure you ask about fees.

Once you have some money saved, it's a good idea to open a **savings account**. A savings account allows you to earn interest on your money. This means that if you leave the money in your savings account, it grows over time (usually at a very slow pace). You cannot write checks from a savings account, but some savings accounts will allow you to access your money through an ATM.

There are many good reasons to have a bank account:

- Putting your paychecks in a bank account is cheaper than paying fees for check cashing services.
- Some employers put your earnings directly in your account.
- A debit card means you don't have to carry lots of cash.

- Many banks offer free access to online banking services, which you can use to keep track of your money, pay bills automatically, and transfer money between accounts.
- Apps like Venmo let you transfer and receive money without any fees. You can get Venmo on your phone and use it if you have a bank account.
- You can work with banks to get car or mortgage loans, develop a retirement investment plan, and invest in stocks.

You don't have to be a U.S. citizen or have a Social Security number to open a bank account. You can open an account using the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) assigned to you by the IRS, regardless of immigration status. Visit [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) for more information about ITINs.

## Choosing a Bank

Banks and credit unions offer different products to choose from, like checking and savings accounts, loans, rewards programs, and credit cards. Before choosing a bank, think about what you need. When you first go to the bank, ask to speak to someone who can help you understand their services and how they can meet your needs.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Will you travel a lot for work, fun, or visiting family? You may want to choose a bank that has many branches and ATM locations. Online banks are also an option.
- What fees does the bank have? Some fees might be an overdraft fee (when you take out more money than you have), fees for closing accounts, fees for foreign transactions, and monthly maintenance fees.
- Has a bank ever shut down your checking account? If so, banks might reject your account application. Don't worry though, because some banks offer second chance checking accounts. Call and ask smaller local banks and credit unions about their account policies. Smaller companies tend to be more open to people who have had financial trouble.
- Is your bank or credit union backed by the government? If it is, that means that if the bank closes or has other problems, your money is protected. Make sure your bank is a member of the FDIC or NCUA.
- Does your employer, school, or community have a credit union? Credit unions are better in some ways than banks. See the chart on the following page comparing banks and credit unions.
- Are you a veteran? If so, you qualify for a USAA account. USAA members and their families can often get good rates on loans. Visit [usaa.com](http://usaa.com) for more information.
- Do you have bad credit? Many banks use a database called ChexSystems to check your bank customer history, but they don't always pull your credit report when you apply. Ask them what their policies are.

	<b>Banks</b>	<b>Credit Unions</b>
<b>Pros</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to open an account.</li> <li>• Many branches and ATM locations.</li> <li>• More options for types of accounts, loans, and credit cards.</li> <li>• Online banking and services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credit Unions are non-for-profit institutions. They are owned by their members.</li> <li>• Because credit unions are smaller companies, they have better customer service.</li> <li>• Higher interest on savings accounts.</li> <li>• Lower rates for loans.</li> <li>• More flexibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Cons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have more restrictions or are less flexible when you make errors.</li> <li>• Higher interest rates on loans and credit cards.</li> <li>• Banks are owned by investors who may not act in the interests of the bank's customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership is more exclusive in credit unions than banks.</li> <li>• Fewer locations.</li> <li>• Fewer product options.</li> <li>• Poorer online services.</li> </ul>



## Using Bank Cards for Purchases

If you've been in prison for a long time, buying things at the store may look very different. Perhaps you carried around cash in the past or wrote paper checks. Most people these days use debit cards or credit cards rather than paying with cash.

Here are some card options:

- Debit cards look just like credit cards, but are different. Most debit cards are linked to a checking account, and you can only spend money that you have in your account. Debit cards can be used anywhere that you use a credit card. You can also use your debit card to get money from an ATM.

- With prepaid debit cards, you can load money onto the card when you get it, then use it to make purchases. Prepaid debit cards are often used by people who can't get a bank account. You might use one if you haven't been able to get your ID yet. Bluebird by American Express and Chime are prepaid debit cards with no monthly fee.
- Your EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card for food stamps and/or cash benefits. Many states offer cards that you can use just like a debit card at stores that accept EBT.
- With a credit card, you are borrowing money and will need to pay it back. We talk more about credit cards in the next section.
- There are also gift cards where people can put money on the card and then give it to someone to use like a debit card. Some cards--like a Visa Gift Card--can be used at any store, while other gift cards only work for specific stores.

For debit cards you will need to make a 4-digit PIN number, which is like a password. Before you use your card, make sure you have your PIN number set up. Usually, there is a number on the back of the card that you can call to set up the PIN number. When using a debit card or EBT card, make sure you know how much money you have. If you don't have enough money your card may not work



It can be embarrassing if you don't know how to use a card. Here's a brief guide (summarized from Wikihow) about what to expect when you check out at a store.

1. After the cashier scans your things, they will ask you to pay.
2. There will likely be a card reader on the counter. Card readers look a little bit like calculators. They usually have a screen with instructions to follow.
3. The screen on the card reader may ask if you agree to pay the amount on the screen. You may have to press "enter" or "yes" to continue.
4. Next, the screen may ask you to swipe your card. Other times, the cashier will let you know when the machine is ready for you to swipe your card.
5. For some card readers you'll swipe your card on the right side (black stripe facing down and to your right). For others you'll stick the card in the bottom of the machine (stripe facing down) and leave it there until the screen lets you know that you can take it out. Don't worry if you don't get it right the first time. Turn the card around and try again. Lots of people make mistakes and have to swipe their cards a few times or get help from a cashier.
6. The card reader may ask whether you want to pay by "debit" or "credit." If you hit debit, it may ask you to enter your 4-digit PIN number. Once the screen says "Approved" you should get a receipt. You can take your items and your receipt and leave.
7. Some debit cards allow you to get cash back with your purchase. The card reader screen will ask if you want cash, and you will enter the dollar amount you would like. The cashier will then give you the cash. The amount will come out of your bank account.

8. If you are using a credit card, you may be asked to sign a paper receipt or sign the screen with a special pen that is attached to the card reader. It will ask you to press "enter" or "accept" when you are finished. Once you have finished signing and get your receipt, you should be ready to go.

Learn more about how to use a debit card here: [wikihow.life/Use-a-Debit-Card](http://www.wikihow.com/Use-a-Debit-Card)

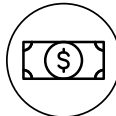
Learn about how to use an ATM here: [wikihow.com/Use-an-ATM](http://www.wikihow.com/Use-an-ATM)

**Remember:** It's OK to ask for help! Lots of people have problems using their cards. The cashiers are there to help you.



*The first time I went to the store by myself, I got up to the front of the line and didn't know how to pay for my groceries. I saw this contraption for a card that looked real complicated and didn't know how to use it. A long line of people were behind me and getting restless when I was just standing there looking dumbfounded. I didn't want to tell anyone I had been locked up and didn't know how to use a link or debit card. I was embarrassed and panicked!*

—Michael



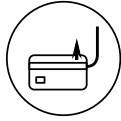
## Financial Resources

One of the easiest things you can do to manage your money is to make a budget. Budgeting can help you know where your money is going so you do not spend more than you make. There are thousands of different budget forms you can download online for free. Or you can make your own. To make your own, add up how much money you make every month. Then, make a list of everything you spend money on in a month and compare the two numbers.

You can find information online about banks, credit unions, account options, and strategies for saving your money. Some financial planning websites have a "chat" where you can ask an advisor a question and get an answer right away. Here are some resources for help with money:

- [Learnvest.com](http://www.learnvest.com) and [Mint.com](http://www.mint.com): financial planning.
- [TheSimpleDollar.com](http://www.thesimpledollar.com): understanding money and budgeting.
- [Nerdwallet.com](http://www.nerdwallet.com): budgeting, banking, credit, financial planning, investments, mortgages, car and health insurance.
- [Annuity.org](http://www.annuity.org): budgeting, personal finance, credit and more. Two resources that may be especially helpful are: [annuity.org/financial-literacy](http://www.annuity.org/financial-literacy) and [annuity.org/annuities/types/income](http://www.annuity.org/annuities/types/income)
- Business Insider Magazine has a list of some top-rated money advice websites: [businessinsider.com/best-websites-money-advice-2014-12](http://www.businessinsider.com/best-websites-money-advice-2014-12)

☆ Please remember that we are not saying you must use any of these websites or services. The resources listed here are suggestions. It is important to think on your own about any advice you are given. They may be free, but may not always be exactly what you are looking for. Feel free to do your own looking online.



## Avoiding Scams

You don't want to become a victim of a scam. Visit this website for a list of common scams and their warning signs: [fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes](https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes).

New types of scams are going on now during the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit these website for information on some of the scams to look out for:

- [fbi.gov/news/stories/protect-yourself-from-covid-19-scams-040620](https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/protect-yourself-from-covid-19-scams-040620)
- [fbi.gov/coronavirus](https://www.fbi.gov/coronavirus)

### Here are a few scams to avoid:

Be suspicious of emails or calls that offer you lots of money or "free gifts" if you pay a small fee. If the reward sounds too good to be true, avoid it.

Beware of companies that try to push you into signing up for something immediately. Only sign up for services you understand. You can always ask them for more information if you are confused.

Only give personal information (such as account numbers and Social Security numbers) to companies you know to be trustworthy.

Never pay for a letter of credit.



## Credit

You may be considering getting a credit card so that you can buy things with credit. Buying on credit means that you buy things now and pay for them later. A bank loans you the money, and you agree to repay the bank later. Usually, this means that you buy something with your credit card, and then you make monthly payments to the bank until the loan is repaid.

Keep in mind that when you buy with credit, you have to pay interest. Interest is a fee to the bank for borrowing the money. Interest rates can be very high. Think hard before you get any credit card, and make sure you do not sign up for too many. The more cards you have, the more payments you will have to make. Also, too many credit cards will have a negative effect on your credit. Credit card companies make money when people get deeper and deeper into debt. You do not want to be that customer!

A credit counselor at a nonprofit organization can give you good advice about getting a credit card. One example is [credit.org](https://www.credit.org), which offers free telephone counseling sessions.

Sometimes, credit cards can lead to a lot of trouble. If you buy too much with credit cards, it can be hard to pay your monthly payments. A service like [credit.org](https://www.credit.org) can help you figure things out if you get overwhelmed. A good practice is to only buy things with your credit card that you can pay back within a month.

For some big purchases, such as buying a car, a house, or paying for college tuition, buying on credit makes a lot of sense. You may be unable to pay for a car all at once, but the cost becomes easier if you can spread it out over many months. Make sure to choose a car that is affordable so that you can manage the monthly payments. Try to get an interest rate that is as low as possible. Again, be cautious and talk to a credit counselor before going into debt.

If you decide to get a credit card or buy something using credit, your bank will look at your credit score first. A credit score is a number that tells them whether they think you will repay a loan. If you have a good credit score, it will be easier to get loans and lower interest rates. If you were in debt before you went to prison, you will need to take steps to improve your credit score. Credit scores range from 300 (bad credit) to 850 (excellent credit).

Here are some guidelines for managing credit:

Get educated. Being uninformed can lead to costly mistakes. For a good primer on your credit score, check out this website: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/credit-reports-and-scores/>

**Be smart.** Avoid businesses (such as car dealerships and payday loan offices) that advertise directly to people with bad credit. They often have extremely high interest rates. They are counting on your not being able to pay your debts. Do not support any company whose business model depends on your lack of money.

**Be cautious.** Read the fine print carefully and understand the rules before you sign anything. Remember, what counts is what is in the contract, not what the salesperson promised.

**Pay your debts.** If you've gotten behind on any of your debts—or have had debts fall into collections—pay them, or make a plan for starting to pay them. For information about managing debt, see this website: [consumer.ftc.gov/articles/coping-debt](http://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/coping-debt)

**Pay your bills on time.** Paying on time is a good habit and can improve your credit score. The easiest way to do that is by setting up an automatic payment with your bank on your bills' due dates. Marking the dates on a calendar is fine, too.

**Use credit cards wisely.** If you choose to have a credit card, don't charge what you can't pay back at the end of the month. If you must borrow money with a credit card to pay your credit card bills, it's time to talk with a credit counselor.



*If possible I would suggest you have a loved one that you trust and who believes in you to add you to some line of credit much like parents do for their children. Trust me, you will need it.*

—Shaun

*Open a bank account. Work on building up your credit. If you get a credit card, use less than 30% of the credit limit, buy things with your credit card, and then use the 30 day grace period to pay the bill in its entirety. That's the slow way to build credit.*

—JoeJoe



# Tax Basics

Once you start earning money, you will have to pay federal and state taxes. The amount you pay depends on how much you make and who lives with you. Things like childcare, disability, and healthcare costs will also change how much you pay. Taxes are taken out of your paycheck.

Every year, you must file your taxes. When you file taxes, you let the government know how much you have earned and how much you have paid in taxes. You can also tell them things like if you have children, disability, or healthcare costs. The government decides whether you have paid too much or too little in taxes. In many cases, you will find that you have paid too much, and you get a tax refund. If you have paid too little, you have to pay the amount you owe. If you do not file your taxes, you have to pay a fee and you will owe back taxes for the money you didn't pay.

## **W-4 Form: Claiming Incoming and Exemptions.**

When you start a new job, you are asked to fill out an IRS Form W-4. This form helps your employer know how much of your paycheck should be withheld in taxes. It is important to fill out this form so that you can arrange to pay taxes month by month. If you don't fill it out you'll have to pay them all at once at the end of the year. To learn how to fill out a W-4 form, visit the following website: [wikihow.com/Fill-Out-a-W-4](http://www.wikihow.com/Fill-Out-a-W-4)

Filing Taxes. Every year, you will need to file your federal and state taxes by April 15. Many people choose to file their taxes in January so that they can get a tax refund sooner. To file taxes, you will need a W-2 form from your employer(s). Employers will usually give you W-2 forms in January.

Next, you will need to decide which type of tax return to complete. Some of the more common forms are:

- Form 1040 (U.S. Individual Income Tax Return)
- Form 1040A (U.S. Individual Income Tax Return)
- Form 1040EZ (Income Tax Return for Single and Joint Filers With No Dependents)
- Form 1040NR (U.S. Nonresident Alien Income Tax Return)
- Form 1040NR-EZ (U.S. Income Tax Return for Certain Nonresident Aliens With No Dependents).

Because filing taxes can be confusing, many people get help from a tax professional called a certified public accountant, or CPA.

Simply bring your W-2s and any other IRS forms to their office. For a fee, they will file your taxes for you. This means you won't have to worry about mistakes or spending a lot of time on your taxes. This is a good idea for people who have multiple jobs or other complicated tax situations. If you are looking for a CPA, ask someone you trust to recommend one.

There are also online websites that can help you file your taxes. These websites cost less than a tax professional. If you have a simple tax situation you might want to use a website. The website will guide you through your return using a series of questions and automatic calculations. Remember to read all instructions and offers carefully. It should be free to file your federal tax return, but most online services charge to file your state tax return. Some of the most used online tax filing websites are:

- [e-file.com](http://e-file.com)
- [turbotax.intuit.com](http://turbotax.intuit.com)
- [hrblock.com](http://hrblock.com)
- [taxact.com](http://taxact.com)
- [jacksonhewitt.com](http://jacksonhewitt.com)

Some places offer free tax help for people. See this website to check if there is a program near you: [irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers](http://irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers)

# Voting



Voting rights for people with felony convictions vary by state. In a few states, you don't lose your right to vote at all and can vote from prison. In others, you have the right to vote after release. In some states, you can vote after you are released from prison and finish your parole or probation. Finally, in a few states, you may not ever be able to vote, or you may have to pay all your fines before you can vote. See the table below.

May vote from prison	Vote restored after prison	Vote restored after prison, parole, and probation	May lose vote permanently (or have additional requirements to meet)
Maine, Vermont, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico	California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington	Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin	Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, Tennessee, Virginia, Wyoming

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/felony-disenfranchisement-a-primer/>

If you can vote, you should! Your vote matters. Less than half of the people in the US vote. This means that only a small number of people choose the people who make the laws that apply to all of us. Your vote can make a difference, especially at the local and state levels.

US federal elections (for US President, US Senators, and US Congress Representatives) happen every two or four years, on the first Tuesday in November. State and local elections can take place in any year, at any time. During any federal, state or local elections, you may be voting for state leaders, county state attorneys, local officials, and sometimes judges. There may be other important offices and issues on the ballot.





## Step 1: Register to Vote

Each state makes its own voting and election rules, including when and how to register. Learn more at <https://www.usa.gov/register-to-vote>, or call (866) OUR-VOTE.

Here are a few common ways to register:

- **Register online.** In 42 states, plus D.C., you can register at [vote.gov](https://vote.gov).
- **Register by mail.** Download the National Mail Voter Registration Form and mail it in: <https://www.eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form>
- **Register in person.** Sometimes you can register to vote at a state or local election office, a DMV, or a place where you sign up for SNAP/food stamps. In some states, you can register at the polling location on election day.

**What do I need to bring to register?** It depends. At a minimum, you will need to write down your name, mailing address, date of birth, telephone number, and ID number (state ID or driver’s license or social security number—state laws differ).

Some states require that you show two forms of ID and have a document that shows your name and address (bank statement, government check, utility bill). Be prepared. Call (866) OUR-VOTE if you have questions.

**When should you register?** You can register at any time, but if you want to vote in an upcoming election, find the registration deadline for your state. Some states require people to register 2-4 weeks before the election. For other states, you can register at the voting place on election day.



## Step 2: Learn about the Candidates and Issues

This guide cannot tell you how to vote. But you can learn about candidates and issues by listening to the news, talking with people you trust, and looking up candidates and issues online. You can also find voter guides and ratings for judges online.



## Step 3: Vote!

Depending on your state, you may be required to show your ID to vote. Bring your voter registration card and ID with you just in case. Normally, there are two ways that you can vote:

- In person, on election day or during an early voting period.
- By mail-in ballot. Contact your election authority or (866) OUR-VOTE if you need help requesting a mail-in ballot.

You can take notes, voting guides, and this voter information into the voting booth. It’s a good idea to do this, because there can be a lot to remember.

Take your time. Do not let anyone rush you. If you need help, ask a poll worker. They cannot tell you who or what to vote for, but they can answer questions about the process. They can help you mark a ballot if you have difficulty reading or if your English is limited. You can also request a ballot in other languages.

Call (866) OUR-VOTE if you run into any problems while voting.

# Veterans

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This section covers VA (Veterans Administration) benefits and services. Although you can't get your VA pension while incarcerated, there are many veteran programs and benefits on the outside that can help you.

For assistance with VA benefits and services, contact a VA representative by calling (800) 393-0865 or searching for your state's VA benefits office.

In general, you will not be able to receive your VA pension while you are incarcerated. After you go to prison, you will still get your benefits for 60 days. After that time, you may still get the checks, but you have to return the money to the VA.

If you have an injury or disability that is 80 to 100% related to your military service, you can receive 10% of your pension while incarcerated. You cannot receive any of your pension for injuries or disabilities that happened after your service.

Veterans who are incarcerated can still get other benefits, including education and training, healthcare, insurance, vocational rehabilitation and employment, and burial services.

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## Transferring Benefits to Your Family

While you can't get your benefits in prison, you can transfer your pension to your family. This includes a spouse, children, or parents who rely on you for money. They must have financial need to get the benefits. This is called apportionment.

You (or an adult you are giving your benefits to) should apply for apportionment within one year of the day you were incarcerated. To apply, mail a letter to your VA Regional Office (VARO). Your letter should say who you are and whom you want to transfer your benefits to. You must also complete and mail VA Form 21-0788. There are three ways you can get this form:

1. Ask a prison counselor for assistance. They may be able to get the form for you.
2. Ask someone on the outside to download the form from the website below: <https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0788-ARE.pdf>
3. Tear out and use the form in the back of this book.

**Female Veterans.** VA Medical Centers have program managers who help female veterans. They offer help with VA benefits and healthcare. Contact the closest VA Medical Center to find a program manager who specializes in female veterans.

If you have questions about the process, ask someone you trust to call the Department of Veterans Affairs at (800) 827-1000.

Once they get your application, the VA will review it. They may ask your spouse or children's guardian to fill out the same form. They will let you know if the apportionment is approved, and your family will retroactively receive your benefits. That means that your benefits will be saved and given to them, starting 60 days after your incarceration.

# Reinstating Benefits After Release

You can have your benefits start again 30 days before your scheduled release date. If you are in prison, ask your counselor or someone on the outside to help you contact the IDVA to get your benefits restored. They can call (800) 393-0865 or go to [va.gov](http://va.gov) for help.

The VA has a reentry program called Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) Program. They offer:

1. Post-release assessments
2. Referrals to medical, psychiatric, and social services, including employment services and housing assistance
3. Short-term case management after reentry. All VA Medical Centers have reentry staff. Contact the closest VA Medical Center to begin receiving services

You can find VA hospitals and clinics in your state here: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/allstate.asp>

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## Filing Disability Claims

Do you have a disability related to your military service? You can file a disability claim online or in-person. You can get disability benefits in prison and once you are released.

To file an online claim, visit the website <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/apply> and create an eBenefits account by clicking "Register." You will need to provide some personal information to open an account. Then click "Apply for Disability Compensation" to apply.

You will need your medical records and any other proof of disability for your claim. You can also apply for a disability claim by filling out a paper application at a VA

facility, or mailing the claim to a VA facility. You can find VA facilities by visiting: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/> Check out this website to learn how to file a claim: <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>

The VA does not accept all claims. They may reject yours the first time you submit it. Keep trying. The process can be complicated, so you may wish to get help from a Veterans Service Organization (such help is free). Some veterans hire a claims agent or an attorney. You can search any of these options at this website: [www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search)

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## Health

After you leave prison, you can get care at VA medical centers. You can enroll in their system by visiting a VA medical center, or by phone at: (877) 222-VETS.

You can only receive care if you were honorably (or generally) discharged. You can receive treatment for injuries unconnected to your military service.

Not all VA healthcare is free. Your insurance will be billed for care, and you will have to pay part of your bill inpatient, outpatient, extended care (nursing home care),

and medication costs. Some of these services may be free if your income is below a certain limit or if your illness is connected to your service. For more on eligibility, go to <https://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/>

The VA also offers mental health and substance abuse treatment at VA medical centers or at Vet Centers (depending on the treatment). Visit <https://www.va.gov/health/vamc/> for a list of VA Medical Centers in your state.

# Housing

The VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program provides help for veterans that are homeless. This includes benefit help, case management services, and help getting housing. Contact the closest VA Medical Center to get services.

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# Employment

The VA has employment help for honorably (or generally) discharged people.

Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Representatives (DVOP) help veterans find jobs. They also provide job training. You can get help here: <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/>

The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP) helps veterans with:

- Searching for jobs.
- Vocational counseling.
- Occupational skills training.
- On-the-job training.
- Trade skills certification and licensing.
- Job placement assistance.
- Referral to supportive services.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services help veterans with disabilities related to military service. They offer help finding a job, job training, and advice. To connect with this program, call (800) 827-1000 or visit <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/296>

Veterans Industries and Compensated Work Therapy programs help homeless and near homeless veterans with physical, mental health, or addiction problems. These programs contract with businesses to provide paid work for these veterans. They also have therapeutic housing. Veterans Industries Programs are sometimes housed within VA Medical Centers. For more information go to <https://www.va.gov/health/cwt/>





## **Part 3:** **Healing and Moving Forward**

- Beginning to Heal
- Building Healthy Relationships
- Mindfulness
- Connecting With Your Community

# Beginning to Heal



Prison hurts in a lot of ways. People who are incarcerated sometimes push others away to protect themselves from that pain. Some people stay away from relationships, grieving, and emotional self-care to stop themselves from feeling helpless. Or they may want to protect themselves from being vulnerable with distance and indifference.



*My family thinks that because I'm free, all my problems are over, but really we carry all this baggage with us. The coping mechanisms we had on the inside are still with us, and they create barriers on the outside.*

—Pablo

Healing is a part of moving forward and reconnecting the pieces of your life. It is a process, and it requires you to be both vulnerable and strong. It might sound hard to be vulnerable. You need to let yourself feel the pain of incarceration. Opening up to yourself and being open to trusting others is a big step toward getting your life back.

Prison is often traumatic. Recovery will take time. The work towards recovery is a form of healing. Vulnerability is not weakness. It is not weak to ask for help. Getting help from a professional is a good option. Support groups and individual counseling can help you deal with trauma that may have happened while you were in prison. See the Mental Health section for information on finding support.

This section addresses a number of aspects of wellness that can help you heal and move forward. It is based on suggestions given to us by EJP alumni.

What is wellness? Wellness is a complicated subject. It means something different for everyone. After you leave prison, wellness is about making meaning out of your experiences. It also means making these experiences a part of who you are and who you want to be in the world. It is about forgiveness, healing, caring for yourself, and reconnecting with others.

**Emotional wellness** means being respectful of yourself and others. It means you are aware of your good or bad feelings and accept them. You express your feelings to others in healthy and constructive ways. It also means you think about other people's feelings and perspectives. People may think differently than you. Knowing how to disagree respectfully is key to healthy relationships. You may have other unresolved issues you're dealing with, such as grief, anger, or depression. Be patient and realize the path to emotional wellness can be a long one.



*Reach out to somebody. One of our coping mechanisms that's prevalent with individuals who are incarcerated is that we retract ourselves, isolate ourselves to try to deal with it, with the psychological hurdles we're going through.*

—Pablo

**Physical wellness** is taking care of your body. It is important to stay active and healthy. Consider finding a gym, jogging, walking, biking, practicing yoga, or looking up free at-home exercise videos online. It's good to eat healthy and drink plenty of water. Practice safe sex by using condoms. For those with addiction issues, getting help through counseling or recovery programs can be a really positive step. You can read more about healthcare in our Health chapter.

**Social wellness** means you look for healthy relationships with many different kinds of people. As we discuss in our Building Healthy Relationships chapter, reentry is a time when you will strengthen old relationships and build new ones. While it can be difficult to put yourself out there, it can also lead to meaningful, healthy relationships.



*Advice for socializing outside? Learning coping skills and anger management. Being less abrasive and open-minded.*

—Earl W., EJP Alumnus

**Spiritual wellness** is thinking about a larger meaning or purpose to life. This can, but does not have to, involve religion. You may decide to join a church, synagogue, or mosque. You may also decide to join a support group to find community and purpose. Set aside some time each day to be open, listen, and think about what's going on inside. Practice mindfulness or meditation. A description of some ways of doing so can be found in our Mindfulness chapter.



*Take a breath. You're going to be in for a ride, and you better pack your patience.*

—Pablo

**Occupational wellness** is contributing meaningfully and respectfully in your job. Your job may not be your perfect job. But how you do it is entirely up to you. What strengths do you bring to the table? Bring those to your work. Invest in yourself by investing in what you do. Find ways to do a little extra and try new things if you are able. Take the time to realize the value of the work you do, and honor that. Also, beware of toxic work environments. Some jobs can be unhealthy, physically, emotionally, or otherwise.

**Environmental wellness** means being aware of Earth's resources and trying to create a healthy environment. There are many ways to contribute. You can grow vegetables in a community garden or volunteer to help with community clean up. Spend time in nature, even if it's at a local park, to help you feel healthy.



*What I felt was most difficult when I first got out is figuring out how to relate to other people. You have both the lack of 'normal' experiences that most people have as late-teenagers and young adults. Plus you have the negative effects of long-term imprisonment.*

—Greg A.

# Building Healthy Relationships



Prison makes it hard to stay connected with family, friends, and loved ones. Reentry removes some of these barriers, but it can be a hard time for both you and your loved ones. Rebuilding healthy, positive relationships will require time, patience and openness. You've changed while in prison, and so have your loved ones. It's going to take time to get to know each other again.

Since you've been gone a long time, you may struggle to feel like you belong. You and your loved ones may feel uncertain about each other. You may wonder if you can trust each other.

Your relationship with loved ones may go through different stages when you return home. Things might start out great (the "honeymoon" stage) but get harder as you spend more time together. This is a common experience and you are not alone!

Four common relationship stages during reentry			
<p><b>Stage 1: Honeymoon.</b></p> <p>You and your loved ones are excited to be back together. Everyone's at their best, but anxiety is under the surface.</p>	<p><b>Stage 2: Uncertainty and suspicion.</b></p> <p>You and your loved ones might feel uncertain about your relationship and question motives. Are you going to stick around? Do you still want to be together?</p>	<p><b>Stage 3: Testing and learning to share.</b></p> <p>You and your loved ones may test each other to see if it's OK to share feelings and be yourself. Can you trust each other?</p>	<p><b>Stage 4: Belonging.</b></p> <p>You may struggle with how to get involved in family routines. What roles will you play? How can you be part of family life again?</p>

You don't have to face relationship challenges alone! Here are a few places you can go for help:

- **Look for a family-oriented reentry program.** Phalanx Family Services based in Chicago, for instance, offers programs to help people and their families reunite after prison. Learn more at <https://www.phalanxgrp.services.org/>. Look for a similar program in your community.
- **Take a class.** Anger management, parenting, communication, or marriage and family classes can help you develop skills that will make your relationships stronger.
- **Get counseling or therapy,** either alone or with your partner or family. See our Mental Health chapter.
- **Join a returning resident support group.** Many community organizations offer supportive circles where you can share your struggles with others who share a similar background. They can provide advice and support.
- If you are in an abusive relationship, **call the National Domestic Violence Hotline: (877) 863-6338**



There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to the challenges people face when reuniting with loved ones. Below, we share advice about common challenges that people face when reuniting with loved ones. We cover the following topics:

- Sharing (self-disclosure)
- Parenting after release
- Dealing with difficult emotions
- Anger management
- Institutionalization
- Domestic violence

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## Sharing (Self-Disclosure)

Many people survive prison by becoming closed off and guarded. They seldom share things with others. But being closed off can hurt your relationships. Family members can also become closed off. They might only share positive things during their visits or visit rarely because it's too painful.

Tony explains why many people are closed off from their family members in prison:

*You keep [your family] at an arm's length because you know you could lose them. A lot of us watched family members die. Family members get sick. Family members move away. You're watching the world go past you, and to keep that family interested in your life and to keep yourself interested in their life is really hard because you can't experience that life with them.*

Isolation helps people cope in prison, but it's not always helpful on the outside.

So how do you open up when you're used to being closed off? How do you learn to share?

**Self-disclosure** is sharing information about ourselves that is truthful. It is being honest with your loved ones. It is one of the most important parts of a healthy relationship.

- It builds trust
- It provides emotional release
- When you share, your loved ones are more likely to share, too

There are risks to sharing. You may worry that your loved ones will reject you if they know how you feel. You may worry that you will hurt others if you share what you have experienced. You may feel embarrassed to admit that you need help. You may feel that your family members won't be able to understand what you have gone through. All this can make you afraid to share.

Keep in mind that closeness doesn't happen overnight. You can choose what to share and when. When building relationships, most people share slowly. They take small steps and wait to see how people respond. Here are some tips for learning to open up to loved ones again:

- **Start with the easy stuff.** Share what you like to do for fun. Ask them what they like to do. What movies do they love? What do they do to relax?
- **Spend time together.** Take long walks. As you do, share some of your feelings, fears, and goals. Invite them to open up, too. Start small and see how they respond.
- **Learn to text.** Send short, friendly messages about your day to your family and friends. Ask how they are doing.
- **Avoid criticizing or trying to offer advice** when your loved ones share things with you. Just listen. Be positive and supportive.

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*The coping mechanisms we had on the inside are still with us, and they create barriers on the outside. When you retract and people are not knowing the reason for your isolation, they think it's having to do with them.*

—Pablo

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- **Be willing to talk about your relationship.** How has your relationship changed? How can you perform your share of the work?

Keke describes the small ways he shares his life with his children and invites them to share their lives with him:

*I take time out of my day, even five minutes, to call them and see what's going on. I text them every day, every morning. . . . I talk to them and get their point of view and see what's going on, try to spend time. I tell them I love them, how you are doing, how your day is going, what you got planned. Little simple stuff. I let them talk.*

David notes that if you want your children to open up to you, it helps to not be critical. He shares this advice:

*In prison I became more educated, more aware. My relationships with my children became complicated because I had the tendency to correct them in their behavior. I was bombarding them with advice, and the more I did this, the more they were pushing me away. I had to learn to relax, to not be overbearing.*

Pablo also notes the importance of listening:

*Be ready to hear some truths. Listen attentively. There is a lot of lived life in your absence. Everybody was in a bad situation. As we were surviving, so were they. Don't approach it with judgment. Try to be understanding with your family and with yourself.*

Keke notes the importance of being open and honest with your partner.

*The most challenging thing is [to] be honest with [your partner]. If she's taking time out of her life to stand by you, give her your life. [Don't] feed her a fairy tale. . . . Don't come out trying to feed nobody no dream and definitely don't feed yourself a dream.*

## Sharing your Past with Others

If you are in the habit of closing yourself off, it can be hard to make new friends. We offer a few methods for doing so below, and you can choose what you think would work best for you. Tony explains:

*You spend so much time keeping people at arm's distance. You never let anybody get close. [When you go into prison] you're so young, you're so vibrant, it's so easy to have friends, to have relationships, to have*

*people that are close to you. But when you come home, you've gotten so used to keeping people at a distance that you just continue to do it. It's hard to make new friends.*

When meeting new people, it can be hard to know how much to share about your past. Not everyone will be accepting of who you are. Roberto talks about the challenge of getting to know people and deciding how much to share.

*How do I get to know people? How do you create a personal brand so that all the good things you offer are not eclipsed by the fact that you spent a significant amount of time in prison? How do you open a conversation with someone when you're trying to remain private, and also take into account all of the negative stigma that's attached to being incarcerated? You're just meeting people and you don't want to share too much about yourself. There's so much negative stigma. You have to break through that wall. On the other hand, if you do, it's still no guarantee that they are going to relate to you and understand what you're going through.*

Keke prefers telling people right away about his past. "I tell them in the door," he says.

*I learned from my experience that if you lay your cards out in the open, you get a better understanding. Nowadays, people google so much. Both of you have to be honest with each other. So that's what I do. I let them know right in the door. This is me. I've been to prison twice. I'm doing this, I'm doing that, trying to get myself together.*

Tony also prefers being open:

*It's a little weird, a little awkward, to just come out and say, hey, I just spent ten years in prison. But I've never been one to be shy. I've always been real open about what I went through because it lets other people know that, look, just because I was in there doesn't mean I have to keep going back and forth, back and forth.*

Heather, on the other hand, is more reserved:

*I don't really mention [that I was in prison] to people. But, I guess it helps to have moved away to a different state, so really not that many people know me. They just know what they see of me now. They don't know . . . I made mistakes in the past. And I'm kind of comfortable with it. So, if I was to meet a guy or*

something and start dating, I wouldn't just throw all my dirty laundry out front. I'd get to know him. But if things were working out really good, I'd tell him all about it, and if he didn't accept it, then he probably wouldn't be the guy for me anyway.

Tony concludes, "When you meet somebody, if it scares them that you've been to prison, then you know what? That's not the person that you need to be with."

When you are deciding how to share your past with people, consider these guidelines:

1. Is the other person important to you? If so, sharing may help you be closer.
2. Is there a risk to sharing this information? Could they tell others or make it more difficult for you to get a job? Could they use it against you in other ways?
3. Is it appropriate to share? Sometimes it's wise to not share too much with strangers. What do they need to know about your past?
4. Will the other person be willing to share, too? Good relationships are built on reciprocity (a willingness to share on both sides).
5. Is sharing going to help or hurt? Think about the effect your sharing will have on the other person.

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## Asking for Help and Setting Boundaries

If you're used to being closed off, it may be especially hard to ask for help from loved ones. Pablo notes:

*My family thinks that because I'm free, all my problems are over, but I need assistance with the most basic things. That does make me somewhat defensive, and I'll end up trying to do things on my own and then I crash and burn.*

His advice? "Ditch that machismo and ask for help. It's not a bad thing."

It can be embarrassing to have to ask for help. As Joe Joe explains:

*What we're competing with is not feeling like a helpless infant all the time. We're so used to being rejected that we don't reach out much for help.*

Lee, whose partner was incarcerated, argues that "healthy adult relationships aren't about putting your needs in the back seat." She explains:

*You want to be considerate and not wear out your welcome. The effect of that is that maybe you're not expressing the things that you need. It's OK to say, "Hey, I need you to do this thing for me." Learn to communicate what you need.*

Joe Joe offers this final piece of advice regarding asking for help:

*If you strive to lighten someone's load rather than adding to it, they are going to be more receptive to helping you. This is what really wins people over and will help get you where you need to go.*

Some people going through reentry struggle to set boundaries with their loved ones. Your loved ones are happy to have you back. They may pressure you to get involved or do things you aren't ready for yet. They may ask you to do too many things at once.

It's OK to step back and take things slow. It's OK to say no to things and let them know that you aren't ready yet.



*You have to take things slow. All these new experiences, it can be extremely overwhelming. All those people tugging at you—those are extra stressors. Listen, take care of yourself.*

—Ricky

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*I love a good challenge. I was pulled into a monkey bar contest, into diving off the high board. But these old bones are not the same as they were. You don't want to injure yourself.*

—Kilroy

*We're coming out feeling beholden to people for what they've done for us while we're inside, or for our loved ones. That clouds our judgment, our best interest. Realize you can't help anybody if you're not helping yourself. Being selfish is not a bad thing. If love is directed inwards, it can radiate outwards. You can't help anybody if you're not helping yourself.*

—Pablo

## Parenting After Release

If you are a parent, you may be nervous about reuniting with your kids. You may feel guilt for what your kids have gone through while you were locked up. Some parents need or want time to get their feet on the ground before getting their kids back. These feelings are normal.

You may feel pressure to make up for lost time with your kids or to be a super parent. No matter what, resist the urge to parent out of guilt.

Lots of people have unrealistic expectations of parents, especially mothers. They are expected to spend lots of time and money on their kids. They should be there emotionally for their kids at all times. They should place the needs of their children above their own needs at all times. They should have a clean house and money to put their kids in good programs. Parents who cannot or do not meet this ideal are often seen as bad.

**These “super parent” ideals are impossible to live up to. And that's OK. Resist the urge to parent out of guilt.**

Don't be too hard on yourself. You are going to make mistakes. We all do. Take mistakes as an opportunity to learn. Be willing to learn from your children, too. Building a healthy relationship with your children will take hard work, love, and compassion. It will take time and patience, but it is definitely worth it.

Some relationships may never entirely heal. Accept that your children and loved ones may not want the same kind of relationship you once had.

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*Always remember that reconciliation and restoration are two different things. You may reconcile, but the relationship may never be restored. Just grieve properly. Be OK with that. Don't walk around forever with the grief on your back. If you've done all you can, it will be OK.*

—Josephine

*There will be people in your life who will remain after such a long journey, and there will be some that fall to the wayside. Don't look back. Keep looking forward, looking inward. Seek inward happiness.*

—Pablo

Here are a few things you can do to make the process easier to reunite with your family:

- **Educate yourself.** Read books and attend classes about parenting. Raising a child is always hard, so get all the tools you can.
- **Get counseling or therapy.** It can help you heal and provide tools for you to be a better parent. See our mental health chapter.

- **Do things you enjoy.** Meditate. Take some time to do things for yourself, if you can. See our meditation chapter.
- **Talk to other parents,** especially those who have spent time in prison. Join a mothers group or a parents group. Share your experiences, fears and dreams.



*You can't recapture time that has been lost. You have to start fresh. Don't be too gung-ho. Trust has to be reestablished. If they're angry, don't try to invalidate their anger. Talk about it. Don't pretend that the separation never happened, because it did. Try to seek counseling.*

**—Josephine**

*When you're locked up, you have all this time to sit and think. You have ideas of how you want things to go, and then you get out and, of course, those are just ideas. . . . Take care of yourself and everything else will fall into place. . . . You can't stress out over everything that you have no control over. Don't give up hope. There's always hope. And love overcomes a lot of stuff.*

**—Heather**



## Reflect

1. What feelings do you have about reuniting with your kids?
2. How can you practice self-care during this time?
3. Where can you go for help? Who is in your support network?

# Dealing with Difficult Emotions

In prison, you may have bottled up difficult emotions instead of working through them. Maybe you pushed aside feelings of fear, guilt, or anger and instead told family members that everything is going to be OK. Your family members may have done the same.

Here are a few of the emotions you might feel as you reunite with your loved ones.

**Fear** is your body’s reaction to danger or uncertainty. You may fear that nobody will love you because of the things you’ve done. You may be afraid that your children won’t accept you. This fear can cause you to withdraw from them even more.

**Sadness** is feeling unhappy or discouraged. You might feel discouraged that your children don’t know you or that your sister doesn’t want to talk to you.

**Grief** is a profound feeling of loss. You might feel a sense of loss for the years you spent in prison, away from your family.

**Guilt** is feeling bad about yourself, often for something you’ve done or haven’t done that makes others suffer. You might feel guilt for not being around for your partner or kids.

**Anger** is something you feel when someone or something has done you wrong. You might feel angry about what prison has done to you, or angry about something a loved one has said.

People experience emotions through their mind and body. For instance, fear can tighten your chest. You might feel sick to your stomach or start sweating. Some emotions can help you change and grow. Others can keep you from growing and harm your relationships.

Expect some of your repressed emotions to surface. Sounds, tastes, and smells can trigger memories from the past. You’ve lost partners, friends, and parents. Expect to feel rage, sorrow, frustration, and grief.



*If you have any emotions at all, you’re going to have guilt about making your family suffer... They suffer with you while you’re in there. To them, you’re kind of dead because you’re not around any longer. There is guilt. And we don’t like to show it because, hey, we’re tough guys.*

—Tony

*I was looking at videos with a friend and a song came on. I found myself crying for no apparent reason. I lost my father when I was locked up. That was one of his favorite songs. I had never had the opportunity to mourn. All of the pain came forward.*

—Pablo

It’s normal to feel these emotions. It’s what you do with these emotions that matters. Pushing aside difficult emotions instead of facing them can harm your relationships. Learning to recognize, express, and manage emotions can help you have healthier relationships.

Here are some tips for managing emotions in healthier ways:

- **Identify your feelings.** Let them wash over you. They won’t last forever. Give yourself time to feel them. Don’t bury them. Doing so can cause these feelings to build up even more.

- **Express your feelings in helpful ways.** Separate people from actions. "I'm angry about something you have done," not "I am angry with you."
- **Recognize the difference between feeling and acting.** Just because you feel a certain way doesn't mean you have to act on it.
- **Accept responsibility for your feelings.** Try not to blame others for the way you feel. Instead of saying, "You're making me angry," say "I'm feeling angry."
- **Change your perception.** Think about what caused you to feel that way. Are there different ways to think about what happened that are more helpful?

Therapists or counselors can help you work through and manage your emotions. It may help to go to family or couples therapy. Some organizations offer support for families working through the challenges of reentry.

In prison, you may have walked away from difficult emotions and conflicts. Perhaps you had space to think through difficult issues before facing them. On the outside, you may be expected to directly address issues with your loved ones rather than walking away. You may feel pressure to respond right away when you'd rather take your time.

Pablo explains what happens when you retreat instead of talking about how you are feeling with loved ones:

*When you retreat, it telegraphs to the other person that you don't care. When you remain silent, people may think you're brushing them off.*

It's OK to take some time to think before talking through a problem. As Lee explains, "It's OK to say, 'I need time to think about this, I can't give you an answer right away.'"

But too often when people retreat, they never come back to it. If you need some space, commit to talking about it later.

## Anger Management

As with other emotions, it's normal to feel and express anger. It gets to be a problem if it is out of control, aggressive or constant. It's a problem if it hurts the people around you.

Anger is a secondary emotion. For example, "He embarrassed me, then I got angry." Getting to the root of why you were embarrassed can help the anger subside.

You may have to take an anger management class as a condition of your parole. These classes can help you learn some basic skills for managing your anger. A therapist or counselor can also help. Anger management classes or therapy may cover topics such as:

- Causes behind your anger and triggers
- Expressing anger in better ways
- Time out and reflection
- Understanding how your anger affects you and others

**Need to find an anger management class?** If it's required for parole, you will need to make sure that it offers a certificate. Often there is a small fee for this certificate. Ask questions to make sure. You can take online or in person classes.

To find a low or no-cost class, try the following resources:

- Go to a DHS Family Community Resource Center and ask if they can recommend anger management classes you can take. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12>
- Ask your parole officer or your healthcare provider for some suggestions.
- Local universities and colleges sometimes offer anger management classes for the public.
- Local community centers and nonprofits often offer anger management classes as well.

Here are some anger management tips, modified from experts at the Mayo Clinic: (include simple icons)

1. **Think before you speak.** In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts. Allow others to do the same.
2. **Once you're calm, express your anger.** As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your anger, concerns and needs clearly and directly. Do so without hurting others or trying to control them.
3. **Get some exercise.** Exercise can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger building, go for a run.
4. **Take a timeout.** Give yourself a short break when things get stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you handle things better.
5. **Identify possible solutions.** Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue. Does your child's messy room stress you out? Close the door. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening or agree to eat on your own sometimes.

6. **Stick with 'I' statements.** To avoid placing blame, use "I" statements. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without asking to help with the dishes" instead of "You never do any housework."
7. **Use humor to release tension.** Humor can help you face what's making you angry without getting out of control.
8. **Relax.** When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Take deep breaths. Imagine a calm place or repeat a calming phrase, such as "Take it easy." Listen to music or go for a walk. Practice mindfulness (see our Mindfulness chapter).
9. **Know when to seek help.** Learning to control anger is hard for everyone at times. Seek help if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you.



## Reflect

1. Think about a time when you felt angry and it got out of control. What happened? Why did it get out of control?
2. Now think about how you could have managed your anger better. What are some things you can try next time you get angry?

## Institutionalization

Many people who have left prison continue to suffer the mental effects of being locked up long after they leave. Institutionalization is how your thoughts, speech, and actions are influenced by being locked up. You and your loved ones may not be aware of all of the many ways prison has impacted you. This can cause all sorts of conflicts and misunderstandings.

Some people who leave prison suffer from Post-Incarceration Syndrome (PIS), a syndrome similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). Time in prison can make mental health problems worse. It can make people more isolated and be more violent. It can lead some people to feel that they have no purpose. It can make people fearful and hypervigilant.

Here are just a few of the many ways that time in prison may have impacted you and your relationships.

*"I closed myself off as a way of coping."*

*"I have these defense mechanisms. I've learned to telegraph assertiveness and square up when faced with conflict." —Pablo*

*"I had hangups about talking to regular, free people. I didn't feel comfortable." —Ricky*

*"When I get upset, my posture says I'm ready for a fight." —Pablo*

*"In prison, we got up early. I'm up in the middle of the night. Up early in the morning."*

*"In prison, you have to watch your back. Now on the outside, I can't sit with my back to people. I have to be at the back of the room so I can see everyone."*

—Kilroy

*"I'm loud because in jail, people tend to scream. Everyone has to speak over each other if they want to be heard." —Antonio*

The tools you used to survive in prison were "blunt tools," as Pablo describes. You may have survived by being closed off, aggressive, and hypervigilant, by being loud and watching your back. These tools can drive your loved ones away on the outside.



You will need to add new tools to your toolbox—tools that are more delicate. They include listening, communicating, and being patient with each other. Have honest talks with loved ones. Invite them to help you recognize when you are acting in an aggressive way. Practice adjusting your body language.

It will take time for you and your loved ones to understand just how much your time in prison has impacted you. You may need counseling or help from a support group to work through these issues.

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## Domestic Violence

Domestic violence isn't just an anger problem. It's about control. Domestic violence is when one person exerts power or control over another person in a dating, family or household relationship.

It can take many forms, including:

- Verbal abuse (threats, name-calling, intimidation)
- Physical abuse (pushing, slapping, choking, destroying property)
- Controlling behavior (keeping you from seeing people, going places, or spending money)
- Emotional abuse (making you feel like you are worthless)
- Sexual abuse (unwanted sexual activity, often using force)

In some families or cultures, these behaviors are not seen as wrong. It's hard to break away from domestic violence when the attitudes about relationships around you are not healthy. It may take some time to change your way of thinking. It may take some time to realize that what you are doing or experiencing is wrong.

If you are in an abusive relationship, seek help. Making the decision to leave is hard. It can be risky. It takes courage to leave, especially if you fear for your own safety or the safety of your children. It's hard to leave if you depend on the other person for money.

Begin by calling the National Domestic Violence hotline: (877) 863-6338 or (877) TO-END-DV. This confidential, free 24-hour hotline provides support, information, and referrals. It can put you in touch with resources in your area. Even if you are not ready to leave the relationship, the hotline can help you get through hard times. It can help you take the next step.

Additional resources for survivors of domestic violence can be found at <https://ncadv.org/resources>

For a list of places where you can go for help in your community do a search at <https://www.domesticshelters.org/help#?page>

If money is keeping you from leaving a partner who is abusing you, there may be an Emergency Crisis Fund for survivors of domestic violence in your community. Search online for "Domestic violence support," "crisis fund" and the name of your community.

We have listed transitional housing and emergency shelter options in our Housing Directory. Many of these shelters serve people who are leaving an abusive relationship. Some provide protection if you fear for your safety.

## If You are the Abusive Partner

If you have been abusive to a partner or family member, reach out to get help. The first important step is to acknowledge you have a problem. You can change, but it will take work. You may be required to stay away from your partner until you are in a better place, or you may choose to stay away for a while to keep them safe and give them some space.

To get help, consider attending a program for those who have been abusive. Programs like these will help you:

- See that it is NOT ok to abuse a partner
- Learn to take blame and credit for actions
- Learn nonviolent and non-controlling ways of communicating and behaving

These programs vary by state but you can search online locally for keywords like "domestic abuse intervention." For more information about what to expect with these programs visit <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/intervention-programs-for-abusive-behavior/>

In Illinois you could enroll in the Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP), for people who control

their partners with physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or economic abuse (withholding money). For more information on the program and how to sign up visit <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30276>

In Minnesota, the Duluth Model helps people who want to change abusive behavior: <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/>



## Reflect

1. What does a healthy relationship look like to you?
2. Think back on your relationships with your family or loved ones. In what ways were they healthy? In what ways were they unhealthy?
3. Where are the places you can go for help if you are in an abusive relationship?



## Notes

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# Mindfulness

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Mindfulness can help you deal with the stress of reentry. This chapter covers the following topics:

1. What is mindfulness?
  2. What are the benefits of mindfulness?
  3. How do I meditate?
  4. Meditation scripts
  5. Mindfulness resources
  6. Meditation groups
- 

## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about paying attention to the present. It is about noticing your thoughts, emotions, and how your body feels. It's about not judging yourself or giving yourself a hard time. When you are aware of your five senses or your mind, you are being mindful!

Mindfulness is not about fixing what is wrong with you. Instead, it is about accepting what is going on inside you. It's about being gentle and kind to yourself. It helps us stay connected to the moment. We can then respond in healthy, caring ways.

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism, but mindfulness is not a religion. Instead, it is a way to explore your mind and body. Some people see mindfulness in every religion. Prayer can be a form of mindfulness.



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*Does your heart race every time you step out of your house or enter a public place? Practicing mindfulness helped me be aware of physically overwhelming experiences at the onset. I could feel perspiration on my upper lip. My palms start getting sweaty. My body tenses up. These are the warning signs that remind me to just breathe. During these episodes, I found that I was not breathing. Doing nothing else but concentrating on my breathing made this experience bearable. Soon thereafter, I was more and more in control.*

**—Mindfulness Program Participant**

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# What are the Benefits of Mindfulness?

Mindfulness has many benefits. It can help you manage stress and control your emotions. It can even change how your brain works. It can help you not get stuck in bad thoughts. It can help you be happier. Other benefits include:

- Better able to fight disease
- Lower blood pressure and heart rate
- Better mental focus
- Better handle of emotions
- Lower anxiety and depression
- More growth after trauma
- More self-compassion
- Less burnout



*Have you felt alone, out of place? You are not alone. I experience that regularly. No one seems to understand what I am experiencing. I rely on mindfulness to assist me in channeling my focus. I do so by simply concentrating on the breath. This simple act is what grounds me and allows me to function normally.*

—Anonymous

## How do I Meditate?

Meditation is a common way to practice mindfulness.

**No training is needed to meditate!** There is no one right way to meditate. There is no “good” way, and certainly no “bad” way. If you can breathe, you can meditate.

**Practice alone or with a group.** Find someone who knows how to meditate to help you get started. You can meditate alone or with a group.

**When to practice.** In the beginning, try to meditate for 5 or 10 minutes. Make that time longer bit by bit. Try different times of the day: morning, evening, or afternoon. Try to practice every day. But, if something comes up, that’s OK! Let go of what you think should happen.

**How to sit.** Many people meditate sitting down with their eyes closed or open. Sit in a chair or cross-legged on a pillow, floor, or bed. Sit up straight, but be relaxed. Rest your hands in your lap or on your legs.

**Common Difficulties.** It’s normal to feel restless, bored, and sleepy. Your mind may wander. That’s totally okay. You don’t need to get rid of thoughts when you are meditating. Do your best to notice your thoughts. Label them as they come. You might label them things like “thinking about the past,” “feeling restless,” or “feeling bored.” Then, see if you can bring your attention to your breathing. Meditation takes practice. Do your best to be curious. No matter what happens, try not to judge yourself.

**Meditation and Trauma.** Sometimes meditation makes you remember things. It may dig up traumatic memories. This may make you feel stressed or anxious. Meditation can help you deal with these feelings. But, it is not a cure-all. If focusing on your body brings up traumatic memories, try focusing on a safe image or sound. If difficult memories keep coming, talk with a mental health professional. Look for a meditation group for people who have trauma.

# Meditation Scripts

Many people use a script for meditation. A meditation script is a set of words you can read or listen to while meditating. Read each script slowly to get used to it. After a while, you can say the words silently to yourself. Give each step about 1 minute, but feel free to go at your own pace.



*I don't always follow a specific regimen other than just to breathe in times of stress. This sounds simple enough but it can be very difficult, especially when you are not practicing regularly.*

**—Anonymous**

## ***A Seated Breath and Body Meditation Practice | Abbreviated from Mindful Magazine***

1. Begin by getting comfortable, sitting up straight but not rigid, in a position of ease. Close your eyes or lower your gaze toward the floor.
2. Take a few deep breaths. Get a sense of how you're doing at this moment physically, emotionally, and mentally. Is there tension or tightness anywhere? Is your mind busy or calm?
3. As you breathe in, bring a beginner's mind, noticing things for the first time. As you breathe out, bring the same sense. Rest your awareness on the breath.
4. Begin to sense your body sitting here. Feel into your whole body. What are your senses telling you? You may feel warm or cold. You may be itchy. Perhaps some areas don't have any feeling at all – a blank. Spend the next minute feeling these sensations. Allow them to come and go.
5. If your mind wanders, where is it wandering to? Are you remembering something? Are you feeling anger or regret? Are you practicing what you will say to someone? Notice your thoughts as if you were sitting in a movie theater, watching images come and go on the screen. Notice the thought or emotion as if it were someone else's thought, not yours. Notice an opening up in yourself as you become more aware, more accepting.
6. Come back to the breath. Breathe in and out. Notice how the whole body expands when you inhale, and contracts when you exhale. The whole body is breathing.
7. As you end, congratulate yourself for taking time to meditate. Realize that you can take a few minutes to meditate whenever you wish.



*Have you experienced disappointment? I have and that is not something to be ashamed of. I constantly ruminate on these disappointments. Rumination occurs naturally when you allow your mind to take control. Mindfulness has taught me how to take control of my thought process. This has allowed me the freedom to take life as it comes and adjust as needed.*

**—Mindfulness Program Participant**

**Gratitude Meditation | Mindvalley Academy**

Gratitude practice can help us tap into hope. It can help us boost our mood. That said, it's not easy to focus on the positive when you feel stressed. Be patient with yourself as you try this meditation. You can always return to the breath, if it feels too stressful.

1. Sit in a comfortable position. Take a few deep and slow breaths.
2. Think about something that's troubling you. It's best to start small. Name something that annoys you. Perhaps the room you're in is cold and drafty.
3. Now see if you can flip it to something positive. For example, perhaps the room is cold and drafty, but it's raining and you're able to stay dry.
4. Continue to think of things or experiences that you don't like. Do your best to find something positive about each thing or experience. Challenge yourself. Maybe they are helping you learn or grow. Perhaps you notice how you have kept going even when things are hard. Maybe you have found new ideas you didn't have before.
5. You can also simply repeat, "I am grateful for \_\_\_\_\_" and notice what comes up.

**Mindful Walking | Adapted from Mindful Walking, Segal, Williams, & Teasdale Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression**

Mindfulness is about being aware of what you're doing, thinking, and feeling. Walking mindfulness is simple. You can do it without people knowing what you're doing. Everybody walks, but most of us don't focus on the process of walking and how the body feels.

1. Standing still, become aware of your feet. How do your feet feel when they touch the ground? Bend your knees a few times to get a sense of how your feet and legs feel.
2. When you start walking, notice how you move your weight into each leg. One leg "empties" and the other leg takes over to support your body.
3. With one leg "empty," allow the other heel to rise slowly. Move it forward, feeling your leg. Place it down to get ready for the next step. Feel your weight move to this leg.
4. Continue walking. Notice how your feet, legs, hips, and upper body feel.
5. If you stop, notice how you feel when you stand. Notice how it feels when you start moving again.

## Meditation Resources

Need more meditations? Check out this website for more meditation scripts! [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XSgYgKhvpM1uqq3\\_00Q074nBXIZq4CLo/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XSgYgKhvpM1uqq3_00Q074nBXIZq4CLo/view?usp=sharing)

**Phone apps.** There are lots of free mindfulness phone apps. These apps offer guided meditations, timers, calming sounds, soothing voices, tips, and more. Some provide tips on how to sleep better or be less anxious.

These phone apps can be used on the bus or train, at work, or before bed. You can choose long or short meditations. Check out our Mental Health directory section for a list of apps. Want to learn how to download a Phone App? Go to the Technology chapter.



*Remind yourself that the deepest stillness and peace does not arise because the world is still or the mind is quiet. Stillness is nourished when we allow the world, the mind, and the body to be just as they are for now, moment by moment, and breath by breath.*

**—Williams & Penman, Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World**

# Meditation Groups

Meditation groups are great ways to meet people and practice. If you are a beginner, they can help you learn. They can help you keep going when you feel like quitting. Some are face-to-face while others are online. Many groups begin with a few friends meeting in someone's home.

Some meditation groups may say they are Buddhist. They may use words like "Sangha" (community), "Zen" (meditative state), or "Vipassana" (insight). You may not have to be Buddhist to join. Many groups are open to anyone joining their group. Some mindfulness groups also focus on mental health. They can help you reduce pain or deal with stress and anxiety.



*It is common to question your purpose. I do so repeatedly. My relationships aren't exactly as I had envisioned. Mindfulness meditation provided me the space and compassion to accept people as they come. I learned to let the little things go and focus on what makes that person special to me.*

**—Mindfulness Program Participant**



# Connecting With Your Community



Connecting with others is hard for many people after release from prison. You were separated from your family and friends. Now you may feel loneliness and isolation, especially if the people you were close to are no longer around.

Getting involved in your community and making new friends may help you begin to heal. This might mean working to make a difference through politics, organizing, and volunteering. This may mean writing letters to elected officials, campaigning, voting, participating in government events, talking to people in your community, and volunteering.

## Community Organizing and Advocacy

Community organizing is when community members join together and push for their needs and rights. A community can be people who live in the same area, or people who have something in common. Community organizing can look like:

- Going door-to-door
- Public speeches
- Organizing meetings
- Gathering information about the community needs
- Sharing information to educate the public
- Developing community leadership
- Organizing fundraisers

Community organizing is a tool for making your voice heard and creating positive change. You would be surprised by what you can do when you join together with others to make sure your community's voice is being heard.

There are many organizations that do community organizing online and on the ground. Now that you are out of prison, you can help them in important ways. You can help change the laws that affect people who have been in prison. EJP alumni have volunteered with, coordinated, and been employed by groups including:

- Community Renewal Society, FORCE Project (Fighting To Overcome Records & Create Equality)—<https://www.communityrenewalsociety.org/>

- Community Support Advisory Council (regular monthly meetings to support the parole process)—[www.illinois.gov/idoc/communityresources/Pages/CSAC.aspx](http://www.illinois.gov/idoc/communityresources/Pages/CSAC.aspx)
- Edovo (Education Over Obstacles)—[edovo.com](http://edovo.com)
- Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform <http://www.icjia.org/>
- Give up the Streets (GUTS)—<https://www.facebook.com/GiveUpTheStreets/>

You can contact these groups and many others to find out how you can get involved in your community.



*Get involved in advocacy work. If we want to change the process, we have to lead the process.*

—Marlon C.



# Getting Involved in Your Community

**Religious Organizations**—Churches, synagogues, mosques, or other religious communities can help you find meaning, purpose, and fellowship. Many religious organizations have classes, support groups, and volunteer opportunities. Don't worry if it takes a while for you to find the place that feels right for you.

**Libraries**—Public libraries organize events and classes. They have book clubs, social gatherings, and concerts. Many also have a space where people can post information about community events, group meetings, and even job openings. Visit your local library's website or stop by in-person to find out what your library has to offer.

**Reentry Programs**—If you live in a town with a reentry program, consider volunteering your time there. Even if you didn't use this program, you could help people who are getting out now. Let them know you are happy to help. With some luck, you may even be able to turn your volunteer work into a paid job.

**City and County Park Districts and Forest Preserves**—Your town or city probably has a park district, and its website will include information about the parks in your area. Take time to visit these parks and spend time in nature. Many park districts offer sports programs and leagues, as well as other recreational programs.

**Events and Activities**—In many cities you can get free alternative papers weekly. They usually have information on concerts and local events and classes. The same information should also be on the paper's website. A simple Google search can also help you find events in your area.



*Don't give up. Do what you can to promote change. Take the time out to try to mentor some of these young people that are out here in the hopes that, one day, we can bring about changes. Instead of wondering when somebody else is gonna do something about it, I need to remember that I'm somebody and try to do what I can.*

—Anonymous

# Serving Your Community

Volunteer work gives you the chance to make friends, solve problems, and do some good for your community. It is also good for your health. Making new friends can prevent feelings of sadness and make you feel less alone. Watching how your work makes your community better can give you a sense of pride and fulfillment.

If you are out of work, volunteering can also help you get new skills to add to your resume. You may also meet new people who can help you network and find new job opportunities. Volunteering expands your life in ways that may surprise you. You may discover new abilities or find new interests.

Some places you can volunteer are:

- Senior living centers and nursing homes
- Humane societies
- Homeless shelters
- Food banks
- Local churches

Call or visit these places to ask how you can help out. You can also do a Google search for volunteer opportunities in your community.



## **Part 4: Directory**

- National Resources
- State-Specific Resources



# National Resources



Name	Website	Phone	Description
<b>HOUSING RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Transitional Housing Directory</b>	<a href="http://transitionalhousing.org">transitionalhousing.org</a>		Directory of transitional housing throughout the country
<b>Homeless Shelter Directory</b>	<a href="http://homelessshelterdirectory.org/">homelessshelterdirectory.org/</a>		Directory of homeless shelters throughout the country
<b>Shelter Listing Directory</b>	<a href="http://shelterlistings.org">shelterlistings.org</a>		Directory of homeless shelters, transitional housing, halfway houses and more throughout the country
<b>National Coalition for Homeless Veterans</b>	<a href="http://nchv.org">nchv.org</a>		Veteran housing services
<b>Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)</b>	<a href="https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies">https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies</a>	(866) 674-6327	Federally funded assistance in managing costs associated with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization, minor home repairs
<b>Substance Abuse Rehab Centers Directory</b>	<a href="http://substancerehabcenter.com/halfway-house/">substancerehabcenter.com/halfway-house/</a>		List of substance abuse transitional houses throughout the U.S. as well as outpatient services
<b>Sober Living Homes—Intervention America</b>	<a href="http://soberliving.interventionamerica.org/">soberliving.interventionamerica.org/</a>		Directory of sober living homes across the US
<b>ID RESOURCES</b>			
<b>US Social Security Office Locator</b>	<a href="https://www.ssa.gov/locator/">https://www.ssa.gov/locator/</a>		Request a replacement social security card, apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits
<b>FOOD RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Feeding America</b>	<a href="https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank">https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank</a>		Directory of local food banks throughout the country
<b>Find Food Pantries</b>	<a href="https://www.foodpantries.org/">https://www.foodpantries.org/</a>		Directory of local food banks and soup kitchens throughout the country



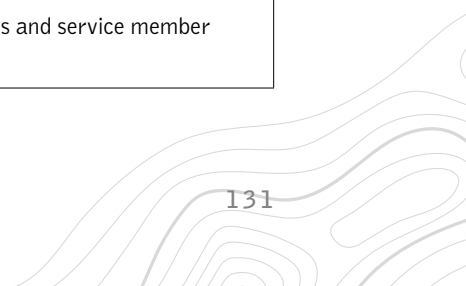


# National Resources



Directory

Name	Website	Phone	Description
<b>HEALTH RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Transitions Clinic Network (TCN)</b>	<a href="https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/">https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/</a>		A network of clinics in 14 states specifically for chronically ill people after prison
<b>Partnership for Prescription Assistance</b>	<a href="http://pparx.org">pparx.org</a>	(571) 350-8643	Medicine cost assistance
<b>AIDS Info Hotline</b>	<a href="https://hab.hrsa.gov/get-care">https://hab.hrsa.gov/get-care</a>	(800) 448-0440	Confidential answers to questions about HIV/AIDS treatment and clinical trials
<b>EyeCare America</b>	<a href="http://aao.org/eyecare-america">aao.org/eyecare-america</a>		Medical eye exams, often at no cost
<b>GoodRx</b>	<a href="https://www.goodrx.com/">https://www.goodrx.com/</a>		Offers 80% discount on prescriptions
<b>US Healthcare Marketplace</b>	<a href="http://healthcare.gov">healthcare.gov</a>		National website to sign up for health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare services.
<b>MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES</b>			
<b>Suicide and Crisis Lifeline</b>	<a href="http://988lifeline.org">988lifeline.org</a>	988	24/7 suicide and mental health crisis lifeline
<b>Palouse Mindfulness</b>	<a href="https://palousemindfulness.com">https://palousemindfulness.com</a>		Free online mental health mindfulness group
<b>Mindfulness Coach</b>			Free app to learn mindfulness, self-guided training program, resource library, exercises, goal-setting and tracking, assessment, access to support, and crisis resources
<b>Aura Phone App</b>			Daily micro-meditations (3 minutes); can purchase monthly subscription for more
<b>Insight Timer Phone App</b>	<a href="https://insighttimer.com">https://insighttimer.com</a>		Guided meditation app
<b>UCLA Mindful Phone App</b>			Wellness meditations for people suffering from challenging health conditions, informative videos on the science of mindfulness and how to get started, and weekly podcasts on different meditation themes
<b>Veteran Crisis Line</b>	<a href="https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat">https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat</a>	(800) 273-8255, text 838255	24/7 Veteran's and service member crisis line

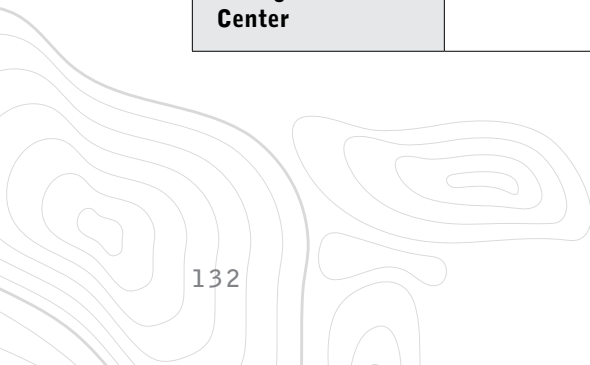




# National Resources



Name	Website	Phone	Description
<b>SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES</b>			
<b>Narcotics Anonymous</b>	<a href="https://na.org/">https://na.org/</a>		Support groups
<b>Alcoholics Anonymous</b>	<a href="aa.org">aa.org</a>		Online and in-person support groups
<b>Alcohol and Drug Referral Helpline</b>	<a href="https://www.samhsa.gov/">https://www.samhsa.gov/</a>	(800) 662-4357	Referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations
<b>REENTRY SERVICES</b>			
<b>Fair Shake</b>	<a href="https://www.fairshake.net/">https://www.fairshake.net/</a>	(608) 634-6363, information@fairshake.net	Online reentry resources including a basic toolkit, a database of reentry resources, and study guides
<b>EMPLOYMENT &amp; TRAINING RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Jails to Jobs Website</b>	<a href="http://jailstojobs.org/">jailstojobs.org/</a>		Online job search tool
<b>Jobs For Felons Hub Website</b>	<a href="http://jobsforfelonshub.com/">jobsforfelonshub.com/</a>		Online job search tool for people with a felony record
<b>Education &amp; Career Guide for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals</b>	<a href="https://study.com/resources/formerly-incarcerated-education-career-guide">https://study.com/resources/formerly-incarcerated-education-career-guide</a>		Helpful information about earning your degree and getting hired after incarceration
<b>CareerOneStop</b>	<a href="https://www.careeronestop.org/Site/contact-us.aspx">https://www.careeronestop.org/Site/contact-us.aspx</a>	(877) 872-5627 <a href="mailto:info@careeronestop.org">info@careeronestop.org</a>	Career training and career search assistance
<b>Step Ahead Career Planning Resources</b>	<a href="https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/exoffenders/workbook.html">https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/exoffenders/workbook.html</a>		Online job planning workbook for people with criminal records
<b>LEGAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Legal Action Center</b>	<a href="https://clearinghouse.lac.org/public">https://clearinghouse.lac.org/public</a>		Job resources for people with criminal records
<b>National Immigrant Justice Center</b>	<a href="http://immigrantjustice.org">immigrantjustice.org</a>	(312) 660-1370	Immigration legal services to low-income individuals in the Latino community





# National Resources



Name	Website	Phone	Description
<b>National Immigration Legal Services Directory</b>	<a href="https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory">https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory</a>		Directory to search for legal services by state, county, or detention facility
<b>FAMILY &amp; CHILDREN RESOURCES</b>			
<b>Domestic Violence Helpline</b>	<a href="http://thehotline.org">thehotline.org</a>	(877) 863-6338	Domestic violence hotline
<b>Domestic Violence Hotline</b>	<a href="https://www.thehotline.org/">https://www.thehotline.org/</a>	(800) 799-7233, text START to 88788, live chat on website	Domestic abuse hotline
<b>National Diaper Network</b>	<a href="http://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/members">nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/members</a>	(203) 821-7348	Visit their website to see what organizations near you provide free diapers
<b>CURRENTLY INCARCERATED SERVICES</b>			
<b>Prison Library Project</b>	<a href="http://prisonlibraryproject.org">prisonlibraryproject.org</a>	(909) 626-3066	Mails free books to people in prison. Support for children and families impacted by incarceration. Offers individual and family support group, gas cards for family visits, and community presentations and events.
<b>LGBT Books to Prisoners</b>	<a href="http://lgbtbookstoprisoners.org">lgbtbookstoprisoners.org</a>		Mails free books to people in prison
<b>VETERAN SERVICES</b>			
<b>US Department of Veterans Affairs—Benefits</b>	<a href="http://va.gov">va.gov</a>		Assistance with accessing veteran benefits
<b>US Department of Veterans Affairs - Medical Centers</b>	<a href="http://va.gov">va.gov</a>		Veterans' health services
<b>American Legion</b>	<a href="http://legion.org">legion.org</a>	(800) 433-3318	Health, education, employment, other benefits for veterans





## State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
AL	<b>Alabama Department of Corrections</b>	<a href="http://www.doc.state.al.us/ReentryOverview">http://www.doc.state.al.us/ReentryOverview</a>	301 S Ripley St, Montgomery, AL 36130	(334) 353-3883	Reentry support
AL	<b>Aid to Inmate Mothers</b>	<a href="https://inmatemoms.org/">https://inmatemoms.org/</a>	660 Morgan Ave, Montgomery, AL 36104	(334) 262-2245	Family services
AK	<b>Alaska Department of Corrections</b>	<a href="http://doc.alaska.gov/rehabilitation-reentry">doc.alaska.gov/rehabilitation-reentry</a>	550 W 7th Ave, Ste 1800, Anchorage, AK 99501	(907) 269-7352 <a href="mailto:doc.reentry@alaska.gov">doc.reentry@alaska.gov</a>	Reentry support
AK	<b>New Life Development</b>	<a href="https://www.newlifeak.org/">https://www.newlifeak.org/</a>	3916 E 9th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99508	(907) 646-2200 <a href="mailto:admin@newlifeak.org">admin@newlifeak.org</a>	Reentry support
AK	<b>No Limits, Inc.</b>	<a href="https://nolimitincorp.wordpress.com">https://nolimitincorp.wordpress.com</a>	253 Romans Way, Fairbanks, AK 99701	(907) 451-9650 <a href="mailto:nolimits.exdir@yahoo.com">nolimits.exdir@yahoo.com</a>	Reentry support, substance use treatment
AZ	<b>Hope's Crossing</b>	<a href="https://hopescrossing.org/">https://hopescrossing.org/</a>	1632 W Camelback Rd, Phoenix, AZ 85015	(602) 795-8098	Reentry support and family services
AZ	<b>Old Pueblo Community Services</b>	<a href="https://helptucson.org">https://helptucson.org</a>	4501 E 5th St, Tucson, AZ 85711	(520) 546-0122 <a href="mailto:info@helptucson.org">info@helptucson.org</a>	Individualized case management, employment placement, housing assistance and trauma-based therapy
AR	<b>Little Rock Compassion Center</b>	<a href="https://lrcompassioncenter.org">https://lrcompassioncenter.org</a>	3618 W Roosevelt Rd, Little Rock, AK 72204	(501) 296-9114	Food, shelter, and reentry support
AR	<b>Arkansas Department of Corrections</b>	<a href="https://doc.arkansas.gov/community-correction-reentry/">https://doc.arkansas.gov/community-correction-reentry/</a>	105 W Capitol Ave, #2, Little Rock, AR 72201	(501) 682-9510	Reentry support



# State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
CA	<b>Root &amp; Rebound</b>	<a href="https://www.rootandrebound.org/resources/ca-roadmap/">https://www.rootandrebound.org/resources/ca-roadmap/</a>	1610 Harrison St, Ste E, East Oakland, CA 94612	(510) 279-4662 <a href="mailto:info@rootandrebound.org">info@rootandrebound.org</a>	Reentry legal hotline, help with accessing employment, finding housing, comprehensive California reentry guide
CA	<b>Community Prisoner Mother Program</b>	<a href="https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/adult-operations/fops/community-prisoner-mother-program/">https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/adult-operations/fops/community-prisoner-mother-program/</a>	1515 S Street, Rm 415S, Sacramento, CA 95811	(909) 624-1233 Ext 2160	Reentry support for mothers with children
CA	<b>Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership</b>	<a href="https://www.lareentry.org/">https://www.lareentry.org/</a>	724 N La Brea Blvd, Inglewood, CA 90302	<a href="mailto:info@lareentry.org">info@lareentry.org</a>	Reentry support including employment, housing, and education assistance
CA	<b>California Reentry Program</b>	<a href="https://www.ca-reentry.org/">https://www.ca-reentry.org/</a>	PO Box 483, San Quentin, CA 95964	(415) 870-7020 <a href="mailto:info@ca-reentry.org">info@ca-reentry.org</a>	Reentry support and education
CA	<b>Homeboy Industries</b>	<a href="https://homeboyindustries.org">https://homeboyindustries.org</a>	130 W Bruno St, Los Angeles, CA, 90012	(323) 526-1254 <a href="mailto:info@homeboyindustries.org">info@homeboyindustries.org</a>	Reentry support for former gang members
CA	<b>Transitions Clinic</b>	<a href="https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/">https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/</a>	Multiple locations	<a href="mailto:TCNinfo@ucsf.edu">TCNinfo@ucsf.edu</a>	Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
CA	<b>California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation</b>	<a href="https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/about-cdcr/vision-mission-values/">https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/about-cdcr/vision-mission-values/</a>	1515 S St, Sacramento, CA 95811	(916) 324-7308	Reentry support including health, education, and employment services
CO	<b>The Reentry Initiative</b>	<a href="https://www.reentryinitiative.org/">https://www.reentryinitiative.org/</a>	402 Kimbark St, Longmont, CO 80501	(720) 640-9513 <a href="mailto:info@reentryinitiative.org">info@reentryinitiative.org</a>	Reentry support and pre-release education
CO	<b>Focus Reentry</b>	<a href="https://www.focusreentry.org/about-focus">https://www.focusreentry.org/about-focus</a>	1905 15th St, Boulder, CO 80306	(720) 662-2577 <a href="mailto:info@focusreentry.org">info@focusreentry.org</a>	Reentry support





## State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
<b>CT</b>	<b>Emerge</b>	<a href="https://www.emergect.net">https://www.emergect.net</a>	830 Grand Ave, New Haven, CT 06511	(203) 562-0171, (203) 535-0940 <a href="mailto:info@emergect.net">info@emergect.net</a>	Reentry support including transitional employment program
<b>CT</b>	<b>Families in Crisis</b>	<a href="https://familycenters.org/Families-in-Crisis">https://familycenters.org/Families-in-Crisis</a>	60 Popieluszko Ct, Hartford, CT 06106	<a href="mailto:info@familiesincrisis.org">info@familiesincrisis.org</a>	Reentry support including health, education, and employment services
<b>CT</b>	<b>Transitions Clinic</b>	<a href="https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/">https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/</a>	Multiple locations	<a href="mailto:TCNinfo@ucsf.edu">TCNinfo@ucsf.edu</a>	Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
<b>DE</b>	<b>Sojourners' Place</b>	<a href="http://www.sojournersplace.org/re-entry-services.html">http://www.sojournersplace.org/re-entry-services.html</a>	2901 NE Blvd, Wilmington, DE 19802	(302) 764-4713	Reentry support, case managed residential program
<b>FL</b>	<b>Covenant House Florida</b>	<a href="https://www.covenanthousefl.org/">https://www.covenanthousefl.org/</a>	733 Breakers Ave, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304	(954) 561-5559	Shelter for youth including health services, substance use treatment, and employment assistance
<b>GA</b>	<b>Georgia Department of Correction</b>	<a href="https://gdc.ga.gov/">https://gdc.ga.gov/</a>	300 Patrol Road, Forsyth, GA 31029	(404) 656-4661	Reentry support
<b>GA</b>	<b>Liberty County Re-entry Coalition, Inc.</b>	<a href="https://www.libertyreentry.org/">https://www.libertyreentry.org/</a>	205 E. Court St, Hinesville, GA 31313	(912) 877-5293	Reentry support including housing, employment, and childcare assistance
<b>HI</b>	<b>WorkNet</b>	<a href="https://www.worknetinc.org/">https://www.worknetinc.org/</a>	1130 N Nimitz Hwy #B-224, Honolulu, HI 96817	(808) 521-7770 <a href="mailto:worknethawaii@gmail.com">worknethawaii@gmail.com</a>	Reentry support including referrals for housing and vocational skills training
<b>ID</b>	<b>The Center for Hope Peer Recovery Center</b>	<a href="https://www.centerforhopeif.org">https://www.centerforhopeif.org</a>	530 E Anderson, Idaho Falls, ID 83401	(208) 538-1888	Reentry support including addiction and mental health support



# State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
IA	<b>Inside Out Reentry Community</b>	<a href="https://www.insideoutreentry.com">https://www.insideoutreentry.com</a>	500 N Clinton St, Iowa City, IA 52245	(319) 338-7996 <a href="mailto:hello@insideoutreentry.com">hello@insideoutreentry.com</a>	Reentry resource center including educational services, housing and employment assistance
KY	<b>Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy, Capital Post Conviction Branch</b>	<a href="https://dpa.ky.gov">https://dpa.ky.gov</a>	100 Fair Oaks Ln, Frankfort, KY 40601	(502) 564-8006	Legal services and referrals
LA	<b>Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Louisiana, Inc.</b>	<a href="https://goodwillno.org/programs/ex-offender-reentry-program/">https://goodwillno.org/programs/ex-offender-reentry-program/</a>	3400 Tulane Ave, Ste 1000, New Orleans, LA, 70119	(504) 456-2622	Employment training and assistance
LA	<b>Community Service Center, Inc.</b>		4000 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA 70115	(504) 897-6277 <a href="mailto:cscnouw@aol.com">cscnouw@aol.com</a>	Reentry support including case management, support groups, and substance use referrals
LA	<b>FIT Clinic at Healthcare for the Homeless</b>	<a href="https://nhhchc.org/health-care-for-the-homeless/">https://nhhchc.org/health-care-for-the-homeless/</a>	Multiple locations		Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
ME	<b>Restorative Justice Project</b>	<a href="http://www.rjpmidcoast.org/community-reentry-program.html">http://www.rjpmidcoast.org/community-reentry-program.html</a>	39A Spring St, Belfast, ME 04915	(207) 338.2742	Residential program including restorative justice circles, court diversion, and community conferencing
MD	<b>DHCDC ReEntry Program</b>	<a href="http://druidheights.com/dhcdc-reentry-program/">http://druidheights.com/dhcdc-reentry-program/</a>		(410) 523-1350	Reentry support including housing assistance, anger management, conflict resolution and job readiness training
MD	<b>Maryland CURE</b>	<a href="http://marylandcure.webs.com">marylandcure.webs.com</a>	PO Box 23, Simpsonville, MD 21150	<a href="mailto:marylandcure@comcast.net">marylandcure@comcast.net</a>	Reentry support



# State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
<b>MA</b>	<b>Volunteers of America Massachusetts</b>	<a href="https://voamass.org/">https://voamass.org/</a>	441 Centre St, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130	(617) 522-8086 <a href="mailto:info@voamass.org">info@voamass.org</a>	Reentry support
<b>MA</b>	<b>Prisoners' Legal Services</b>	<a href="http://www.plsma.org">www.plsma.org</a>	10 Winthrop Sq, Boston, MA 02110	(617) 482-2773 <a href="mailto:lwalker@plsma.org">lwalker@plsma.org</a>	Legal services and referrals to other services
<b>MI</b>	<b>FIND-CURE</b>		PO Box 51334, Kalamazoo, MI 49005	(269) 384-5755 <a href="mailto:gooseko@att.net">gooseko@att.net</a>	Reentry resources and information
<b>MN</b>	<b>Central Minnesota Re-entry Project</b>	<a href="http://cmnrrp.org/">http://cmnrrp.org/</a>	PO Box 2391, St. Cloud, MN 56302	(320) 656-9004 <a href="mailto:pat@cmnrrp.org">pat@cmnrrp.org</a>	Reentry support including referrals to other services
<b>MN</b>	<b>AMICUS</b>	<a href="https://www.voamnwi.org/amicus-reconnect">https://www.voamnwi.org/amicus-reconnect</a>	3041 4th Ave, Minnesota, MN 55048	(612) 877-4250	Reentry support including housing assistance, mental health care, and support groups
<b>MN</b>	<b>Hennepin Healthcare</b>	<a href="https://www.hennepinhealthcare.org/">https://www.hennepinhealthcare.org/</a>			Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
<b>MS</b>	<b>Mississippi Department of Corrections</b>	<a href="https://www.mdcc.ms.gov/Pages/default.aspx">https://www.mdcc.ms.gov/Pages/default.aspx</a>		(320) 656-9004	Reentry support
<b>MO</b>	<b>Humanitri</b>	<a href="https://humanitri.org/">https://humanitri.org/</a>	PO Box 6512, St. Louis, MO 63125	(314) 772-7720	Reentry support including housing
<b>MT</b>	<b>Community, Counseling, and Correctional Services</b>	<a href="http://www.cccscorp.com/programs/qcrrp/">http://www.cccscorp.com/programs/qcrrp/</a>	675 South 16th Ave, Bozeman, MT 59715	(406) 494-0306 <a href="mailto:mhamblin@cccscorp.com">mhamblin@cccscorp.com</a>	Reentry support including housing assistance
<b>NE</b>	<b>Reentry Alliance of Nebraska</b>	<a href="http://re-entrynebraska.org">http://re-entrynebraska.org</a>	1230 O St, Ste 240, Lincoln, NE 68508		Reentry support
<b>NV</b>	<b>Foundation for Recovery</b>	<a href="https://forrecovery.org/">https://forrecovery.org/</a>	4800 Alpine Pl, Ste 12, Las Vegas, NV 89107	(702) 257-8199 <a href="mailto:info@forrecovery.org">info@forrecovery.org</a>	Peer recovery support services to individuals with substance use and mental health disorders



# State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
NH	<b>Head Rest</b>	<a href="https://headrest.org/">https://headrest.org/</a>	141 Mascoma St, Lebanon, NH 03766 (on the Alice Peck Day campus)	(603) 448-4872	Crisis hotline
NJ	<b>Reentry Coalition of New Jersey</b>	<a href="https://reentrycoalitionofnj.org/">https://reentrycoalitionofnj.org/</a>	986 S Broad St, Trenton, NJ, 08611	(609) 706-2684 <a href="mailto:info@reentrycoalitionofnj.org">info@reentrycoalitionofnj.org</a>	Online resource directory
NJ	<b>H.O.P.E For Ex-Offenders, Inc.</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/HOPEforExo/">https://www.facebook.com/HOPEforExo/</a>	259 Passaic St, Hackensack, NJ 07601	(201) 646-0234	Reentry support including referrals to other services
NM	<b>A Peaceful Habitation</b>	<a href="https://www.apeacefulhabitation.org/">https://www.apeacefulhabitation.org/</a>	PO Box 53516, Albuquerque, NM 53516	(505) 44-5937	Transitional housing, support, and services to women reintegrating into society
NY	<b>Youth Represent</b>	<a href="https://youthrepresent.org/">https://youthrepresent.org/</a>	11 Park Pl, Ste 1512, New York, NY 10007	(646) 759-8080	Legal and social support for youth affected by the criminal justice system
NY	<b>Fortune Society</b>	<a href="http://www.fortunesociety.org">www.fortunesociety.org</a>	29-76 Northern Blvd, Long Island City, NY, 11101	(212) 691-7554 <a href="mailto:info@fortunesociety.org">info@fortunesociety.org</a>	Reentry support including referrals for other programs
NY	<b>Transitions Clinics</b>	<a href="https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/">https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/</a>	Multiple locations	<a href="mailto:TCNinfo@ucsf.edu">TCNinfo@ucsf.edu</a>	Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
NC	<b>North Carolina Department of Corrections, Office of Transition Services</b>	<a href="https://www.doc.state.nc.us/rap/OTS.htm">https://www.doc.state.nc.us/rap/OTS.htm</a>		(919) 825-2739 <a href="mailto:monica.artis@ncdps.gov">monica.artis@ncdps.gov</a>	Reentry support
NC	<b>Transitions Clinics</b>	<a href="https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/">https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/</a>	Multiple locations		Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill



## State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
<b>ND</b>	<b>The Lionheart Foundation</b>	<a href="https://lionheart.org">https://lionheart.org</a>	PO Box 327, Dedham, MA 02027	(781) 444-6667 <a href="mailto:questions@lionheart.org">questions@lionheart.org</a>	Reentry support including child care assistance and trauma healing
<b>OH</b>	<b>Women's Re-Entry Resource Network</b>		1468 W 25th St, Cleveland, OH 44113	(216) 696-2715 <a href="mailto:mail@lutheranmetro.org">mail@lutheranmetro.org</a>	Reentry support and referrals for women
<b>OK</b>	<b>Oklahoma Rehabilitation Services</b>	<a href="https://oklahoma.gov/okdrs/job-seekers/dvr.html">https://oklahoma.gov/okdrs/job-seekers/dvr.html</a>	3535 NW 58th St, Ste 500, Oklahoma City, OK 73112	(405) 951-3470, (800) 845-8476	Reentry support including vocational training
<b>OK</b>	<b>Hope for the Hopeless, Inc.</b>	<a href="https://m.facebook.com/Hope-For-The-Hopeless-100151070048545/">https://m.facebook.com/Hope-For-The-Hopeless-100151070048545/</a>	1301 W Sheridan Ave, Oklahoma City, OK, 73101	<a href="mailto:info@h4web.org">info@h4web.org</a>	Reentry resources and information
<b>OR</b>	<b>Prisoner Reentry Employment Program (PREP)</b>	<a href="https://seworks.org/ex-offenders/">https://seworks.org/ex-offenders/</a>	6401 SE Foster Rd, Portland, OR, 97206	(503) 772-2300	Reentry support including employment assistance
<b>PA</b>	<b>Philadelphia RISE—Reintegration Services for Ex-Offenders</b>	<a href="https://www.phila.gov/departments/office-of-reentry-partnerships/rise/">https://www.phila.gov/departments/office-of-reentry-partnerships/rise/</a>	1425 Arch St, First Fl, Philadelphia, PA 19102	(215) 683-3370 <a href="mailto:rise@phila.gov">rise@phila.gov</a>	Reentry support including financial counseling, vocational training, education, and mental health services
<b>RI</b>	<b>Rhode Island Department of Corrections, Office of Reentry Services</b>	<a href="https://doc.ri.gov/rehabilitative/reentry">https://doc.ri.gov/rehabilitative/reentry</a>	40 Howard Ave, Cranston, RI 02920	(401) 462 0933 <a href="mailto:reentry@doc.ri.gov">reentry@doc.ri.gov</a>	Reentry support
<b>RI</b>	<b>Open Doors</b>	<a href="http://www.opendoorsri.org/about">http://www.opendoorsri.org/about</a>	485 Plainfield St, Providence, RI, 02909	(401) 781-5805 <a href="mailto:admin@opendoorsri.org">admin@opendoorsri.org</a>	Reentry support including employment assistance, and transitional housing



# State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
RI	<b>Center for Primary Care, Lifespan</b>	<a href="https://www.lifespan.org/locations/center-primary-care-rhode-island-hospital">https://www.lifespan.org/locations/center-primary-care-rhode-island-hospital</a>			Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
SC	<b>Alston Wilkes Society</b>	<a href="http://www.alstonwilkesociety.org">www.alstonwilkesociety.org</a>	3519 Medical Dr, Columbia, SC 29203	(803) 799-2490	Adult residential services, veteran, and youth services
SD	<b>GEO Reentry Services</b>	<a href="https://www.geogroup.com/Reentry-Services">https://www.geogroup.com/Reentry-Services</a>			Reentry support including substance use and anger management recovery
TN	<b>Tennessee Department of Correction, Tennessee Reentry Collaborative (TREC)</b>	<a href="https://www.tn.gov/correction/redirect---rehabilitation/tennessee-reentry-collaborative--trec-.html">https://www.tn.gov/correction/redirect---rehabilitation/tennessee-reentry-collaborative--trec-.html</a>	Rachel Jackson Bldg, Sixth Fl, Nashville, TN	(615) 741-1000 <a href="mailto:april.buckner@tn.gov">april.buckner@tn.gov</a>	Reentry support
TN	<b>Project Return</b>	<a href="https://projectreturninc.org">https://projectreturninc.org</a>	109 Lafayette St, Nashville, TN, 37210	(615) 327-9654 <a href="mailto:pri@projectreturninc.org">pri@projectreturninc.org</a>	Reentry support including case management, employment assistance, housing and utility assistance
TX	<b>Goodwill industries</b>	<a href="https://www.goodwillhouston.org/">https://www.goodwillhouston.org/</a>	1140 W Loop N, Houston, TX 77055	(713) 692-6221	Employment training and assistance
TX	<b>Texas County Resources Map</b>	<a href="http://countyresources.texascjc.org">http://countyresources.texascjc.org</a>			Map of reentry resources throughout the state
TX	<b>Transitions Clinics</b>	<a href="https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/">https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/</a>	Multiple locations		Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
UT	<b>Golden Spike Outreach</b>		869 S 170, East Provo, UT, 84601		Reentry support including housing and substance use treatment



# State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
VT	<b>Reentry Essentials Inc.</b>	<a href="https://www.reentryessentials.org/uploads/1/2/7/2/127293103/reentry_essentials_resources_-_vermont.pdf">https://www.reentryessentials.org/uploads/1/2/7/2/127293103/reentry_essentials_resources_-_vermont.pdf</a>		<a href="mailto:info@reentryessentials.org">info@reentryessentials.org</a>	Reentry resource PDF
VA	<b>Virginia Department of Corrections</b>	<a href="https://vadoc.virginia.gov/offender-resources/reentry-resources/">https://vadoc.virginia.gov/offender-resources/reentry-resources/</a>			Reentry support
VA	<b>Opportunities, Alternatives &amp; Resources of Fairfax County</b>	<a href="http://www.oarfairfax.org">www.oarfairfax.org</a>	10700 Page Ave, Ste 200, Fairfax, VA 22030	(703) 246-3033 <a href="mailto:info@oarnova.org">info@oarnova.org</a>	Restorative justice organization providing violence intervention and employment training
VA	<b>Offender Aid and Restoration of Arlington County</b>	<a href="http://www.oaronline.org">www.oaronline.org</a>	1400 N Uhle St, Arlington, VA 22201	(703) 228-7030	Reentry support including transition assistance and employment counseling
WA	<b>Washington Appleseed</b>	<a href="https://wareentryguide.org/">https://wareentryguide.org/</a>	PO Box 1111, Seattle, WA 98108	(415) 952-7753	Reentry support
WA	<b>The Journey Project/ Communities of Belonging</b>	<a href="http://www.thejourneyproject.info">www.thejourneyproject.info</a>		(206) 605-5351 <a href="mailto:housingtransition@thejourneyproject.info">housingtransition@thejourneyproject.info</a> <a href="mailto:Kristie@CommunitiesofBelonging.org">Kristie@CommunitiesofBelonging.org</a>	Reentry support, transitional housing
WA	<b>Country Doctor Community Health Center</b>	<a href="https://cdchc.org/">https://cdchc.org/</a>	Multiple locations in Seattle		Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people
WV	<b>Workforce West Virginia</b>	<a href="https://workforcewv.org">https://workforcewv.org</a>	Multiple locations	(800) 252-5627	Employment program and assistance
WV	<b>West Virginia Reentry Council</b>	<a href="https://wvreentry.org/">https://wvreentry.org/</a>		(304) 315-4796 <a href="mailto:bsharp@wvcc.org">bsharp@wvcc.org</a>	Reentry support



## State Resources

State	Name	Website	Address	Phone/Email	Description
<b>WV</b>	<b>State Agency Directory</b>	<a href="https://pds.wv.gov/community-resources/Pages/client-resources.aspx">https://pds.wv.gov/community-resources/Pages/client-resources.aspx</a>	One Players Club Dr, Ste 301, Charleston, WV 25311	(304) 558-3905	Online resource directory of services throughout the state
<b>WI</b>	<b>Fair Shake</b>	<a href="https://www.fairshake.net/">https://www.fairshake.net/</a>	PO Box 63, Westby, WI 54667	(608) 634-6363 <a href="mailto:outreach@fairshake.net">outreach@fairshake.net</a>	Online resource directory
<b>WI</b>	<b>Journey Home</b>	<a href="https://justdane.org/journey-home/">https://justdane.org/journey-home/</a>	2115 S Park St, Madison, WI 53713	(608) 256-0906 <a href="mailto:info@justdane.org">info@justdane.org</a>	Reentry support including case management, life skills training, and employment assistance
<b>WI</b>	<b>Transitions Clinics</b>	<a href="https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/">https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/</a>	Multiple locations	<a href="mailto:TCNinfo@ucsf.edu">TCNinfo@ucsf.edu</a>	Health clinic that welcomes formerly incarcerated people, especially those who are chronically ill
<b>WY</b>	<b>Laramie Interfaith</b>	<a href="https://www.laramieinterfaith.org">https://www.laramieinterfaith.org</a>	712 Canby St, Laramie, WY, 82070	(307) 742-4240 <a href="mailto:info@laramieinterfaith.org">info@laramieinterfaith.org</a>	Housing and food assistance program, rental and utilities assistance
<b>WY</b>	<b>Wyoming Department of Corrections</b>	<a href="https://corrections.wyo.gov/services-and-programs/reentry-and-offender-resources">https://corrections.wyo.gov/services-and-programs/reentry-and-offender-resources</a>	1934 Wyatt Dr, Ste 100, Cheyenne, WY 82002	(307) 777-7206 <a href="mailto:justin.burkart@wyo.gov">justin.burkart@wyo.gov</a>	Reentry support including case management and housing support
<b>WY</b>	<b>Second Chance Ministries</b>	<a href="https://www.secondchancegillette.org">https://www.secondchancegillette.org</a>	706 Longmont St, Gillette, WY 82716	(307) 682-3148	Reentry support including referrals to other recovery groups, clothing, housing, and employment assistance





## Part 5: Forms

- Social Security Card Request Form
- Sample Resumes
- Veterans Beneficiary Apportionment Form

# SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## Application for a Social Security Card

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0960-0066

<b>1</b>	<b>NAME</b> TO BE SHOWN ON CARD			First	Full Middle Name	Last
	<b>FULL NAME AT BIRTH</b> IF OTHER THAN ABOVE			First	Full Middle Name	Last
	OTHER NAMES USED					
<b>2</b>	Social Security number previously assigned to the person listed in item 1				<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
<b>3</b>	<b>PLACE OF BIRTH</b> (Do Not Abbreviate) City State or Foreign Country				Office Use Only <b>4</b>	<b>DATE OF BIRTH</b> MM/DD/YYYY
<b>5</b>	<b>CITIZENSHIP</b> (Check One)		<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Citizen <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Alien Allowed To Work <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Alien <b>Not</b> Allowed To Work (See Instructions On Page 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (See Instructions On Page 3)			
<b>6</b>	<b>ETHNICITY</b> Are You Hispanic or Latino? (Your Response is Voluntary) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<b>7</b>	<b>RACE</b> Select One or More (Your Response is Voluntary) <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Asian		
<b>8</b>	<b>SEX</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female			
<b>9</b>	<b>A. PARENT/ MOTHER'S NAME AT HER BIRTH</b>			First	Full Middle Name	Last
	<b>B. PARENT/ MOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER</b> (See instructions for 9 B on Page 3)			<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
<b>10</b>	<b>A. PARENT/ FATHER'S NAME</b>			First	Full Middle Name	Last
	<b>B. PARENT/ FATHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER</b> (See instructions for 10B on Page 3)			<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>		<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
<b>11</b>	Has the person listed in item 1 or anyone acting on his/her behalf ever filed for or received a Social Security number card before? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (If "yes" answer questions 12-13) <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know (If "don't know," skip to question 14.)					
<b>12</b>	Name shown on the most recent Social Security card issued for the person listed in item 1			First	Full Middle Name	Last
<b>13</b>	Enter any different date of birth if used on an earlier application for a card				MM/DD/YYYY	
<b>14</b>	<b>TODAY'S DATE</b> MM/DD/YYYY		<b>15</b>	<b>DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER</b> ( ) - - Area Code    Number		
<b>16</b>	<b>MAILING ADDRESS</b> (Do Not Abbreviate)			Street Address, Apt. No., PO Box, Rural Route No.		
		City		State/Foreign Country		ZIP Code
<b>17</b>	<b>YOUR SIGNATURE</b>			<b>18</b>	<b>YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON IN ITEM 1 IS:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Or Adoptive Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE (FOR SSA USE ONLY)						
NPN		DOC		NTI		CAN
PBC		EVI	EVA	EVC	PRA	ITV
EVIDENCE SUBMITTED			SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EMPLOYEE(S) REVIEWING EVIDENCE AND/OR CONDUCTING INTERVIEW			
			DATE			
			DATE			

# John Smith

## Contact

123 W. Main St. #5  
Peoria, IL 60000  
[John.smith22@gmail.com](mailto:John.smith22@gmail.com)  
300-600-1234

## Education

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign  
July 2012-March 2014  
*Upper-division courses in literature, communication, and theater.*  
GPA: 4.0

Danville Area Community College  
*Earned over 60 credits in toward an Associate's degree*  
GPA: 4.0

## Key Skills

Kitchen equipment and sanitation  
Special diet preparation  
Conflict resolution  
Creative and academic writing  
Mentoring  
Inventory, order, and stocking  
Leadership in theater troupe

## Objective

My goal is to become associated with a company where I can utilize my skills and gain further experience while enhancing the company's productivity and reputation

## Experience

Resource Room Worker • Education Justice Project  
July 2012-March 2014  
*Assisted students with library needs, assisted tutors with tech support, conducted library circulation work, kept rooms cleaned and well organized*

Teaching Assistant • Adult Basic Education, State of Illinois  
Dec 2015-Dec 2016  
*Tutored students in basic literacy and numeracy for the Test of Adult Basic Education, graded student work, and maintained student records.*

Special Diet Cook • State of Illinois  
1997-2015  
*Operated commercial ovens, fryers, steam pots, and other equipment, prepared special diets, served meals in high capacity cafeteria*

## Publications and Awards

"Rhetorical Listening" (essay) Intertext, 2014  
"Practicing Openness in Prison Education: A Collaborative Inquiry Into Empathic Pedagogy and the Politics of Compassion in Writing Center Practice." College Composition and Communication Conference, 2014  
Prison Writing (essay). College Composition and Communication Conference, 2014  
Martha Webber Creative Nonfiction Award, 2013.  
Education Justice Project Creative Writing Award in Poetry, 2012

## References

Maggie Jones, Associate Professor of Sociology  
University of IL-Springfield  
[j.ones@gmail.com](mailto:j.ones@gmail.com) 600-300-4000

Fred Thomas, General Manager  
Smith Foundation  
1323 Main St., Peoria, IL 60000  
[f.thomas@email.com](mailto:f.thomas@email.com) 300-400-5000

# JOHN ALBERT JOHNSON

500 Main St, Anytown, IL 60606 · (555) 555-0000

[JohnJohnson@email.com](mailto:JohnJohnson@email.com)

## EXPERIENCE

2015 TO PRESENT

### ENGLISH TEACHER

ADULT LEARNING CENTER, CHICAGO, IL

Coordinate community outreach efforts and administer institutional examinations.

MARCH 2013-DECEMBER 2014

### TEMP WORKER

FRIENDLY TEMP AGENCY, CHICAGO, IL

Various assignments involving administrative and clerical roles

AUGUST 2010-JANUARY 2013

### TEACHER, PEER TUTOR

ILLINOIS CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE, DECATUR, IL

Developed lesson plans, tutored beginning and advanced students.

## EDUCATION

JUNE 2011-2012

### ILLINOIS CENTRAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE IN GENERAL STUDIES

- Education coursework: Advanced mathematics, Linguistics for language teachers, Political and historical perspectives in Education, Sociology of Education, Philosophy of Education

CERTIFICATE, PEER COUNSELING

2009

### NORTHERN ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CERTIFICATE IN HORTICULTURE STUDIES

## REFERENCES

Sharon Mendez, Coordinator  
Adult Learning Center  
1010 Center Street  
Our Town, IL 60000  
[sharonmendez@email.com](mailto:sharonmendez@email.com)  
555.555.5555

William Smith, Director  
Friendly Temp Agency  
40 North Ave.  
Our Town, IL 66666  
[williamsmith@email.com](mailto:williamsmith@email.com)  
555.555.5555

# Peter Smith

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123 Main St., Chicago, IL 60000 | 312-555-5555 | petersmith@gmail.com

## Experience

University of Illinois

### ESL INSTRUCTOR

2011-2014

- Served as a volunteer ESL instructor in Danville, IL to provide a much needed ESL class in the community
- Developed and taught lesson plans and activities in a multi-instructor class.
- Shared instructor responsibilities with 7 other instructors in a class of 10-12 students twice a week for a total of six hours with beginner-intermediate students
- Taught reading and writing for communicating effectively in personal and workplace settings.
- Provided corrective language feedback on oral and written production.

University of Illinois

### CHICAGO/COMMUNITY ANTI-VIOLENCE EDUCATION (CAVE)

2011-2014

- Helped design and implement a peer driven anti-violence program that empowers incarcerated men through mentoring, education and character building to return to their communities as peace makers.

Danville Correctional Center (Clinical Services)

### GUEST SPEAKER/SUBSTANCE ABUSE INSTRUCTOR

2011-2014

- Designed and presented lessons relating to substance abuse prevention to students at Danville Correctional Center

### PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS EDUCATOR

2010-2011

- Designed and presented lessons focused on peaceful solutions for conflict resolution

## Education

### GOVERNOR'S STATE UNIVERSITY

JUNE 2016

- Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies

### CARL SANDBERG COLLEGE, GALESBURG IL

2000-2001

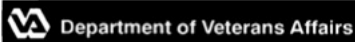
- Associate's Degree in General Education
- Business Management Certificate
- GPA: 3.38

### CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE'S ADDICTION PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

2012

## Skills

- Fluent in Spanish and English
- Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint



(DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE)  
 (VA DATE STAMP)

**INFORMATION REGARDING APPORTIONMENT OF BENEFICIARY'S AWARD**

INSTRUCTIONS: All or part of a veteran's disability award may be apportioned (paid) to the veteran's spouse, child, or dependent parent. A surviving spouse's award may also be apportioned for the veteran's child or children. Print all answers clearly. If an answer is "none" or "0," write that or line through the space provided. For additional space, attach a separate sheet, indicating the item number to which the answers apply. Make sure to write the veteran's name and VA claim number on any attachments to the form.

IMPORTANT: If you are certifying that you are married for the purpose of VA benefits, your marriage must be recognized by the place where you and/or your spouse resided at the time of marriage, or where you and/or your spouse resided when you filed your claim (or a later date when you became eligible for benefits) (38 U.S.C. § 103(c)). Additional guidance on when VA recognizes marriages is available at <http://www.va.gov/opa/marriage/>.

1. FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST NAME OF VETERAN		2. VA FILE NUMBER C/CSS-	
3A. FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST NAME OF PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM (If other than veteran)		3B. MAILING ADDRESS (Number and street or rural route, city or P.O., State and ZIP Code)	
3C. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include Area Code)		3D. E-MAIL ADDRESS (If applicable)	
Daytime		Evening	
4A. WHO ARE YOU REQUESTING AN APPORTIONMENT FOR? (List first, middle, and last names)		4B. WHAT IS HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP TO THE VETERAN?	
5A. HOW MUCH IS THE VETERAN OR VETERAN'S SURVIVING SPOUSE CONTRIBUTING TO THE PERSON(S) FOR WHOM AN APPORTIONMENT IS BEING CLAIMED? \$		5B. HOW OFTEN ARE THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE?	
6. IF THE SPOUSE IS CLAIMING AN APPORTIONMENT, IS HE/SHE LIVING WITH ANOTHER PERSON AND HOLDING HIMSELF/HERSELF OUT OPENLY TO THE PUBLIC AS THE SPOUSE OF THE OTHER PERSON? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If "Yes," provide an explanation) _____		7. HAS THE VETERAN'S CHILD(REN) BEEN LEGALLY ADOPTED BY ANOTHER PERSON? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	

**PART I - INCOME AND NET WORTH**

Report all income and net worth. Report the gross amounts before you take out deductions for taxes, insurance, etc. If you do not receive income or net worth from a particular source, write "0" or "none" in the space provided. **Do not leave the space blank.** Note: If you are the veteran or surviving spouse, report only your income and net worth. If you are the claimant or are filing on behalf of the claimant(s), report all income and net worth for all persons for whom an apportionment is being claimed. If you are claiming an apportionment as the custodian of the veteran's child or children, report your income and net worth and the income and net worth of the child(ren).

**MONTHLY INCOME**

SOURCE	VETERAN OR SURVIVING SPOUSE	CUSTODIAN	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR
1A. GROSS WAGES FROM ALL EMPLOYMENT	\$	\$	\$	\$
1B. SOCIAL SECURITY				
1C. RETIREMENT OR ANNUITIES				
1D. SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) / PUBLIC ASSISTANCE				
1E. OTHER INCOME (Show source)				
1F. OTHER INCOME (Show source)				

**NET WORTH**

SOURCE	VETERAN OR SURVIVING SPOUSE	CUSTODIAN	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR
2A. CASH/NON-INTEREST-BEARING BANK ACCOUNTS	\$	\$	\$	\$
2B. INTEREST-BEARING BANK ACCOUNTS				
2C. IRAS, KEOGH PLANS, ETC.				
2D. STOCKS, BONDS, MUTUAL FUNDS, ETC.				
2E. REAL PROPERTY (Not your home)				
2F. ALL OTHER PROPERTY AND ASSETS				

**PART II - MONTHLY LIVING EXPENSES**

Show your monthly living expenses, including any monthly installment payments. If you do not have expenses from a particular source, write "0" or "none" in the space provided. Do not leave the space blank.

**Note: If you are the veteran or surviving spouse, report only your expenses. If you are the claimant or are filing on behalf of the claimant(s), report expenses for all persons for whom an apportionment is being claimed. If you are claiming an apportionment as the custodian of the veteran's child or children, report your expenses and the expenses of the child(ren).**

SOURCE	VETERAN OR SURVIVING SPOUSE	CUSTODIAN	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR
1A. RENT OR HOUSE PAYMENT	\$	\$	\$	\$
1B. FOOD				
1C. UTILITIES <i>(Water, gas, electricity)</i>				
1D. TELEPHONE				
1E. CLOTHING				
1F. MEDICAL EXPENSES				
1G. SCHOOL EXPENSES				
1H. OTHER EXPENSES <i>(Show source)</i>				
1I. OTHER EXPENSES <i>(Show source)</i>				

**PART III - CERTIFICATION AND SIGNATURE**

I CERTIFY THAT the foregoing statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1. SIGNATURE OF VETERAN OR CLAIMANT

2. DATE SIGNED

**PENALTY** - The law provides severe penalties which include fine or imprisonment or both, for the willful submission of any statement or evidence of a material fact, knowing it is false, or fraudulent acceptance of any payment to which you are not entitled.

**PRIVACY ACT INFORMATION** - The VA will not disclose information collected on this form to any source other than what has been authorized under the Privacy Act of 1974 or Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations 1.576 for routine uses (i.e., civil or criminal law enforcement, congressional communications, epidemiological or research studies, the collection of money owed to the United States, litigation in which the United States is a party or has an interest, the administration of VA programs and delivery of VA benefits, verification of identity and status, and personnel administration) as identified in the VA system of records, 58VA 21/22/28, Compensation, Pension, Education and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Records - VA, published in the Federal Register. Your obligation to respond is required to obtain or retain benefits. The requested information is considered relevant and necessary to determine maximum benefits under the law. The responses you submit are considered confidential (38 U.S.C. 5701). Information submitted is subject to verification through computer matching programs with other agencies.

**RESPONDENT BURDEN** - We need this information to determine whether an apportionment of VA disability or death benefits may be made (38 U.S.C. 5307). Title 38, United States Code, allows us to ask for this information. We estimate that you will need an average of 30 minutes to review the instructions, find the information, and complete this form. VA cannot conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless a valid OMB control number is displayed. You are not required to respond to a collection of information if this number is not displayed. Valid OMB control numbers can be located on the OMB Internet Page at [www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain](http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain). If desired, you can call 1-800-827-1000 to get information on where to send comments or suggestions about this form.



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