

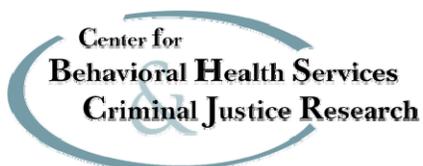
Pennsylvania Reentry Survival Manual

Manual for People Leaving
Prison

*Based on the experiences of those
who left or were leaving prison*



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



RUTGERS
THE STATE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW JERSEY

Message to People Leaving Prison

This manual is designed to help you, the person inside prison, help yourself and others inside prison to plan for successful community living. Its goal is simply to help you increase the odds of winning at community living. The manual will guide you through the process of planning by first asking a question, such as “do you have identification?” If the answer is “no”, then a series of steps are shown that guide you towards a “yes” response to the question. Space is left for you to add information for your state. The experiences of people who have walked this journey before you are shown in boxes along the right-hand side of the page.

This manual is a work in progress. It is based on the experiences shared with me by people inside prison or who had reentered the community from prison. From what has been told to me, most prisons have very basic reentry programs that help only a small number of people. Yet almost everyone inside prison eventually returns to the community. Living in the community after prison is not easy. Many people fail at living in the community or die trying! The research suggests that most people who leave prison return within three years. People who left prison report experiencing depression, disappointment, and frustration after they returned to the community. New evidence also shows that people who left prison are more likely to die in the community during the first weeks, months, and year after release compared to people their age already living in the community. These deaths were caused by homicide, suicide, drug overdose, and cardiovascular problems. This is a very bleak picture. We share it with you so that you can “get real” with what you are facing as you approach the gate. **Your experience back to the community can be different; it can be successful. It is your choice to make it a priority.**

This manual is for you and for those who will walk this journey after you. It becomes more useful to those following in your footsteps if you help to improve the manual through your experiences. Please let me know if there are ways to improve the manual by adding your comments on the last page and mailing it to my office. Together we can help people leaving prison help themselves survive reentry and live successfully in the community. **May successful living in the community be yours!**

Steps to Successful Community Living

In Prison Steps:

Step One:	Getting the Paper “You” in Order	4
Step Two:	Things to Know about Your Identity	6
Step Three:	Things to know about Your Conviction	7
Step Four:	“Get Real” with Community Living	9
Step Five:	Getting “You” Ready for Community Living	15
Step Six:	Getting and Staying Healthy	17
Step Seven:	Getting Your Family Ready for Your Return	19

Appendices:

- A:** Basics on Internet Searching
- B:** Resources for People Leaving Prison
- C:** Rights and Restrictions for Ex-Offenders in Pennsylvania
- D:** How to Apply for Public Assistance and Public Benefits
- E:** How to Apply for Medicaid
- F:** Federal Bonding and Tax Credits
- H:** Your Ideas to Improve the Manual

Step One: Getting the Paper “You in Order

<p>Question: Do you have identification?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES If you already have photo identification, skip to Step 2.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO Continue with this step at the bottom of this page.</p> <p>PA DOC has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (Penn DOT) to help you get identification. See your Corrections Counselor to get the status of your license and obtain photo ID.</p>	<p>Since 9-11, photo identification has become essential but also hard to get.</p>
<p><u>Birth Certificate</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>See your Corrections Counselor to obtain your birth certificate. They will help you apply for your birth certificate no matter which state you were born. It is much easier to get your birth certificate through your institution instead of applying for it after you are released. PA Veterans can get their birth certificates for free when sending along a copy of their DD214</p>	<p>Birth certificates are requested from the state where you were born.</p> <p>Birth certificates are requested from the state offices of Vital Records. See your Corrections Counselor to get your birth certificate.</p>
<p><u>Social Security Card</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>PA DOC has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Social Security Administration to help process Social Security card applications for a <u>duplicate</u> card. Speak with your Corrections Counselor about applying for a duplicate Social Security Card.</p> <p>NOTE: PA DOC will not be able to help you get a new Social Security Card.</p>	<p>Some DOCs request SS cards prior to release and give them to the person at the time of release.</p> <p>NOTE: The Social Security Administration will not process SS card applications submitted from people inside prison. You MUST go through PA DOC counselors!</p>
<p><u>Driver’s License or Non-Driver Photo Identification</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p>Speak with your Corrections Counselor to know the status of your license and obtain your driver’s license or non-driver photo ID. It is easier and faster to get photo identification through your institution than after being released.</p> <p>NOTE: The photo ID application you receive from PA DOC is specific to your institution and only works through the institution. The application form will not work if trying to apply in the community.</p>	<p>Some types of convictions, such as DWI or drug possession/distribution convictions, place lifetime or time limit suspensions on the ability to get a driver’s license. Check the laws in your state to determine if this affects you.</p>

Step Two: Things to Know about Your Identity

<p>Question: Is your identity clear of trouble?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES If your identity is clear of trouble, move to Step 3. If you are unsure, continue with this step.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active warrants or detainers ▪ Active fees or charges ▪ Possible “identity theft” 	<p>Many people reported that they have pending warrants and detainers and that they were unsure whether they would be picked up at the gate by federal or local agencies.</p> <p>Others had fees or charges associated with child support, court rulings to pay damages or restitution, or court/defense costs.</p>
<p>Doing a “Background Check” on Yourself</p> <p><u>Legal Background Check</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request information about detainers and warrants from paralegals in the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Request legal aid assistance in the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for someone on the outside to do a background check on you. 	<p>Employers and landlords often perform criminal and civil background checks. What they will find out about you varies by the search site. The most reliable search sites are NetDetective.com and CourtRecords.org. Both charge about \$29.00 for a three-year membership.</p> <p>You need to know what employers and landlords are going to see before they see it!</p>
<p><u>Credit Background Check</u></p> <p>The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires several nationwide companies to provide you with a <u>free</u> copy of your credit report, at your request, <u>once every 12 months</u>.</p> <p>Order your free report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Online – www.annualcreditreport.com 2.) Phone – 1-877-322-8228 3.) Mail – Find the Annual Credit Report Form at www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/requestformfinal.pdf <p>Send the completed form to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Annual Credit Report Request Service P.O. Box 105281 Atlanta, GA 30348-5281</p>	

Step Three: Things to Know about Your Conviction

<p>Question: Does your conviction affect reentry?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES If yes, you will need to work especially closely with the reentry counselor to identify resources. Continue with Step 3.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO My conviction does not affect where I live, the jobs I can apply for, my application public benefits, or my ability to obtain a driver’s license. Skip to Step 4.</p>	<p>Many people report that they cannot find affordable housing, transportation, decent jobs, or treatment services; and that they don’t know how to find them.</p>
<p><u>Home Plan Planning</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Request information on public housing from family members, friends, and community organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have your family member, friend, or community organization begin the search with this HUD website. www.hud.gov/local/pa/working/ph/index.cfm <p><input type="checkbox"/> The Public Housing Authority will not assist sex offenders find housing. Instead reach out to family, friends, and organizations in the community to get information on housing.</p> <div style="background-color: #e6f2ff; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>MYTH: Federal law bans all individuals with criminal histories from public housing programs.</p> <p>REALITY: HUD requires all PHAs to perform criminal background checks. Permanent ban on public housing for two offenses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Conviction of meth production on properties of federally-funded housing. 2.) Individuals who have a lifetime registration under state sex offender program. </div>	<p>Many states deny public housing to people with a history of violence and those with felony drug convictions.</p> <p>A main reason for denying a public housing application is “false” information on the application.</p> <p>Eviction can occur if a person receiving public housing benefits allows a convicted drug offender live with him or her within 2 years of their release.</p> <p>Private landlords can reject applicants or evict residents for arrests or convictions.</p> <p>PHAs can set different criminal record policies for <u>each</u> of their housing programs. Contact your local PHA office to get more information.</p>
<p><u>Public Assistance (including food stamps)</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individuals cannot apply for public assistance while incarcerated. Seek outside assistance from family, friends, or organizations to obtain information on public assistance.</p>	<p>Federal law says that individuals with certain drug-related charges are banned from receiving public benefits, including public housing, cash assistance and food stamps.</p>

Step Three: Things to Know about Your Conviction

Employment

- PA DOC has employment programs in your institution that will assist with writing resumes and cover letters, job applications, skill building and course work. See your Counselor to review these programs.
 - Your institution may offer vocational courses in auto technician, masonry, construction, and more. Receive a nationally accredited certification when the course is completed. Speak with your Counselor to discuss vocational courses and eligibility requirements.
 - Contact the Department of Labor & Industry in Harrisburg, PA to learn about the state laws that prevent people with criminal records from employment and about programs within the state that help ex-offenders get jobs.
 - Look for a new 4-week Reentry program at your institution coming Fall 2012. In the first two weeks of the program you will learn basic computer skills, how to write a cover letter and resume, and participate in mock job interviews. The third week will cover money management from the FDIC 'Money Smart' program. And, the fourth week will review living skills, decision making, anger management, and goal setting.
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

In Philadelphia, the "Ban the Box" law became effective July 2011. People with criminal records are no longer required to check off the 'criminal history' box on job applications. Those with a criminal record have an equal opportunity to complete a job application and one interview before discussing their criminal past.

Second Chance Ministries of Pennsylvania is a faith-based organization that provides spiritual support and employment resources for ex-offenders. Search their offender-friendly employer database at www.scmpa.com.

Employers in Pennsylvania may only consider a job applicant's felony or misdemeanor convictions if they relate to the individual's suitability for employment. Occupational licensing agencies may consider any felony, but only job related misdemeanor convictions. The applicant is entitled to a written explanation if he or she is denied employment based upon criminal history, or licensure based on a conviction.

Step Four: “Get Real” with Community Living

<p>Question 1: Do you have a “recovery” plan?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES I have a recovery plan that includes a plan to regain my community living skills, my need to work to pay bills, my parenting responsibilities, my ability to talk with men, women, and children, and my emotions. Skip to Question 2.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO If you are unsure, continue with this step.</p>	<p>People leaving prison report being scared by all they don’t know or forgot about living in the community.</p> <p>Some people were concerned about all the choices that have to be made and about paying for all the choices.</p>
<p><u>Recovery Plan</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Request books on the internet and searching the internet, <i>The Internet for Dummies</i> book is particularly good.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Enroll in a computer class and practice.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Request books and materials on how to budget your money, save, use credit, and use checking accounts and ATM cards. Practice budgeting and saving while in prison.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Get involved in any program or opportunity that brings you into contact with community members. Look into mentoring programs and look for ways to talk with people on the outside to practice talking with people and learning about community life.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read the newspaper – learn about what is happening in the outside world.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Request self-help books on building self-confidence, a positive self-image, and parenting.</p>	<p>Some express concern about not knowing how to use the internet or ATM cards.</p> <p>Some employers require job applications to be completed and submitted online.</p> <p>Many people reported problems managing money, using cashing services that charge high fees, and getting too many credit cards and misusing them, and not knowing how to get or use a checking account.</p> <p>People report feeling like an “alien” when they return to the community. People, places, and situations have changed since being behind the wall. Nothing looks the same. Bus and train tickets are purchased from machines, not people. People talk on cell phones everywhere.</p> <p>People report feeling like they need a “human upgrade”. They need to get their feelings back. “Real men have real feelings.”</p>

Step Four: “Get Real” with Community Living

Question 2: Do you have a “good” reentry plan?

YES

I have a reentry plan that includes a self-care plan, a home plan, a career plan, a parole plan, and a social support plan, with a back-up plan in case things change. **Skip to Step 5.**

NO

If you are unsure, continue with this step.

Reentry Plan – You must ask for assistance from family, friends, community organizations, or the Corrections Counselor to complete this section.

- Complete the Reentry Planning Form on next page and follow the plan.
- Get information on all types of housing options.
- Get information on communities that have public transportation.
- Get information on communities that will help you stay away from trouble.
- Get information about offender-friendly employers.
- Get classified ads on jobs in the community where you will be living and send for information or apply by mail.
- Write a statement about your work ethic and send it with your job application.
- Get at least one job skill while in prison.
- Apply for union membership.
- Apply for apprenticeship programs.
- Apply for admission to state-sponsored transition employment programs.
- Identify agencies that help people leaving prison on the outside.
- Learn about parole supervision and contact your parole staff before leaving prison.

Some people are concerned about living up to the expectations of their mothers or children, and other people who gave them money or support while in prison.

People leaving prison report that things fall apart as they get close to leaving. Home plans are rejected by parole; family or friends change their minds; and employers don't have a job.

People feel overwhelmed by what they need to do to get ready for the community.

People report not knowing the date of their release and can't make plans.

People report not having information about jobs or housing in the communities where they will be living.

Getting a job requires sending lots of job applications.

Ask, search, ask, search....

People leaving prison on parole report not knowing the rules for parole, who their parole officer will be, or how they will get to the parole office after release.

REMEMBER: You need a back-up plan and a back-up for the back-up plan. Things happen!!

Reentry Planning Form

<p>Do you have proof identification?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Birth Certificate</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Card</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Current driver's license or non-driver photo identification</p>
<p>Do you have a home plan?</p> <p>Goal: Find a safe and stable place to live. A place that keeps you away from bad influences and that gives you privacy to deal with the "Stuff" of returning to the community.</p> <p>Goal: Know the things and behaviors that get you in trouble. Know your risk factors and then manage them in smart ways. Trouble doesn't just happen, you let it happen!</p> <p>Goal: Have a back-up plan. Things happen, so plan for it.</p> <p>Goal: Living with family can be stressful. Understand what is expected of you before living with family. Some things don't change, so plan for it.</p>	<p><i>Check the Plan A option that best describes your housing arrangements and have your Plan B ready!</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan A: Safe, stable place to live</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan B: Safe, stable place to live</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan A: Safe, temporary place</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan B: Safe, temporary place</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan A: Risky, temporary place</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan B: Risky, temporary place</p>
<p>Do you have a career plan?</p> <p>Goal: Find a living wage job. A job that pays enough to pay your bills, fines, day-to-day living expenses, and savings. Your first job out of prison is a stepping stone. Establish your reputation as a good employee and use your reputation and skills to get a better job.</p> <p>Goal: Find a career that will provide satisfying work. Look into employment counseling to identify careers that interest you and what you need, to get that type of job.</p> <p>Goal: Think about more education or vocational training. Getting a better paying job requires schooling and training. Think about night school, online classes, or apprenticeship programs. Invest in your abilities!</p> <p>Goal: Have a back-up plan. Things happen, so plan for it.</p> <p>Goal: Get health insurance and other benefits. Getting sick is expensive. You can lose a job or run up large medical bills. Look for jobs that offer health insurance and sick days, as well as other employee benefits.</p> <p>Goal: Build your reputation as an employee. Identify the characteristics that you want to define you as an employee and then perform you job that way. (Do you want to be known as trustworthy? Reliable? Smart? Skilled?) You are in control of your reputation!</p>	<p><i>Check the Plan A option that best describes your employment arrangements and have your Plan B ready!</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan A: Living wage job with benefits</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan B: Living wage job with benefits</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan A: Living wage job with no benefits</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan B: Living wage job with no benefits</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan A: Minimum wage job with benefits</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan B: Minimum wage job with benefits</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan A: Minimum wage job with no benefits</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan B: Minimum wage job with no benefits</p>

Reentry Planning Form

Do you have a parole plan?

If you are going on parole upon release, you will receive a green sheet prior to release.

Goal: Know your stipulations before release. Find out before you leave what programs you are required to complete as a condition of parole and what you are required to do and not to do to be compliant with parole stipulations.

Goal: Meet your parole staff before release. Get right with your PO before you leave prison. Introduce yourself to the parole staff and ask questions about what is expected.

Goal: Prepare for your first meeting with your PO. Prepare for the fact that your PO will not be prepared for your arrival. You will likely have to wait to see your PO. When you finally meet him/her, expect disinterest and burn-out. It is not about you! It is about the job for them. Don't this your issue. Just listen and be respectful. Your PO will not be your friend but he/she doesn't need to be your enemy. Just do what needs to be done and get with living!

- Know your general and specific conditions
- Know the name of your PO
- Know the address and phone number of the Parole Office where you will have to report
- Make travel plans to get to the Parole Office on the day of release.
- Option 1: Have a plan for working your PO
- Option 2: Just react to your PO and to the situation at the parole office

Do you have a social support plan?

Goal: Have people you can count on. It "takes a village" to return successfully to the community. Look for many sources of support and encouragement.

Goal: Expect to give and receive help. Everyone in the community is struggling to make ends meet. Nothing is free and easy. Find ways to give back while you are receiving help. Show appreciation with words and actions.

Goal: Be patient with others. Things take time. Getting frustrated and showing it will not make things happen faster or easier. Use your time productively while you wait – look into other opportunities, educate yourself, and work on other goals. Remember treating other with kindness, respect, and understanding increased their willingness to work with you. You want people to want to help you, hire you, and rent to you and love/like you.

If you attend drug and alcohol counseling/treatment, speak to a Peer Support Specialist about attending AA/NA meetings in the community.

If Peer Support Specialists are not available in your institution, contact the Reentry Office at Central Office.

- Have at least two people you can count on for help.
- Have a mentor
- Know where you can find other people for support – church, AA/NA, self-help groups.
- Arrange for a temporary AA/NA sponsor before you leave prison
- Know at least two ways that you can give back to others who help you
- Know how to use time constructively and productively while you wait
- Know how to treat people so they will want to help you

40% of the prison population in PA has mental health issues. 70% have drug/alcohol issues.

Reentry Planning Form

Do you have a self-care plan?

Goal: Be, act, and stay healthy. Being healthy includes eating healthy foods, exercising to maintain a healthy weight, taking medications for chronic conditions as prescribed, keeping treatment appointments, getting a good night's sleep regularly, and practicing positive (can-do) thinking. Basically, whatever you tell your children to do, follow that advice in taking care of yourself.

Goal: Cope with stress in positive ways. Stress is part of life. How you deal with it is what matters. Healthy stress management includes finding ways to talk about it or understand it, calming yourself down through positive self-talk, staying focused on positive things and goals, having someone to call if your thoughts and feelings are in crisis, and remembering stress is about life situations, not about your worth as a person.

Goal: Feel and manage your emotions. Real people have real emotions. They have emotions of grief, sadness, hurt, love, excitement, anxiety, loneliness, bravery, envy, kindheartedness, disappointment, plus many more. Feeling emotions requires an ability to manage them. Managing emotions means that you are in control of them, not them in control of you.

Goal: Practice good decision making. Good decision making means that you consider the consequences before you and that you choose to "pay" the consequences for your actions before you act. Good decision making is about thinking before you act and considering alternatives before acting. Good decision making requires being patient, thoughtful, having goals and priorities to consider while making decisions, and learning to be flexible. It is about considering what is best for you today, tomorrow, next year, as well as how what is best for you affects people you love and are responsible for.

- Review Medicaid and other public health programs with the Corrections Counselor before leaving prison.
- A professional in the community can request a copy of your medical records with your signed permission. DOC will not release your medical records to you upon re-entering the community.
- Know where the free clinics are in the community where you will be living so you can fill prescriptions and be seen without insurance.
- Identify a list of healthy foods and plan how to get them into your diet
- Set a healthy weight goal for yourself and get a plan to reach that weight.
- Develop an exercise plan (walk 30 minutes every day). Focus on exercise that increases your heart rate.
- Develop a stress management plan
- Practice stress management in your daily life
- Learn positive thinking from people - watch and learn from people who stay positive
- Label your emotions when you feel them and choose how to manage them
- Learn emotion management from people who feel and who are successfully managing their emotions
- Think before you act in your daily life. Consider the consequences and ask whether this is the future you want for yourself and for others who care about you and counting on you
- Know when the best action is to let it go without getting involved

Step Five: Getting “You” Ready for Community Living

Question 1: Are you ready for community living?

YES

I am confident that I have done everything I can to get myself ready to live responsibly, healthy, and productively in the community. **Skip to Step 6.**

NO

Continue with this step.

People report not being able to get themselves ready for the community in days or weeks.

Many people said that getting ready for the community after prison begins on the first day inside prison.

Waiting for things to happen for you is the first sign that you will return to prison after release.

Get a Plan and Follow It

- Think about the kind of life you want for yourself and your family after prison
- Think about the types of characteristics that you want to describe you as a person, son, daughter, partner, employee, person, friend, neighbor, and citizen
- Think about your legacy and what you want to leave behind at the end of your life
- Think about the people you respect and admire - what is it about them that you respect and admire?
- Think about what gives you hope and encourages the best in who you are
- Imagine the life that you want for yourself and work towards it every day and with every decision
- Plan to be the person who you respect and admire
- Complete the Reentry Planning Form and follow the plan
- Get into a vocational training program that gives you skills that lead to a living wage job in the community
- Invest in your abilities to read, write, and speak effectively
- Learn something new every day
- Think about others and their feelings
- Learn to appreciate what you have and the things that make you feel appreciated
- Learn to give
- Find meaning and opportunity in every experience

People report the characteristics of their “**new selves**” in roles like parent, son, daughter, partner, person, friend, neighbor, and employee are:

Reliable	Trustworthy
Responsible	Mature
Confident	Accountable
Dependable	Understanding
Loving	Thoughtful
Respectful	Trusting
Honest	Independent
Focused	Driven
Industrious	Goal-oriented
Good-humored/Funny	

People report the characteristics of their “**old selves**” include:

Irresponsible	Bitter
Slacker	Angry
Stupid	Unloving
Unfocused	Depressed
Unfaithful	Liar
Lazy	Selfish
Thief	Uncaring
Drug addict	Impulsive
Worthless	Scary

Step Five: Getting “You” Ready for Community Living

Question 2: Do you qualify for public benefits?

****To be completed AFTER you are released with help from family or friends.****

Social Security Benefits

- Contact the Social Security Administration Office to request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for these benefits.
- Visit their website at www.ssa.gov
- Call with questions at 1-800-772-1213

Social security benefits are for people 62 years old or older.

Social Security Disability Benefits

- Contact the Social Security Administration Office to request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for these benefits.
- Visit their website at www.ssa.gov
- Call with questions at 1-800-772-1213

Social security disability benefits are based on work history and disability.

Supplemental Security Income

- Contact the Social Security Administration Office to request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for these benefits.
- Visit their website at www.ssa.gov
- Call with questions at 1-800-772-1213

Supplemental security income is based on financial need and disability age.

Search for a local Social Security Office at <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>

Notes:

Step Six: Getting and Staying Healthy

<p>Question: Is your health in order?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES My health, mental health, and teeth are in good shape and I don't have any concerns about needing any services related to medical, mental health, or dental problems or substance abuse services in the community. Skip to Step 7.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO Continue with this step.</p>	<p>People leaving prison report that they have some type of chronic medical problem, like hypertension diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, that requires follow-up treatment and medication in the community.</p> <p>Some people leaving prison report needing follow-up treatment for mental health (for example, depression, PTSD, anxiety) and substance abuse problems.</p>
<p>Getting your health ready for reentry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with the Facility Health administration at the institution about medical appointments to get chronic and acute medical problems treated while inside prison</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with the Psych department at the institution about mental health appointments to manage problems related to depression, trauma, anxiety, or other types of emotional problems.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your Corrections Counselor or Facility Health administration at the institution about dental appointments to get teeth repaired or to request dentures for teeth that have been extracted or lost while inside prison.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Learn about the prison's policy regarding releasing people with a supply of medications for chronic medical problems. Arrange to qualify for receiving a supply of medications at release for all medications needed to manage health and mental health problems.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Seek out Free Clinics or obtain information about prescription plans or health insurance plans for people leaving prison.</p>	<p>People inside prison have a constitutional right to receive medical and mental health treatment. This right does NOT follow the person into the community.</p> <p>Teeth matter! They affect your appearance and your confidence.</p> <p>Most prisons have a policy to release people with at least a two week supply of essential medications.</p> <p>Access to health and mental health services in the community depends in the ability to pay. Seek out Free Clinics until you are able to pay for these services.</p>

Step Seven: Getting your Family Ready for Your Return

<p>Question: Is your family ready for “you”?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES I have talked with my family about my plans, their plans for me, and about how I have changed since being in prison and about what I need them to do to help me be who I am now, and not return to who I was before prison. Skip this step.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	<p>People leaving prison report that they rely most on mothers, girlfriends, and adult children for help.</p> <p>Help from family includes providing a place to live, transportation, clothing, and food.</p> <p>Many people report feeling uncomfortable asking family for help. They feel that their family has already been burdened by their incarceration and they should be helping now.</p>
<p>Think “Real” About Living with Family</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Think about the kind of relationship you’ve has with your family in the past</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How does the family member that you plan to live with support you? Push your buttons?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Think about what you can reasonably expect from your family.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Think about what you are comfortable asking them for</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Think about how long you can count on having them support you</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Think about what you need to give them</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Think about what they have already given to you while you were in prison and how your needs will affect their schedule, budget, and privacy.</p>	<p>People report needing their family for everything.</p> <p>Family is a “trigger” for some people.</p> <p>Some people report feeling overwhelmed by their family’s expectations for them.</p> <p>One person reported that reality with her mother kicked in on the way home from prison. Old rules and expectations became the new rules and expectations.</p> <p>Some people feel guilty about imposing their needs on their family.</p> <p>Some people see family as the only alternative to a shelter.</p>
<p>Help Family Understand You as a Parolee/Ex-Prison Inmate (Have your Parole Officer help you with this)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explain to your family what parole means in terms of staying out of prison</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explain that violating curfew or doing things that are not allowed can send you back to prison for the rest of your sentence</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explain that you need time alone to think about and understand how prison has changed you and how the community has changed while you were in prison</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explain that you need time to feel again</p>	<p>Family often doesn’t understand why you are not ready to work on the first day, week, or month after prison.</p> <p>Family often doesn’t understand why you have to in by curfew or why you PO knocks on the door at 3:00am.</p> <p>Family often doesn’t understand why you want to stay in your room or why you stay by yourself.</p> <p>Family often doesn’t understand why you seem different.</p>

Step Seven: Getting Your Family Ready for Your Return

<p>Get a Family Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Before leaving prison put a family plan together with your family. In the plan, identify what you will need from them and for how long, and how you will contribute to the family. Also, ask them to be clear about “house” rules and their expectations for you. Indicate when you plan to be independent (have a job and your own place) and when you will resume your parenting responsibilities. Also, get a plan for managing conflict and frustration before it happens!<input type="checkbox"/> Search the <i>County Resource Directories</i> in the prison library for agencies that provide family counseling on a sliding fee scale. Reentry is hard on children. Reconnecting emotionally is difficult and can be painful. Find someone who can help guide the process so that you and your family have the best chance of loving and living together.<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage your family to contact Al-Anon for support. They can call 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666) Monday thru Friday, 8am - 6pm for meeting information or information on www.alanon.alateen.org.	<p>Family wants to know what your plans are and how long you will be staying with them.</p> <p>They want to know when you will take over parenting your children, paying rent, buying food, doing chores, moving out ...</p> <p>Reconnecting with children is hard. They have grown up without you while you were in prison. Many people report that their children are angry with them and resentful.</p> <p>Children have expectations about you and you have expectations about them. Often these expectations are not the same and cause conflict, disappointment, and hurt.</p> <p>Families can learn to help support your recovery from addiction through Al-Anon.</p>
<p>Get a Mentor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Find a mentor who you can talk openly and honestly with about challenges and struggles with life, family, and self.	<p>People leaving prison report that they need a mentor - someone they trust and respect and can talk straight to them.</p>

Basics on Searching the Internet



Type in Search Terms
<input type="button" value="Google Search"/> <input type="button" value="I'm Feeling Lucky"/>

Searching the Internet is easy and very fast. There are many search engines. But Google and Yahoo are the most common. The Google site is displayed above.

Free computer access is available at the public library. There will be instructions at the library on how to turn the computer on and get to the internet. **Ask the librarian if you have difficulty.**

Once you are on the Google website, type search terms into the box and then move the cursor to Google Search (or “GO” on some sites) and click the mouse.

Topic of Interest	Search Terms
Job Opportunities for Felons	Jobs for Felons Felon-Friendly Employers Employment ex-offenders
Jobs for Felons in Pennsylvania	Jobs for Felons in Pennsylvania Employment Ex-Offenders Pennsylvania

Resources for People Leaving Prison

The internet is the best source of information on resources available to help people leaving prison. Although most people inside prison do not have access to the internet, it is important to know that there are websites you can search when you return to the community. Below are some resources by category.

Employment

1. **Federal Bureau of Prisons: Ex-Offender Employment Resources**

Federal Bureau of Prisons provides employment resources to government funded agencies and has an employment information handbook.

http://www.bop.gov/inmat_programs/itb_references.jsp

2. **Impact Services** offers assistance with re-entry services in employment, health referrals, transitional housing, and education classes.

www.impactservices.org/employment/reentry/php

3. **National HIRE Network** provides information on state-specific government agencies and community-based organizations to help individuals with criminal records. These agencies and organizations may be of assistance in providing job-related and legal services, answering questions arising out of having a criminal record, or offering referrals to other useful organizations.

www.hirenetwork.org

4. **iSeek: Employment Resources for Ex-Offenders**

iSeek is a website with information on careers, education and job resources. It has articles on career choices, career skills, barriers to employment, job searching, and job training and education.

<http://www.iseek.org/guide/exoffenders/index.html>

5. www.scmpa.com



Housing

1. **Impact Services** offers assistance with re-entry services in employment, health referrals, transitional housing, and education classes.

www.impactservices.org/employment/reentry/php

2. **Transitional Housing** provides resources for supportive housing along with drug and alcohol treatment for selective locations.

www.transitionalhousing.org/state/pennsylvania

Appendix B

Legal

1. **The Pennsylvania Prison Society** is a social justice organization advocating on behalf of prisoners, their families, and formerly incarcerated individuals. They offer re-entry services and programs.
www.prisonersociety.org
2. **American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania** is dedicated to defending and guarding individual rights and personal freedoms. They are involved in protecting prisoners' rights.
www.aclupa.org
3. **Community Legal Services of Philadelphia** help residents obtain equal access to justice by providing advice and representation in civil legal matters and advocating for individual rights.
www.clsphila.org
4. **National HIRE Network** provides information on state-specific government agencies and community-based organizations to help individuals with criminal records. These agencies and organizations may be of assistance in providing job-related and legal services, answering questions arising out of having a criminal record, or offering referrals to other useful organizations.
www.hirenetwork.org
5. **PA Legal Aid Network** provides free legal services and direct client services to low-income Pennsylvanians.
www.palegalaid.org



Community

1. **X-Offenders for Community Empowerment** provides a forum for ex-offenders to become change agents in mobilizing the community to address issues threatening healthy family and community life.
www.x-offenders.org
2. **CRESC (Capital Region Ex-Offenders Support Coalition)** is a reentry focused organization that offers mentorship and workforce development.
www.reentrynow.org
3. **Open, Inc.** provides information and resources to people leaving prison, including names of support organizations for family members.
www.openinc.org/consulting.html
4. **Esperanza** is a Hispanic, faith-based organization helping serve the needs of all individuals in the community.
www.esperanza.us

Rights and Restrictions for Ex-Offenders in Pennsylvania

There are some limitations on access to employment and other community services. Below are resources that provide information on the rights of ex-offenders.

Employment

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia provides electronic documents explaining the limitation of employment that includes a list of restricted occupations and a handout of employment rights.

www.clsphila.org/Content.aspx?id=552

Housing / Public Benefits

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia provides legal information on family advocacy, public benefits, and public housing.

www.clsphila.org/Content.aspx?id=259

Sex Offense Laws

Sex Offender Resources provides links on sex offense laws, statistics, and information.

www.sexoffenderresources.com/pennsylvania/

www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us

www.meganslaw.state.pa.us

How to Apply for Public Assistance and Public Benefits

About Social Security Benefits

Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits are suspended or terminated when individuals are confined to jail or prison.

- For Social Security Beneficiaries, benefits remain suspended until the inmate is released.
- For SSI beneficiaries, benefits are terminated when the individual is incarcerated for a year or more.

Individuals need funds to cover living expenses when they are released from prison. To help make a successful transition back into the community, benefits need to be started as soon as possible.

How soon can benefits be started after release?

The amount of time it takes to start benefits depends on the individual's specific situation.

- If benefits have only been suspended, Social Security usually can restart them without much delay.
- If benefits have been terminated, it can a few months before benefits resume.
- If the individual was not previously entitled to benefits and is claiming disability, a new application and disability determination are required. In this situation, it could take from three – five months to make a decision about the person's disability.

Is there a way to rush benefit payments?

By following a special procedure before release, Social Security can pay benefits much sooner. This process is called the Pre-release Procedure.

How does the prerelease procedure work?

When an institution has a prerelease agreement with Social Security, the Social Security Administration can:

- Begin processing an inmate's application up to several months before the scheduled release date.
- Make a determination of possible eligibility and payment amount based on the inmate's expected circumstances after release
- Start paying benefits shortly after the inmate is released from the institution.

When notified by the institution, Social Security will follow this procedure if the inmate is likely to be eligible for benefits within 30 days of the scheduled release date.

How to Apply for Public Assistance and Public Benefits

About Social Security Benefits

How can institutions establish a prerelease agreement?

Either the local Social Security office or the institution may begin a discussion about setting up a prerelease agreement. The prerelease agreement:

- May be an informal verbal agreement, or
- May be a written agreement signed by both parties.

What are the responsibilities of each party?

Social Security's responsibilities

In a typical prerelease agreement, the Social Security office will

- Provide guidelines about what evidence is need
- Provide a contact person to assist the institution and the inmate in applying the prerelease procedures
- Process claims and reinstatements timely
- Notify the institution promptly when Social Security has made a decision about the inmate's eligibility for benefits.

Institution's responsibilities

The institution would agree to:

- Notify Social Security of individuals scheduled for release in the near future who may be eligible for benefits
- Provide current medical evidence for the inmate including a statement about the inmate's ability to handle funds
- Provide Social Security with the anticipated release date
- Notify Social Security as soon as the individual is released.

What are the advantages of a prerelease agreement?

- Allows both parties to streamline the process for starting/restarting benefits promptly after an inmate is released
- Facilitates the inmate's return to the community by providing him/her with an adequate source of income
- Could serve to deter recidivism.

For more information about setting up a prerelease agreement, contact the local Social Security office. Search for local offices at www.ssa.gov.

How to apply for Public Assistance and Public Benefits

NOTE: Appendix D can only be completed AFTER your release. DOC will be unable to help you with this.

How to apply for Public Assistance Funds?

Apply for public assistance funds at your local public assistance office. Check the phone book for locations and make sure to bring the required documents with you.

Instructions

- **STEP 1:** Understand that public assistance is provided to assist people in becoming financially stable.
- **STEP 2:** Know that there is a “welfare-to-work” policy in effect that requires participants in public assistance programs to undergo job training and to find work.
- **STEP 3:** Realize that in order to qualify for assistance, you cannot exceed certain income and asset limits.
- **STEP 4:** Apply for public assistance funds at your local public assistance office, which is probably located at or run by your local department of human services or social services. If you do not know where to go, look in the phone book for this department and ask them where to apply.
- **STEP 5:** Bring proof of identity, proof of income (including any benefits you or anyone in your household receives), social security numbers for all members of your household, proof of any financial assets such as bank accounts, home ownership, etc.
- **STEP 6:** Fill out the paperwork you are given and ask for help if you cannot complete it on your own.
- **STEP 7:** Recognize that you may be able to get emergency assistance if you have suddenly become homeless.
- **STEP 8:** Ask about applying for food stamps, free school breakfasts and lunches for your children, and Medicaid as well.

How to apply for Public Assistance and Public Benefits

NOTE: Appendix D can only be completed AFTER your release. DOC is unable to help you with this.

How to apply for Social Security Disability Benefits?

When applying for Social Security Disability benefits you will need to bring evidence that you are disabled from doctors and hospitals that have treated you.

Instructions

- **STEP 1:** Understand that you are eligible for Social Security Disability (SSD) as soon as you are disabled, but your benefits will not begin until six months after the disability began.
- **STEP 2:** Know that you will not be eligible for SSD if you earn more than \$500 per month on average.
- **STEP 3:** Call the Social Security Administration at (800) 772-1213 or visit your local office for an application.
- **STEP 4:** Bring original or certified copies of your birth certificate, social card, W-2 forms, medical records, and lab reports.
- **STEP 5:** Provide the names and addresses of all doctors, hospitals and clinics that have treated your disability.
- **STEP 6:** Include a history of where you have worked in the past five years.
- **STEP 7:** Consider that you may be able to apply for similar benefits under Supplemental Security Income (SSI) instead of SSD. SSD eligibility is based on your work history and disability, while SSI eligibility is based on financial need.
- **STEP 8:** Realize that benefits are not automatic and are given only after your case is carefully reviewed. Only certain types of disabilities are eligible for benefits.

Tips & Warnings

- If your claim is denied, hire an attorney for an appeal.
- Search for a local office at www.ssa.gov

Source: eHow: How to do everything website. www.ehow.com

How to Apply for Public Assistance and Public Benefits

NOTE: This page can only be completed AFTER your release. DOC is unable to help you with this.

How to Apply for Social Security Benefits?

To apply for Social Security benefits you need to show proof of age, citizenship and identity. The Social Security Administration's website has information online, including a list of offices near you.

Instructions

- STEP 1: Apply for Social Security Benefits three months before you want to receive them.
- STEP 2: Understand that you can begin to receive your benefits at age 62, but they will be paid at a reduced level until age 65.
- STEP 3: Call the Social Security Administration at (800) 772-1213 or visit your local office for an application.
- STEP 4: Complete the application and ask office personnel for assistance you there is something you don't understand.
- STEP 5: Take original or certified copies if your Social Security card, birth certificate, W-2 form or self-employment tax return and proof of citizenship. If you apply by mail, you will need to mail these forms with your applications. Ask for the return of any originals.
- STEP 6: Have the name of your bank and account number with you so that your benefits can be directly deposited.

How to Apply for Public Assistance and Public Benefits

NOTE: This page can only be completed AFTER your release. DOC is unable to help you with this.

About Supplemental Security Income

SSI is a federal program that provides monthly cash payments to people in need. SSI is for people who are 65 or older, as well as for blind or disabled people of any age, including children.

To qualify you also must have little or no income and few resources. This means that the value of the things you own must be less than \$2,000 if you are single or less than \$3,000 if you are married. The value of your home does not count if you live in it. Usually, the value of your car does not count. And the value of certain other resources, such as a burial plot, may not count either.

To receive SSI, you also must apply for any other cash benefits you may be able to get.

You must live in the United States to receive SSI. If you are not a U.S. citizen, but you are lawfully residing in the United States, you still may be able to receive SSI. For more information, search www.ssa.gov for *Supplemental Security Income for Noncitizens* (Publication #05-11051).

The state of Pennsylvania adds money to the federal SSI payment. A single payment that includes both the federal SSI payment and the supplement from Pennsylvania is issued to residents of domiciliary care homes and personal care boarding homes.

If you live independently, in someone else's household or in a Medicaid facility, you receive a separate payment from Pennsylvania in addition to your federal SSI payment.

How to apply for SSI?

You can complete a large part of your application by visiting www.ssa.gov. You can also call the Social Security Administration toll-free at 1-800-772-1213 to ask for an appointment with a Social Security representative.

If applying in person, bring your social security card; proof of citizenship; birth certificate; information about the home where you live, such as the mortgage or lease and landlord's name; income information, like pay stubs and your bank account; the names, addresses and telephone numbers of doctors, hospitals and clinics that you have been to – if you are applying because you are disabled or blind.

How to Apply for Medicaid

NOTE: Appendix E can only be completed AFTER your release. DOC is unable to help you with this.

How to apply for Medicaid?

To apply for Medicaid you need to contact your social services department and show proof of your financial need. If incarcerated you may be eligible for help with applying for Medicaid through healthcare or psychology staff at the institution.

Instructions

- STEP 1: Understand that Medicaid is a state-run program that provides medical insurance for low-income people. In Pennsylvania you may be eligible for Medicaid if you are an infant, a child, pregnant, or a parent of a child and your family income meets the Medicaid income standards.
- STEP 2: Know that if you receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income) from the Social Security Administration, you will probably qualify for Medicaid.
- STEP 3: Recognize that there have been recent limits place on this program at the federal level, so the benefits are not as wide as they used to be.
- STEP 4: Contact your state Department of Public Welfare. This agency provides food stamps and financial assistance.
- STEP 5: Ask for a Medicaid application. You will need to complete the application in the office.
- STEP 6: Bring your birth certificate, driver's license, pay stubs, Social Security card, proof of address, proof other insurance if you have it, and information about any bank account you have.
- STEP 7: Be prepared to answer questions about your finances. Eligibility is based on your income level.
- STEP 8: Ask office personnel for assistance if you do not know how to complete the form.
- STEP 9: Request assistance at your home if you would like to apply but are unable to leave home.

You can also apply online at www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass.web/CMHOM.aspx

Source: eHow: How to do everything website. www.ehow.com

Federal Bonding and Tax Credits

Fidelity bonding Services Are User-Friendly

- NO bond approval processing—local staff instantly issue bonds to employers
- NO papers for employer to sign to obtain free bond incentive for job hire
- NO follow-up and NO termination actions required for bond issued
- NO deductible in bond insurance amount if employee dishonesty occurs
- NO age requirements for bondee other than legal working age in State
- NO other U.S. program provides Fidelity Bonding services
- NO Federal regulations covering bonds issued
- ANY job at ANY employer in ANY State can be covered by the bond

What Is Fidelity Bonding?

- Insurance to protect employer against employee dishonesty
- Covers any type of stealing: theft, forgery, larceny, and embezzlement
- In effect, a guarantee of worker job honesty
- An incentive to the employer to hire an at-risk job applicant
- A unique tool for marketing applicants to employers
- DOES NOT cover “liability” due to poor workmanship, job injuries, work accidents, etc.
- Is NOT a bail bond or court bond needed in adjudication
- Is NOT a bond needed for self-employment (contract bond, license bond or performance bond)

Why Is Fidelity Bonding Needed for Job Placement?

- Employers view ex-offenders and other at-risk job seekers as potentially untrustworthy workers, thereby, denying them job-hire
- Insurance companies will not cover risky job applicants under commercial Fidelity Bonds purchased by employers to protect themselves against employee dishonesty
- Anyone who has ever “committed a fraudulent or dishonest act” is deemed NOT BONDABLE by insurance companies, a situation leading to routine denial of employment opportunities for such persons
- Being NOT BONDABLE is a significant barrier to employment possessed by the hardest-to-place job applicants; this barrier can be eliminated only by The Federal Bonding Program
- Job bonding enables the employer to “obtain worker skills without taking risk”
- Persons who are NOT BONDABLE can ultimately become commercially BONDABLE by demonstrating job honesty during the 6 months of bond coverage under the Federal Bonding Program (such commercial bonding will be made available by the Travelers Casualty and Surety Company of America; referred to hereafter as TRAVELERS)

Who Is Eligible for Bonding Services?

- Any at-risk job applicant is eligible for bonding services, including: ex-offenders, recovering substance abusers (alcohol or drugs), welfare recipients and other persons having poor financial credit, economically disadvantaged youth and adults who lack a work history, individuals dishonorably discharged from the military, and others
- Anyone who cannot secure employment without bonding
- All persons bonded must meet the legal working age set by the State in which the job exists
- Self-employed persons are NOT ELIGIBLE for bonding services (bonded must be an employee who earns wages with Federal taxes automatically deducted from paycheck)
- Bonds can be issued to cover already employed workers who need bonding in order to (a) prevent being laid off, or (b) secure a transfer or promotion to a new job at the company
- Bonding coverage can apply to any job at any employer in any State

How Can Bonds Be Accessed Under the Federal Bonding Program?

- Any organization is now eligible to deliver bonding services under The Federal Bonding Program; for many years bonding services were almost exclusively delivered by the State Employment Service
- All organizations issuing Fidelity Bonds must be “certified” to do so by The Federal Bonding Program
- The Fidelity Bonds issued to employers covering at-risk applicants are made available exclusively to The Federal Bonding Program by Travelers which is not duplicated by any other U.S. program
- Bonds are issued instantly to be in effect the day that the applicant is scheduled to start work; the bonds are self-terminating (no termination paperwork needed), and the employer does not sign any papers in order to receive the bond free-of-charge
- The bond insurance issued ranges from \$5,000 to \$25,000 coverage for a 6-month period with no deductible amount (employer gets 100% insurance coverage); when this bond coverage expires, continued bond coverage can be purchased from TRAVELERS by the employer if the worker demonstrated job honesty under coverage provided by The Federal Bonding Program
- Bond can be issued to the employer as soon as the applicant has a job offer with a date scheduled to start work

THE McLAUGHLIN COMPANY • 9210 Corporate Blvd., • Suite 250 • Rockville, MD 20850
PHONE: 800.233.2258 or 202.293.5566

Source: www.bonds4jobs.com/highlights.html

Federal Bonding and Tax Credits

WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT (WOTC)

www.uses.doleta.gov/wotcdata.asp

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a tax credit that functions as an incentive to employers who hire people with certain criminal records. The credit can provide up to \$3,000 per person per year in tax breaks for a full-time employer. The WOTC can also apply to an individual working part-time or completing summer youth work.

The WOTC is available to employers who employ people from one of eight targeted groups, including "qualified ex-felons." A "qualified ex-felon" is defined as an individual who (1) has a state or federal felony conviction; (2) is a member of an economically disadvantaged family and (3) is hired within one year of release from prison or from date of conviction.

