

About *Life After Incarceration*

Life After Incarceration: A Guide for Returning Citizens in Florida was produced through a collaboration between the Community Education Project (CEP) and the Education Justice Project (EJP). CEP is part of the College of the College of Arts and Sciences at Stetson University. Since 2015, CEP has taught college courses to people incarcerated at Tomoka Correctional Institution in Daytona Beach, FL. *Life After Incarceration* includes content from the Education Justice Project's reentry guide *Mapping Your Future: A Guide to Successful Reentry*, © 2022

University of Illinois Board of Trustees. It can be downloaded at reentryillinois.net or educationjustice.net. EJP welcomes collaboration. If you would like to collaborate with EJP to produce a reentry guide for your community, please contact the Reentry Guide Initiative at reentry@illinois.net.



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!

Life After Incarceration: A Guide for Returning Citizens in Florida is free to people on the inside. To order:

- Get them online through <https://www.stetson.edu/other/cep/>. You can download an electronic version for free.
- Request by email at communityeducation@stetson.edu
- Send a request by mail:

Stetson University
Elizabeth Hall #207
421 N. Woodland Blvd.
Unit 8325
DeLand, FL 32723

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 *Life After Incarceration* is printed with support from our funders, including the Mellon Foundation and individual donors. If you or your organization are able to support us in continuing to provide free copies, please consider a donation to the Community Education Project, at <https://www.stetson.edu/administration/development/give/>. You can elect to direct the donation directly to us by specifying Community Education Project as the recipient.

Please help us give *Life After Incarceration* to every person who wants it. Thank you!

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Welcome Home!

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We're glad you picked up *Life After Incarceration: A Guide for Returning Citizens in Florida*. 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.

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 *Life After Incarceration: A Guide for Returning Citizens in Florida*:

- **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?

Life After Incarceration: A Guide for Returning Citizens in Florida 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. They, and so many others, have successfully reentered the outside world. You can too.

Please keep in touch. We'd love to know how you're doing and how we can make *Life After Incarceration: A Guide for Returning Citizens in Florida* better. Your comments can help those who follow in your footsteps.

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

In solidarity,

Community Education Project

Stetson University



Do you or someone you know face the threat of immigrant detention and possible deportation. The Education Justice Project publishes a book called *A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities After Deportation*, available in English and Spanish. You can access it here:

reentryillinois.net/reentry

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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.

People with criminal records can't vote.

False. In Florida, you are eligible to apply for restoration of your civil rights which includes voting. See the "Voting" section.

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
- Post-Prison Supervision
- Deportation After Release



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 realize that you have a lot to offer, both while still in prison and on the outside!

Community Education Project students developed a traveling exhibit on slavery and Indian removal in East Florida. Students have published a literary journal, *More Than Our Blues*, that emerged from an English course. Students worked together to maintain their community garden. 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 interactions 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. Some people manage their stress by taking long walks, biking, or gardening. 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, or 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

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

What skills do you use to manage stress?

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



Know Your Strengths

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

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





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

Use this “Getting Ready to Get Out” checklist to help you plan your release. Even if you still have some time left on your sentence, it’s a good idea to plan early to increase your chances of success. What do you have already covered? What do you need to keep working on?

Issues you may face upon release	Got this covered	Need to address
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 can be 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.

In Florida, the law is changing to make it easier to gather these documents if you were born in Florida. It will also make it easier to get your ID *before* you leave. In the meantime, we advise you to be proactive in gathering your documents.

In many FDC facilities, the field services department (part of field services) is responsible for helping people gather documents before release. They may help you put together a release package that will contain the essential documents you need. Keep in mind that they don't usually come to you and volunteer to help; you will need to be proactive and ask for help.



STEP 1 Verification of Incarceration

To get started, ask for a document that verifies that you are incarcerated. 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. At FDC, you can request a birth certificate 60 days before your release.

To get your birth certificate while you are in prison:

1. Fill out the **Application for Florida Birth Certificate** (for anyone born in Florida). There is one on pages 174-5 that you can tear out and complete. Field services, your prison library or counselor may also be able to give you a form.

2. Decide what type of birth certificate you need. For most purposes the "computer certification of birth" will work. It costs \$9 and is accepted by all state and federal agencies.
3. Include a copy of your identification such as a driver's license or military ID. Check with your prison's field services department or counselors to see if other forms of identification can be accepted if you don't have a current state ID.
4. Include a check or money order payable to Vital Statistics. (\$9 for computer certification of birth)



5. Mail the completed form to
Florida Department of Health
Bureau of Vital Statistics
Attn: Vital Records Section
P.O. Box 210
Jacksonville, FL 32231-0042

Local Departments of Health can also issue birth certificates and take walk-ins during business hours. You can search for your local office at <https://www.floridahealth.gov/>. For more information on birth certificate requests visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/certificates> or call 904-359-6900 ext. 9000.

☆ You may be able to ask a parent or guardian to request your birth certificate for you.

Outside Florida: If you were born in another state, contact a friend or family member so you can learn the process of getting a birth certificate from that state.

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



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:

1. Fill out an Application for a Social Security Card. You can find one on page 173 of this guide. You can also request a form from your field office or counselor. You can also request one by calling the Social Security Administration (SSA) at 1-800-772-1213. They can mail you a form.

2. Include the following documents:
 - A document that verifies that you are incarcerated. In some prisons this is called a "Certification of Inmate Identity."
 - Information Release. You need to sign an information release form, giving the SSA permission to send your Social Security card to your facility. Ask your correctional counselor for this form.
3. Mail the application and supporting documents to any Social Security Administration Office. You can search by zip code here: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp> or ask a counselor to look up the address for you.



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

It's also possible to send it to the main Social Security office in Jacksonville:

US Social Security Office
1685 Dunn Ave.
Jacksonville, FL 32218

It's a good idea to work with a counselor at your facility to request your SSN, if possible. They

may be able to make the process easier for you. They can also confirm the best Social Security Administration Office to mail the application to.

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.



STEP 4 State ID

You may be able to get your ID or driver's license before you leave. The Secretary of State has been sending mobile units to some FDC facilities to help people get their IDs before they are released. Ask Field Services if this is an option at your facility. More information about getting your State ID or driver's license after release can be found in the Getting Your ID section on page 37.

If that's not an option where you are, ask Field Services for a temporary ID card. It's good for 90 days and gives you extra time to get your birth certificate and Social Security card that you will need to get your state ID or driver's license. The temporary ID card is not accepted in many places, but it can help you get your state ID.

Once you're out, you can get a free state ID within 30 days of your release if you have your birth certificate and social security card. (It normally costs \$25). You will need an Identification Card and Verification Form from FDC, and your social security card and birth certificate. Ask Field Services for this form before you leave.

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.



Most people are not aware of the importance of completing the process of getting identification before they leave. I can't stress that enough. It's much harder on the outside.

—Joe Joe



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			



Work with clinical services as much as possible. As early as possible. 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



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

Take advantage of opportunities to 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 on pages 176–178 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



Transitional Housing

If you are not able to live with family members or friends upon release, you may be able to 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 you have to follow. They might have a curfew, or you might have to have a job or attend religious services.

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

How to Find Housing

Generally, 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 housing options organized by region; these housing options offer an array of services from temporary and transitional housing to recovery programs to job training. Here are a few websites:

- [Transitionalhousing.org](https://transitionalhousing.org)
- [Homelesshelterdirectory.org](https://homelesshelterdirectory.org)
- [Shelterlistings.org](https://shelterlistings.org)
- [Soberhousedirectory.com](https://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

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 <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/> (This is the same site where you will apply for other benefits like SNAP and TANF. If you can apply for all at once, it will make the process easier.) 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 will 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 be 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, field services, or a family member to help you find a treatment center. Try to schedule the appointment for a few days after your release. See our directory for a list of low-cost health clinics and substance use treatment centers.

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 (page 73), our Trauma and Mental Health chapter (page 79), and our Substance Use chapter (page 86).





Healthcare Checklist

	Taken care of	Need to tackle	Not applicable	Where to get help
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



This chapter covers the following topics:

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



A man is only as successful as the people that he surrounds himself with. I need my support team, my wise council, my family! We all do.

—Austin C.



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.”

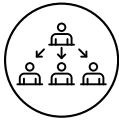
—Keke

“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!



Make sure you have a good relationship with the people you're going to stay with when you leave prison.

—Shaun W.



Post-Prison Supervision



When you are released from prison, you will likely be on some form of supervision. This period is often called “parole” informally. This means that “Probation Services” of the Florida Department of Corrections will supervise you for a certain period of time after your release. You could be on regular “probation” or on “community control” which is more like house arrest.

During post-prison supervision, 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. Supervision is difficult, but many people have gotten through it. You can, too.

This chapter covers:

- Preparing for post-prison supervision
 - Post-prison supervision
 - Electronic monitoring
 - Post-prison supervision rules and violations
 - Registries
-

Preparing for Post-Prison Supervision

Before your release there will be several meetings of the Classification Team that will come up with a transition plan for you. This plan is based on your personal needs, your experience in FDOC and plans for your future. You can find a copy of this plan on page 52.



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.



Just like being in prison—when you live with somebody on the outside you have to learn how to put up with them. On the outside, you have a little more space and a little more freedom, but you're going somewhere new and they might have rules and guidelines for you to follow just like you had inside. You have to be mindful of those things.

—Shaun W.

Post-Prison Supervision

When you arrive at your host site, you will usually be required to call your probation officer right away, often within 24 hours. Before you leave, make sure you have your probation officer's name and phone number. It is your job to get in touch with them. If you cannot reach your officer or do not know who they are, contact the visit <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/cc/index.html> to find your local office.

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

Community Control

Community control is a very restrictive form of supervision after prison. It is basically house arrest. You will likely have to wear an electronic monitor with a GPS (see next section). If a judge allows it you will be able to leave your home to go to work, school or to the doctor. You will be assigned to a community control officer who will set your schedule. They will also randomly stop by your home or work to make sure you are there. If you aren't, it's a violation.



Electronic Monitoring

Many people are required to do Electronic Monitoring (EM) as part of their post-prison supervision. 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 probation 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 probation officer will decide what times you will be allowed to leave your home.

Talk with your probation officer about the specifics for your electronic monitoring. Some officers might require that you download an application on a smartphone. This application allows officers to know where you are and communicate with you directly.

Additional or different rules may apply to your situation. You should receive these rules in writing and will likely have to sign a document. You should receive a copy for yourself, but if you don't, ask for one!

You will be required to check in regularly with your probation officer. Remember, it's very important you answer the phone when they call. 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.

Electronic Monitoring Rules:

- Do not tamper with or disconnect any part of the electronic monitoring equipment.
- If there is a malfunction or some type of damage you should immediately contact your Probation Officer.
- Follow all established rules of the Department, work, the probation office, etc.
- Stick with your schedule and approved travel routes.
- Don't go outside of your approved area.
- Follow any charging guidelines.
- If you are required to have the device on you at all times - do not forget it or remove it.
- Know that your movement is being tracked and stored as an official record.
- Be sure to respond to any calls/texts/communications that may be sent to your device.

Post-Prison Supervision 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.

What Happens If You Violate the Conditions of Your Probation?

1. If a probation officer thinks you have committed a violation, they will submit an Affidavit of Violation to the court. This is a legal document that must clearly outline the alleged violation and the evidence against you.
2. A judge reviews the document to decide whether or not they will take action. They can issue a warrant for your arrest.
3. If you are arrested for a Violation of Probation (VOP) you will be arraigned and a VOP hearing will be scheduled. A VOP hearing is not a trial. There is no jury and the state doesn't need to prove you are guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.
4. At the hearing you have a chance to present your side to the judge before they make a decision. The judge does not have to automatically send you to jail or prison. In fact they can change the rules of your supervision, add additional time, or simply let you go with a warning. This is where honesty, behavior, and good communication can help you. If you have an attorney or public defender representing you, ask them questions.





Do the right thing, even when it might seem like the harder choice. Follow the rules, and your experience will be better. Above all, communicate honestly with everyone involved, and don't expect people to read your mind or know what you need without asking for it.

—Anonymous

I was lucky - I had a family and safe home to return to. If you can stay sober, find a job, get in school, or whatever it might be, you'll be fine. I had several PO's and at the end of the day if you communicate and show up when they ask you to, you won't have a problem.

—Anonymous

Registries

The State of Florida maintains two registries: the Sex Offender Registry and The Career Offender Registry. Your conviction will determine whether you are required to register under one or both registries. If you are supposed to register you should receive paperwork that explains where to go and what to do. Your classification officer may provide you with information prior to your release. You can get more information from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement <https://offender.fdle.state.fl.us> or by calling (888) 357-7332.

These registries are online databases that anyone can see. They have photos and information such as your name, address, birth date, 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.

	Sex Offender Registry	Career Offender Registry
Where will I register?	Local sheriff's office	Local sheriff's office
When will I register?	Within two days of release	Within two days of release
How often will I register?	Two or four times a year	Ask your counselor or probation officer
What should I bring when I register?	ID, social security number, address, vehicle information, employment address, phone number, email addresses and electronic identifiers, conviction information, passport information, immigration status information, professional license information	ID, social security number, address, employment information, conviction information, offense details,
How long will I have to register?	For the rest of your life	For the rest of your life but after 20 years you may petition for the requirement to be removed
Do I have to register every time I move?	Yes, within 48 hours. If you plan to move out of state, notify local law enforcement where you live that you intend to move 48 hours before you move.	Yes, within 48 hours.
Will I have to pay to register?	Not currently. Verify with your probation officer.	Not currently. Verify with your probation officer.
What else will I be asked to do when I register?	Upon registration you will have your photo, fingerprints and palm prints taken.	Upon registration you will have your photo and fingerprints taken.
What other restrictions may I face?	You must get a state ID or driver's license within two days of registering.	
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	



Registration Tips:

- Keep a calendar of all your deadlines and dates to re-register.
- Call ahead and make appointments if you can.
- 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 your post-prison supervision, your registration documents, and certified receipts.
- 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.



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.



When I start to get frustrated with the way things are going, I have to remind myself of where I came from and where I want to be. I have options and choices now. I can see my family whenever I want, I can wear whatever I want, and I'm not stuck inside four walls anymore. Everything is about perspective.

—Chris M.

It is a good idea to keep a journal of your life during parole. Write down all meetings, calls, appointments, and visits with officers. Make sure to record drug tests and when you call to set up appointments to be drug tested. It is helpful to have a record of the requirements you have completed, especially if they are mandatory. If you have a written record, you have evidence that you have done what you were supposed to.

—Anonymous



Deportation After Release

If you were born outside the US and entered illegally, you may be subject to deportation after your release from prison. This can be true even if you were a child when you were brought over or had a legal permanent resident status before your incarceration. Having a felony conviction may mean that status was stripped from you.

An immigration lawyer or non-profit that works to defend the rights of immigrants may be able to help you figure out your current status. There may still be options for you to fight the removal proceedings if ICE intends to deport you.

The consulate of your country may also be able to help. In many prisons representatives of the consulates of various countries like Mexico visit regularly. Ask if you can schedule an appointment with them if you think they can help. It's your right to speak to your country's consulate.

If you are taken into ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) custody after you are released you can ask a family member or trusted friend to look you up on ICE's Detainee Locator System: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/> They can see where you are detained and visit you there, bringing a bag that you can take with you as you are deported. If you know your "Alien registration number" this will help to locate you.

There is much more to know about your rights as an immigrant, what to expect with deportation and reentry in your home country. The Education Justice Project publishes a guide on this topic called *A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities After Deportation* available in Spanish as well. You can access a free online copy at reentryillinois.net/reentry or write to the address below to request a free copy:

Education Justice Project

1001 S. Wright St.

Champaign, IL 61820





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:

- Go to the local Department of Health. They can help you get your birth certificate. For more information visit: <https://www.floridahealth.gov/certificates/>
- Go to a Social Security Administration Office to get your Social Security card. You can find an application in the back of this book. It also lists what you need to bring with you. To find a local office visit: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>



Need a marriage certificate or divorce decree? Find out how to request them at <https://www.floridahealth.gov/certificates/>



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: <https://www.flhsmv.gov/locations/>

If you apply for your state ID within 30 days of your release, you can get it free. (It normally costs \$25.) Bring your temporary ID if you have one.

Do you plan to get a driver's license? Review the Florida Driver's Handbook first. You can pick up a copy of this booklet at any public library or download it at the following website: <https://www.stateoflouisiana.com/drivers-handbook>. 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.

Note: Florida has passed a law that allows every person leaving prison to get a state driver's license or ID card upon release. However, there are some restrictions to this law that may prevent you from getting your ID. For more information, visit <https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/billsummaries/2014/html/632>

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 in prison)
- An original document with your Social Security number (Social Security card, driver's license record, or military service record)
- Proof of address (bank statement, credit report, utility bills, medical record, HIV test)
- Payment (\$48 at the time of printing this guide)



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 the Bureau of Administrative Review (<https://www.flhsmv.gov/driver-licenses-id-cards/driver-license-suspensions-revocations/>). They can give you information on how to get back a suspended ID. You can get a copy of your driving record for a fee here: <https://www.floridadrivingrecord.com/>

Bureau of Administrative Review Locations

Orlando	(407) 445-5581	4101 Clacona Ocoee Road, Suite #152	32810
Clearwater	(727) 507-4405	4585 - 140th Avenue, North, Suite 1002	33762
Jacksonville	(904) 777-2132	7439 Wilson Blvd.	32210
Lauderdale Lakes	(954) 677-5800	3718 W. Oakland Park Blvd	33311
Miami	(305) 265-3001	7795 W. Flagler Street, Suite 82C	33144
Pensacola	(850) 494-5728	100 Stumpfield Road	32503
Tallahassee	(850) 494-5728	2900 Apalachee Parkway	32399
Tampa	(813) 276-5795	2814 E. Hillsborough Ave.	33610

The Bureau of Administrative Review should be able to let you know what you need to do to get your license back. You may need to pay a fine, attend driver improvement school, or pay prior court fees. If you are unable to get a new license, you may be able to get a temporary driving permit if you need to drive to get to work or school. It's a good idea to start a file of documents that show you are employed or taking classes or any documents that show how you have been successful since your release.

If your license was suspended because of a traffic citation you will need to then contact the traffic court in the county where it was issued. For a list visit <https://dos.myflorida.com/library-archives/research/florida-information/government/local-resources/clerks-of-county-courts/>

Once you've met all the requirements, you will need to pay a fee. The amount varies depending on the charges. For a list of fees visit <https://www.flhsmv.gov/fees/> You can pay at any Florida Driver License Service Center. For a list visit <https://www.flhsmv.gov/locations/> or call 850-617-3000 to pay the reinstatement fee over the phone.

You can check the status of your license reinstatement by visiting <https://mydmvportal.flhsmv.gov/home/en/publicweb/dlcheck/>



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.



Treat everything like you're going to the DMV.

—Pablo



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.

.....



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. You can do so online at <https://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida> You can also get help by applying for assistance at Department of Children and Families community centers. For a list of offices, go to the DCF office locator: <https://access-web.dcf.state.fl.us/CPSLookup/search.aspx>

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 the State of Florida including:

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** This used to be called food stamps. Each month, money is put onto a special debit card called the Access Florida Card. You can use it just like a debit card at stores that accept EBT.
- **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.

You can apply for the above programs all through the same portal at <https://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida>



Other Assistance Programs

Type of assistance	Find out more and apply
Access Florida card (food stamps/EBT)	https://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/ebt.html
Rental assistance	https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/homelessness
Utility bill assistance	https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program-liheap
Internet bill assistance	https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov/
Discount drug card	www.floridadiscountdrugcard.com
Free and discount phones	https://www.lifelinesupport.org/ https://www.safelinkwireless.com/en/#!/newHome

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/
- **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.

Learn more and apply at 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>

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, 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, EBT card		
Medicaid	Healthcare help		
TANF	Money for needy families		
Lifeline https://www.lifelinesupport.org/	Help with phone and internet payment		
LIHEAP	Provides help with utility bills		
Medicare	Health insurance for seniors, people 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		



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.

Take your time. Get a plan together to achieve short term goals and long term goals. Ask questions. Everything changes so ask and learn.

—Brian N.



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 https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank
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 https://nafclinics.org/find-clinic/
Substance use treatment	Support group, treatment programs	Call the SAMHSA National Helpline at (800) 662-4357. For a support group, go to aa.org (Alcoholics Anonymous) or na.org (Narcotics Anonymous).
Housing	Emergency housing, transitional housing	Go to https://www.hud.gov/findshelter/
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 https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov



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.

Housing After Release



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. We have listed some emergency shelters in our directory, and you can find even more on national websites such as www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/state/florida

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 Florida Housing Authority to find out more about public housing. <https://www.hud.gov/states/florida/renting/hawebsites>
- **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 local Public Housing Authority. The Florida Department of Children and Families also offers a list of Continuum of Care organizations that offer housing support. You can search for one in your area here: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/public-assistance/homelessness>

Can I stay in public housing if I have a record? This depends on the conviction. People with sex offense convictions and those who have been convicted of methamphetamine production will be denied for public housing. To find out if you are eligible for public housing, ask reentry organizations in your state, your probation 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 or <https://www.hud.gov/states/florida/renting/hawebistes> 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
- www.zillow.com
- www.forrent.com
- www.craigslist.org
- 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. There is a resource to guide you as you come up against the obstacles of private housing in Florida: <https://www.felonyrecordhub.com/housing/florida/>

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.





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? Florida Eviction Protection may be able to help. Find out more here: <https://florida.evictionprotection.org/> The Florida Legal Aid (FLA) Eviction Prevention Project is another resource available to you. For more information visit: <https://gulfcoastlegal.org/florida-legal-aid-fla-eviction-prevention-project>

HUD also offers information about eviction here: 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

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.
- You can file a complaint through the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity online at https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/online-complaint
- You can file an inquiry through the Florida Commission on Human Relations at <https://fchr.myflorida.com/file-a-complaint-page>
- You can file a complaint in the city where you live. The name of the local agency varies. In some communities it's the Human Rights Commission. In others it might be called the Office of Equal Opportunity.

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 re-offended, but because they violate the conditions of their supervision, 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: We encourage you to reach out to organizations that might exist in your community for people with sex offense convictions, if they exist. Here are a few to get you started:

- Information and tips on finding housing:
 - <https://www.floridalsexoffenderhelp.com/housing-assistance> (This resource lists halfway houses in FL that accept people on the registry as well as organizations that offer housing placement services.)
 - <https://oncefallen.com/finding-housing/>
- “Registering With Dignity” handbook for people who are forced to register: <https://narsol.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RegisteringWithDignity-Handbook.pdf>

Employment



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



No matter what, don't stop persevering.

—Anonymous

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 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.
- Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity (floridajobs.org) has a searchable database of job postings in various fields throughout the state.
- Apprenticeship and job training programs throughout Florida are listed at <https://www.floridajobs.org/office-directory/division-of-workforce-services/workforce-programs>
- **Reentry programs.** Reentry and transitional housing organizations in your community may offer employment services. For a list of reentry organization Florida visit <https://www.recordgone.com/articles/former-offender-re-entry-programs-and-resources-florida.htm> or <https://www.reentryprograms.com/in/florida>
- Your **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 give you experience and lead you 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.

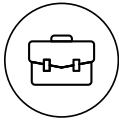
Take time to make a plan. Talk to a career counselor about your skills and interests and the kind of job you are looking for. You can use the worksheet on the next page to explore some of your career interests.

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

- careeronestop.org. Explore careers, find training, check out their toolkit, search for jobs, and more.
- mynextmove.org. Explore careers and get information about what you can do to get a job.
- 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. 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.

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

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.



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?

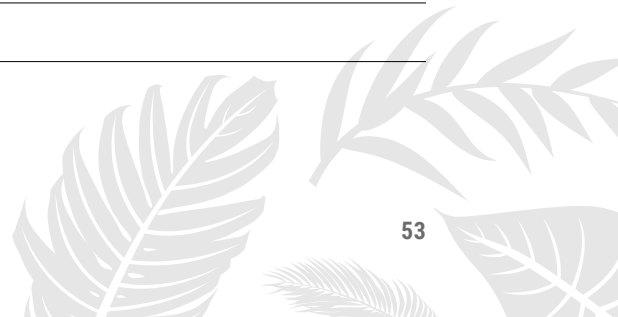
How will my criminal record impact my ability to get a job in these fields?

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

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

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

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.



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.

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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 \$40,000 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) often 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 for an apprenticeship.

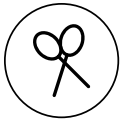
Job facts at a glance	
Wages	Earn \$40,000 to \$70,000 per year, depending on the job
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	High school diploma or GED. Some jobs require formal training, certificates, or an apprenticeship. Most jobs require on-the-job training.
Other requirements	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 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, or 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. Take advantage of those programs if they are available.

Outside of prison:

- Many community colleges and other training programs offer food services certificates.
- The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association has online and in-person training opportunities (<https://frla.org/training-certification/>)



Human Services and Advocacy

Many formerly incarcerated people work in human services to help people 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! People will be able to relate to you because of your experience.

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. They can help you develop leadership skills.

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

Outside of prison:

- **Get involved & volunteer.** We recommend that you get involved in reentry programs or other services that interest you. As you participate in these programs, ask the people who are helping you about their jobs and what they do. Then ask if there are things you can do to help out. Volunteering is a great way to get your foot in the door. 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 and job training organizations on page 170.
- **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 on page 68 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.** Find out what equipment you will need
4. **Space for work and storage.** Depending on your idea, you may be able to work at home or rent a storage shed. Maybe you can rent a small booth.

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

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. Many of them do not succeed. Here are the basic things you'll need to turn your self-employment venture into a small business:

- Capital. You'll need money to start your business.
- More space—maybe you rent an office space or garage.
- Employees and ability to grow a client base.
- Marketing plan.
- Information. You'll want to do lots of research about the industry. 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.



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



Places to Go For Help

Resource	Organization	Link
Small Business Resource Guide	Florida Department of State	https://dos.myflorida.com/library-archives/business/
Open My Small Business	Florida's Official Business Information Portal	https://openmyfloridabusiness.gov/
Small and Minority Business Programs	Florida Department of Economic Opportunity	https://floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/Small-and-Minority-Business-Resources/Small-and-Minority-Business-Programs
Florida Small Business	Florida Trend	https://www.floridatrend.com/small-business?ga=2.177703852.800016253.1663708297-598923289.1663708297#DBA

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.



Look for Jobs

In general, you'll want to apply 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, you should still think about applying. 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](https://www.monster.com), [careerbuilder.com](https://www.careerbuilder.com), and [snagajob.com](https://www.snagajob.com). [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) is one of the largest sources of job postings in the world. It collects job postings from employer websites, job boards, and more. These sites can be good if you want to work for a large employer. Lots of people submit online applications, especially to large companies. It may be hard to stand out among all of the candidates.

You may have better luck looking at company websites. Often, you will find a link to "Current Jobs," "Careers" or "Employment" on the homepage. The website "Jobs that Hire Felons" has a long list of companies whose hiring policies include people with a background: [jobsthathirefelons.org](https://www.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 recommend that you never give out this personal information on the internet

Don't have access to a computer to search for jobs or fill out job applications? You can use computers for free at your public library. They also often offer computer classes to get you started.

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. For upcoming job fairs in your community visit <https://jobfairsin.com/florida/> or <https://jobfairsnearme.com/state/florida>



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. Employers use written job applications to decide who is worth talking to in person. 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 these days. 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 *Life After Incarceration: A Guide for Returning Citizens in Florida*, former employer contact info. This is better than trying to remember the details and making mistakes. If you provide false information, you could be fired if they find out later.

Tips for filling out job applications

- List your past jobs and describe what you did. What skills did you develop? What were the important things you did during your shift?
- Focus on what you have to offer an employer. Downplay the negatives.
- List relevant 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. Some examples of positive reasons for leaving are:
 - 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.
- Florida is not a Ban-the-Box state, meaning employers can legally ask you about felony convictions on their application. 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



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 send out applications 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. This is completely normal. 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.



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.

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!



Zoom Interviews. Since the pandemic, some employers prefer to use Zoom, or other online video conferencing platforms to conduct their interviews. If you are invited for a Zoom interview, you must create an account before your interview.

- What you need:
 - An active email (Gmail, AOL, Yahoo, etc.)
 - A computer or electronic device with wifi
- How to create a Free Zoom account:
 - Sign up through <https://zoom.us/freesignup/>.
 - Enter your email and follow the prompts.
 - Be sure to use your legal name.
 - Create a password that you will remember.

Before your interview, practice using the tools in the call. This will get you familiar with Zoom and allow you to focus on the interview itself rather than the technology.



- Common Zoom Features:
 1. Mute/Unmute: Used for your microphone. When in an interview, it is best to mute your microphone if there is a group of people or if there is background noise.
 2. Start/Stop Video: Used for your camera. When joining a call, a good tip is to check your camera and surroundings before entering the call. For interviews, keep your camera on unless told otherwise.
 3. Participants: This shows you who is in the call with you.
 4. Invite: This feature is used mostly for people who are hosting calls such as interviewers.
 5. Chat: Used to talk to others in the call.
 6. Share screen: This button allows you to share your computer screen with other participants if needed.



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/>

Clemency and Professional Licensing

A criminal record can prevent you from getting a license in certain fields, including education, transit, and childcare. In Florida, a felony or misdemeanor does not automatically exclude you from state or local government positions. This means it is possible to work for the city or the state. However, a person can be denied if they have a felony or first-degree misdemeanor, and it is directly related to the type of position they have applied for.

Florida does have an Office of Executive Clemency. Clemency allows you to apply for relief from punishment and restoration of your civil rights. There are different types of clemency you can apply for. You can apply by yourself but may have a better chance of having it granted if you have a lawyer to represent you. For more information see page 104 or contact the Office of Executive Clemency. Visit <https://www.fcor.state.fl.us/clemency.shtml> or call (850) 488-2952.

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

You may have heard of “Ban the Box” laws. A Ban the Box prevents an employer from asking you if you have had a criminal conviction on job applications. Florida does not have a state law specifically banning this question; however, a patchwork of cities have banned the practice for public sector jobs. At the time of writing these cities include Lakeland, Tampa, Orlando, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Clearwater, Daytona Beach, Pompano Beach, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota. If you apply for a job in these cities the potential employer cannot ask you about your background on the job application.

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 (and there are pro bono lawyers who can help—see our Legal Matters section on page 101). 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 in Florida

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.

In Florida, you must law register through the portal [Employ Florida](https://www.employflorida.com) before you can request benefit payments ([EmployFlorida.com](https://www.employflorida.com)). This site also connects you to job training and opportunities. [FloridaJobs.org](https://www.floridajobs.org) (800) 204-2418 is another good employment resource with information on employment opportunities and assistance for homeowners and small business owners.



Education



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 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.

ABE and GED 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 the GED. A database of ABE programs in Florida can be found at <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/>

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 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 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. For more information see https://floridaliteracy.org/ged_generalinfo.html

Do you need help learning how to use new technology? Go to **Northstar** at 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.

Resources for finding vocational/ apprenticeship programs

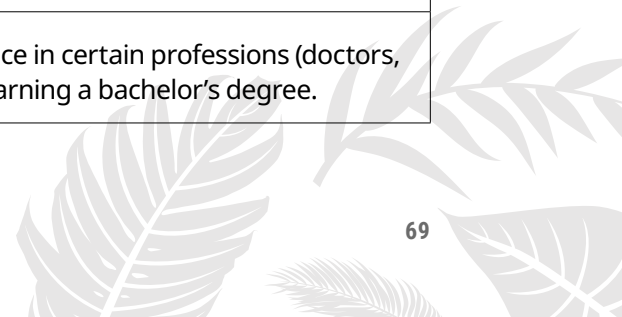
- American Job Center
 - [usa.gov/find-a-job](https://www.usa.gov/find-a-job)
- Florida Department of Education
 - <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/>
- Accredited Schools Online
 - <https://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/vocational-trade-school/florida/>
- National apprenticeships
 - <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-job-finder>
- Florida apprenticeships
 - <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/apprenticeship-programs/>



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 have to earn a certain number of credits to get a 4-year 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 four-year college, 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 or 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.

We recommend that you avoid "for-profit" online universities, such as University of Phoenix, or Ashford University (you can find a list of for-profit universities at https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_for-profit_universities_and_colleges). Most students who attend these schools never finish their degree programs. Those who do may have trouble getting jobs since the schools don't have good reputations. These schools also tend to be very expensive. They often offer only loans (which you have to pay back, often at very high interest) and not scholarships (which you do not have to pay back).



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

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, 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. 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](https://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 on page 79 and 86.

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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.

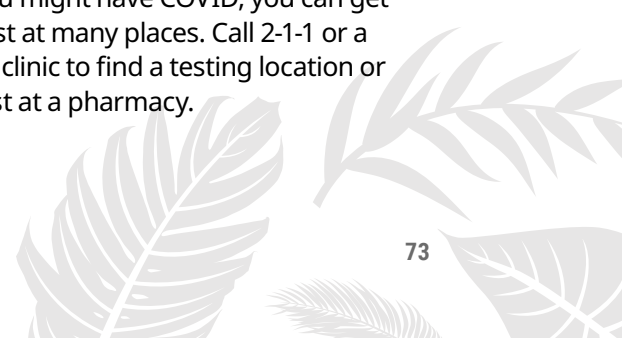
If you get sick

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

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 field services.
2. Apply online at Florida’s Department of Children and Families ACCESS page: <http://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>
3. Apply in person at a hospital or a DCF community partner. You can find the nearest center by going online to: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/map.shtml>. You can also visit one of these community partners for language assistance when completing the application.
4. Apply by mail or fax. You can call DCF to mail you an application by calling 711 or (TTY 1-800-955-8771). Complete the application and mail it to ACCESS Central Mail Center, P.O. Box 1770, Ocala, FL 34478-1770 or fax it back to (866) 886-4342. You can also find the application here: <https://palmbeach.floridahealth.gov>

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).



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

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 or call (800) 318-2596 to talk to someone who can help you complete your application.

Important Health Insurance Vocabulary

Premiums: required monthly payments.

Copay: a set fee for primary care doctor visits, specialty doctor visits, hospital visits, or medicine

Coinsurance: splitting the cost of a visit with your insurance company (e.g., you pay 20% and the insurer pays 80%).

Yearly deductible: required amount of money you must pay before the insurance begins to pay for any additional services.

Out-of-pocket maximum: the most money you will have to pay for covered medical expenses for deductibles and coinsurance before the insurance plan begins to pay 100% of additional expenses.

Approved network: the hospitals and clinics that will take your insurance.





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.

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.

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 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
- InfantSEE (free eye exams for babies 6-12 mo.) - 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 and www.goggles4u.com offer frames starting at around \$10. You will need a prescription.



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.



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

—Pablo

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.





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** 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 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.



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



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





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](#). When calling to set up an appointment, ask if they provide trauma-focused treatment.

- **The Florida Department of Health.** For a list of Florida-based resources for addressing mental health, go to: <https://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/mental-health/index.html>
- 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.

Bouncing Back

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.

”

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

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.

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 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:

- **The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF)** <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/get-help.shtml>. For a list of offices and contact information, go to the DCF office locator: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/SAMH-Get-Help>
- **211** or (352) 332-4636. The 211 line is available throughout Florida 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide information and referrals to health and human services.

- **Directory of mental health care providers:** 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.



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.



I would suggest trying to find a supportive network. Be willing to lean on that support system. We're so used to being rejected that we don't reach out much for help.

—Joe Joe



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.



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.

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

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.



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?



Substance Use Disorders



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



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. Find a Narcotics Anonymous support group by calling 1-818-773-9999 or going to 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 Naxolone (NARCAN®) if available.

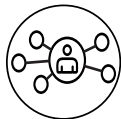




Reflect

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?
- What are your personal rituals around drug use? Can you modify those rituals so that you use less or use in safer ways?
- 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?
- 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) or Narcotics Anonymous (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.



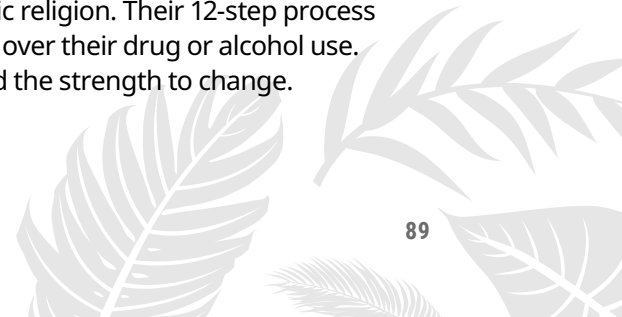
Finding a Peer Support Group

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 or 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 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 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 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



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. 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 for more information. It has service throughout some areas of Florida and around the country: <https://amtrakguide.com/stations/amtrak-stations-in-florida/>

- Greyhound, BoltBus, and MegaBus are a few long-distance bus companies.
- Florida Train and Metro Resources:
 - Sunrail Train (Central Florida): and Metro Route Information: <https://sunrail.com/>
 - Metrorail (Miami-Dade): <https://www.miamidade.gov/global/transportation/metrorail.page>

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

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.

☆ Orlando bike maps: <https://www.orlando.gov/Parking-Transportation/Bike-Trails-and-Paths>

Carpool, Rideshare, and Carshare Programs

Another option for saving money is to carpool. You can look up carpool programs online (see 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 and 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).
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.
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

In Florida you must have your car registered with Florida's Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Office. To register a vehicle in Florida, go to <https://www.flhsmv.gov/locations/> and find your local DMV office. Then go to <https://www.flhsmv.gov/motor-vehicles-tags-titles/license-plates-registration/motor-vehicle-registrations/> to find the documents you will need to bring to the DMV 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.

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



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 probation 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

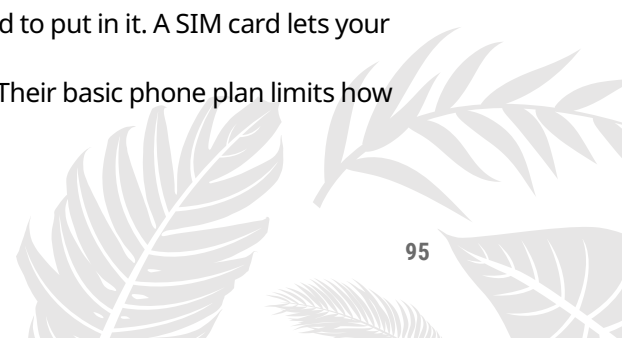
We recommend getting a phone when you get out. You will need a phone to keep in contact with family, friends, your employer, and your parole officer. There are three types of phones:

- **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. You can also get help by calling (800) 723-3546. You can apply for Lifeline at 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.

.....



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 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 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 probation officer can connect with you without having to come to your house. See our Post-Prison Supervision chapter on page 28 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 probation 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.

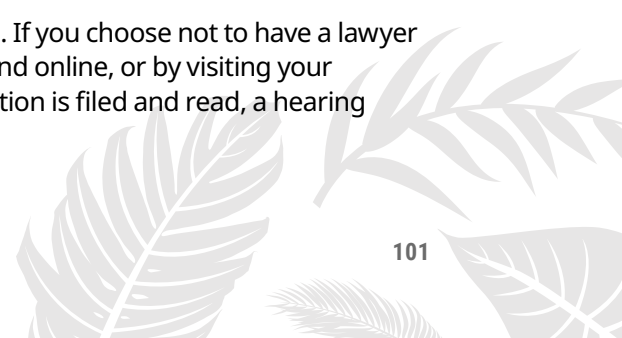
Pro se help desks. If you decide to file pro se, most counties offer pro se help desks. The service is free. There are workers who can help you with pro se forms, courthouse directions, and legal consultations. Call your county circuit clerk's office for information.

Child Custody

There are two key terms you need to know that relate to child custody in Florida.

- **Parental Responsibility:** If you have Parental Responsibility it means you can make choices about your child's future. For example, where they go to school. Florida law prefers that parents share responsibility except when that might not be good for the child. One parent will be designated the "primary" or custodial" parent and the other is the "secondary or non-custodial" parent.
- **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 and when. Even if you don't have Parental Responsibilities you can still have a good amount of Parenting Time. Parents can lose time sharing or visitation rights if there is evidence of domestic violence, child abuse, abandonment or neglect. Supervised time may also be an option.

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 Florida Department of Children and Families will try to place your child with family members, or people who act like family members. DCF 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 DCF. Let the judge in your case know you can't afford a lawyer. The judge will assign one to you.

DCF 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 DCF 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 DCF 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. DCF 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 60 days, 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.

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, childcare, 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 childcare expenses have gone up, you can ask for more child support from your child's other parent. Childcare 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.

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

Waivers for court fees. You may be able to get your court fees waived. Check with your probation officer or county clerk. If your fees cannot be waived, you may be able to get on a payment plan to spread the payments due over a longer period of time.

Removal of past child support debt. Check with the Florida Child Support Program to see if this is an option for you.



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

—Anonymous



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 probation 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 supervision, depending on the charge.

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.

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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



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 you 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



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.

Using Bank Cards for Purchases

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 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.

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



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 Access Florida EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card for food stamps and/or cash benefits.
- 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.life/Use-a-Debit-Card)

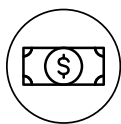
Learn about how to use an ATM here: [wikihow.com/Use-an-ATM](http://www.wikihow.com/Use-an-ATM)

☆ Remember: When using a credit or debit card, 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



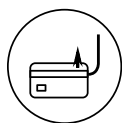
Financial Resources

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://nerdwallet.com): budgeting, banking, credit, financial planning, investments, mortgages, car and health insurance.
- [Annuity.org](http://annuity.org): budgeting, personal finance, credit and more. Two resources that may be especially helpful are: annuity.org/financial-literacy and 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



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.

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
- fbi.gov/coronavirus



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.

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.

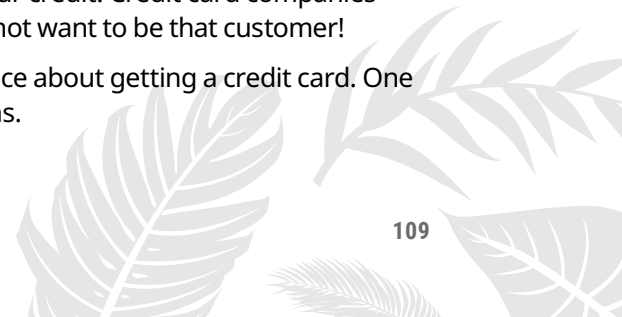


Credit

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, 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

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](https://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](https://www.e-file.com)
- [turbotax.intuit.com](https://www.turbotax.intuit.com)
- [hrblock.com](https://www.hrblock.com)
- [taxact.com](https://www.taxact.com)
- [jacksonhewitt.com](https://www.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](https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers)

Voting

According to Florida state law, you are eligible to vote if you are a US citizen, 18 or older, have finished your sentence with the Florida Department of Corrections, including probation. You must also pay back all fines, fees, costs, and restitution ordered as part of your sentence. You are not eligible to vote if you were convicted of murder or a felony sexual offense. If you lost your right to vote because of a felony conviction, you must re-register to vote after release. The FDC is able to assist you before your release with your application process.

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.

The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC) is a great resource for voting restoration. They list step-by-step instructions on how to get your voting rights back. For more information about the FRRRC and their resources, visit <https://floridarrc.com/>

Step 1: Pay any outstanding court costs or restitution

You can check with the Clerk of Court in the county where you were convicted for more information. You can also call the Court Ordered Payment System (COPS) at (850) 717-3877 to find your balance. You should check both the Clerk of Court and COPS to make sure you completed all obligations.



Step 2: Complete Restoration of Civil Rights Application

The first step to restoring your civil rights is to complete the Restoration of Civil Rights form from Florida's Office of Executive Clemency. You can get this copy form at <https://www.fcor.state.fl.us/restoration.shtml> under "Clemency Application" or by calling the Office of Executive Clemency at (850) 488-2952.

Step 3: Collect and prepare supporting documents

You will need:

- A certified copy of your charge (indictment, information, or warrant with supporting affidavit) for each felony conviction.
- A certified copy of judgment and sentence for each felony conviction. This may include the following
 - An order of community control or probation with each felony conviction,
 - A felony charge for adjudication of guilt withheld, or misdemeanor charge or conviction. (You can get these documents for free from the clerk of the circuit court where your charges were filed. The Office of Executive Clemency or Florida Commission on Offender Review (FCOR) may also be able to help.)
- Character references or letters of support (optional but helpful).

Step 4: Submit your application

The application and supporting documents must be submitted to:

Office of Executive Clemency
4070 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2450

Step 5: Register to vote

Once your Restoration of Civil Rights application is approved, it is time to register to vote. You cannot register before your application has been approved. For help, call the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition at 877-MY-VOTE-0.

There are several ways to register to vote in Florida:

- Online: To register online, visit <https://registertovoteflorida.gov/home>.
- Mail: To register by mail, use the Florida Voter Registration Application at <https://files.floridados.gov/media/704795/dsde39-english-pre-7066-20200914.pdf>. Be sure to read the instructions carefully and send the completed form to your local election office.

To register, you will need a valid Florida Driver's License or Florida Identification Card and the last four digits of your Social Security number. To vote in an upcoming election you must register to vote at least 29 days before that election.

Step 6: 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 7: VOTE!

Congratulations! It is now time to vote. In Florida, you are required to show your ID in order to vote. You do not need your voter registration card; however, it is always a good idea to bring it with.

Normally there are two ways to vote:

- In person, on election day, or during the early voting period at select poll locations.
- By mail-in ballot. Contact your Supervisor of Elections Office by phone, fax, email, mail, or in person to request a mail-in ballot. You can find your local office here: <https://dos.elections.myflorida.com/supervisors/>

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



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 the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FLVA) at (800) 827-1000.

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.

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 the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office (VARO) at 9500 Bay Pines Blvd., Bay Pines, FL 33744. 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 Florida Department of Veterans Affairs at 1 (844) MyFLVet (1-844-693-5838).

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 FLVA to get your benefits restored. They can go to <https://www.floridavets.org/benefits-services/> 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

A list of Florida VA Medical Centers can be found here: https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/fac_list_by_state.cfm?State=FL

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 "Log In." 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 in Florida by visiting: https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/fac_list_by_state.cfm?State=FL

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. In fact, they reject almost all claims the first time. 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

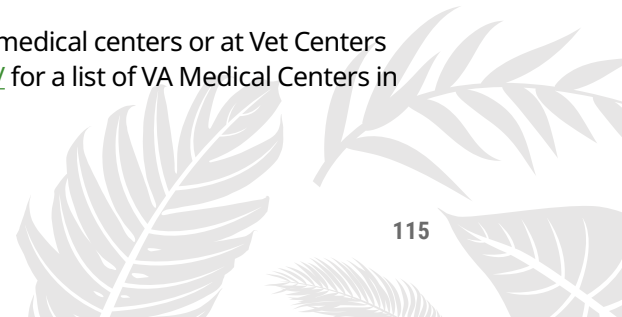
Health

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 use 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.

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 formerly incarcerated people.

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.



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

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.

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 on page 131.

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.



Take a breath. You’re going to be in for a ride, and you better pack your patience.

—Pablo

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're not alone!

Four common relationship stages during reentry			
<p>Stage 1: Honeymoon.</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>Stage 2: Uncertainty and suspicion.</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>Stage 3: Testing and learning to share.</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>Stage 4: Belonging.</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.phalanxgrpservices.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: (800) 799-7233** or the **Florida Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 500-1119.**

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

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.



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

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.
- **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.

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

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.



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:

- 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.

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: (800) 799-7233 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.

The Florida Department of Children and Families website also has a list of domestic violence agencies where you can go for help: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence/>

Additional resources for survivors of domestic violence can be found at <https://ncadv.org/resources>

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. In our Health Directory, we have listed a few counseling resources available to people who are facing domestic violence.

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/>



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?



Mindfulness

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.



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



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.



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

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/1XSgYgKhvpM1ugq3_00Q074nBXlZq4CLo/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. Some popular apps include Aura, Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer, Mindfulness Coach and UCLA Mindful. Do an online search for more information on these apps.



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. Formerly incarcerated people in communities across the country have created or contributed to support groups, advocacy organizations for the formerly incarcerated, and community organizations of all kinds. Ask around for opportunities to connect with them.



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.



You always have to see the silver lining in the clouds, no matter how murky they are. I think that’s the main advice that I could give to someone. Just don’t give up. Because it’s hard. Don’t make no mistake about it.

—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.



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





Part 4: Directory

- National Resources
- State-Specific Resources





National Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
HOUSING RESOURCES			
Transitional Housing Directory	transitionalhousing.org		Directory of transitional housing throughout the country
Homeless Shelter Directory	homelessshelterdirectory.org/		Directory of homeless shelters throughout the country
Shelter Listing Directory	shelterlistings.org		Directory of homeless shelters, transitional housing, halfway houses and more throughout the country
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans	nchv.org		Veteran housing services
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)	https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies	(866) 674-6327	Federally funded assistance in managing costs associated with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization, minor home repairs
Substance Abuse Rehab Centers Directory	substancerehabcenter.com/halfway-house/		List of substance abuse transitional houses throughout the U.S. as well as outpatient services
Sober Living Homes—Intervention America	soberliving.interventionamerica.org/		Directory of sober living homes across the US
ID RESOURCES			
US Social Security Office Locator	https://www.ssa.gov/locator/		Request a replacement social security card, apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits
FOOD RESOURCES			
Feeding America	https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank		Directory of local food banks throughout the country





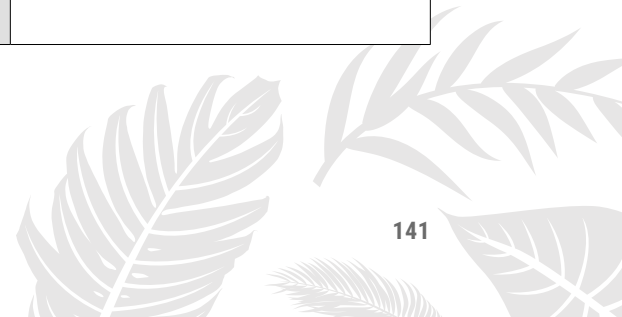
National Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
FOOD RESOURCES			
Find Food Pantries	https://www.foodpantries.org/		Directory of local food banks and soup kitchens throughout the country
HEALTH RESOURCES			
Transitions Clinic Network (TCN)	https://transitionsclinic.org/locations/		A network of clinics in 14 states specifically for chronically ill people after prison
Partnership for Prescription Assistance	pparx.org	(571) 350-8643	Medicine cost assistance
AIDS Info Hotline	https://hab.hrsa.gov/get-care	(800) 448-0440	Confidential answers to questions about HIV/AIDS treatment and clinical trials
EyeCare America	aao.org/eyecare-america		Medical eye exams, often at no cost
GoodRx	https://www.goodrx.com/		Offers 80% discount on prescriptions
US Healthcare Marketplace	healthcare.gov		National website to sign up for health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare services.
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES			
Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	988lifeline.org	988	24/7 suicide and mental health crisis lifeline
Palouse Mindfulness	https://palousemindfulness.com		Free online mental health mindfulness group
Mindfulness Coach			Free app to learn mindfulness, self-guided training program, resource library, exercises, goal-setting and tracking, assessment, access to support, and crisis resources
Aura Phone App			Daily micro-meditations (3 minutes); can purchase monthly subscription for more



National Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
Insight Timer Phone App	https://insighttimer.com		Guided meditation app
UCLA Mindful Phone App			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
Veteran Crisis Line	https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat	(800) 273-8255, text 838255	24/7 Veteran's and service member crisis line
SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES			
Narcotics Anonymous	https://na.org/		Support groups
Alcoholics Anonymous	aa.org		Online and in-person support groups
Alcohol and Drug Referral Helpline	https://www.samhsa.gov/	(800) 662-4357	Referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations
REENTRY SERVICES			
Fair Shake	https://www.fairshake.net/	(608) 634-6363, information@fairshake.net	Online reentry resources including a basic toolkit, a database of reentry resources, and study guides
EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING RESOURCES			
Jails to Jobs Website	jailstojobs.org/		Online job search tool
Jobs For Felons Hub Website	jobsforfelonshub.com/		Online job search tool for people with a felony record
Education & Career Guide for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals	https://study.com/resources/formerly-incarcerated-education-career-guide		Helpful information about earning your degree and getting hired after incarceration





National Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING RESOURCES			
CareerOneStop	https://www.careeronestop.org/Site/contact-us.aspx	(877) 872-5627 info@careeronestop.org	Career training and career search assistance
Step Ahead Career Planning Resources	https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/ex-offenders/workbook.html		Online job planning workbook for people with criminal records
LEGAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES			
Legal Action Center	https://clearinghouse.lac.org/public		Job resources for people with criminal records
LEGAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES			
National Immigrant Justice Center	immigrantjustice.org	(312) 660-1370	Immigration legal services to low-income individuals in the Latino community
National Immigration Legal Services Directory	https://www.immigrationadvocates.org/nonprofit/legaldirectory		Directory to search for legal services by state, county, or detention facility
FAMILY & CHILDREN RESOURCES			
Domestic Violence Helpline	thehotline.org	(877) 863-6338	Domestic violence hotline
Domestic Violence Hotline	https://www.thehotline.org/	(800) 799-7233, text START to 88788, live chat on website	Domestic abuse hotline
National Diaper Network	nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/members	(203) 821-7348	Visit their website to see what organizations near you provide free diapers





National Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
CURRENTLY INCARCERATED SERVICES			
Prison Library Project	prisonlibraryproject.org	(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.
LGBT Books to Prisoners	lgbtbookstoprisoners.org		Mails free books to people in prison
VETERAN SERVICES			
US Department of Veterans Affairs—Benefits	va.gov		Assistance with accessing veteran benefits
US Department of Veterans Affairs - Medical Centers	va.gov		Veterans' health services
American Legion	legion.org	(800) 433-3318	Health, education, employment, other benefits for veterans



Additional resources can be found on the Volusia County Resource Directory:
<https://www.supportvolusia.org/volusia-resource-directory>





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
PANHANDLE				
Tallahassee	Ability1st, A Place Called Home (APCH)	www.ability1st.info	(850) 575-9621	Provides permanent supportive housing for single chronically homeless disabled adults and disabled homeless parents with custody (or pending custody) of at least one minor child. Assistance is in the form of rental assistance paid to landlord. Clients must provide documentation of disability, income, and homelessness.
Tallahassee	Better Angels Senior Housing Program Lutheran Social Services North Florida	www.info@lssnf.org	(850) 575-4309	The Better Angels senior housing program is designed to provide high-quality, affordable, independent living facilities for limited income seniors (55+).
Tallahassee	Big Bend Homeless Coalition	www.bigbendhc.org	(850) 576-5566	Coalition consists of Home Front Veterans Community, Home Place at Balkin, Home Plate, Homeless Prevention, HOPE Community, Patrick Avenue Apartments, Rapid Re-housing, Advocates for Veteran Housing / Supportive Services for Veterans Housing.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Tallahassee	CARE Tallahassee	www.care-tallahassee.org	(850) 320-0281	Provides a Christian home for up to 32 men at risk of homelessness. Assists men with basic needs for food and shelter while also providing opportunities to grow and mature towards healthy social and spiritual living. Formerly incarcerated men, including people with sex offenses, may be referred by corrections or probation officers or may self-refer. Must agree to attending Bible studies, following community rules and attending meetings and chapel.
Tallahassee	CCYS, Going Places Street Outreach	www.ccys.org	(850) 320-0281	Outreach services for youth (11 to 21) on the streets: housing, shelter, tents and/or tarps for living outdoors. Provides help with employment, financial aid for GED and college, ID acquisition, legal advocacy, food stamps, clothes, hygiene items, bus tickets home if not from local area, calls home for safe and well notification. Helps clients obtain Medicaid, health and dental care, prescriptions, pregnancy and STD testing, substance abuse and mental health counseling.
Tallahassee	City of Tallahassee, Community Housing and Human Services	www.talgov.com	(850) 891-6566	Provides affordable housing and homeless programs information.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
PANHANDLE				
Tallahassee	City Walk Urban Mission	www.citywalkthrift.com	(850) 528-3909	Provides Christian-based transitional housing for men releasing from incarceration, including individuals required to register for sex offenses.
Tallahassee	Covenant House Florida	https://www.covenanthousefl.org/	(954) 561-5559	Shelter for youth including health services, substance use treatment, and employment assistance
Tallahassee	The Dwellings	www.thedwellings.org	(850) 786-2290 info@thedwellings.org	The Dwellings tiny homes provide a manageable space for individuals who are institutionally, financially, or socially disadvantaged.
Tallahassee	ECHO Outreach Ministries	www.echotlh.org	(850) 224-3246	ECHO's Rehousing and Homelessness Prevention program works with individuals who earn an income to identify affordable permanent housing options and establish budget thresholds to meet their ongoing living obligations while relieving them of the initial, up-front charges that are often hurdles to self-sufficiency.
Tallahassee	Good News Outreach Mercy House	www.goodnewsoutreach.org	(850) 412-0016	Provides a transitional housing program for men recently released from state and federal prison, excluding people with sex offenses.
Tallahassee	Good Samaritan Network	www.gsncares.org	(850) 556-5202	Provides a Christian-based residential housing program for men.



Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Tallahassee	Good Samaritan Network - Chelsea House for Women	www.gsncares.org	(850) 297-1113	Provides a Christian-based residential housing program for women and single-mom families who are able and willing to work, go to school and/or volunteer with the ministry full-time.
Tallahassee	Habitat for Humanity	https://bigbendhabitat.org/	(850) 574-2288	Provides new homes for eligible applicants. Applicants must demonstrate need, comply with HUD guidelines, and undergo criminal background checks (no violent offenses.)
Tallahassee	Joseph House	www.josephhouseus.org	(850) 933-0375	Joseph House collaborates with other community partners to provide evidence-based, trauma-informed programming for men soon to be released from prison or recently released. Length of stay varies. Participants are provided with housing, food, clothing, and a range of services to assist with their transition back into society in order to support their complete restoration into our communities and neighborhoods. Open to individuals of all faiths or no faith. Open to individuals with sex offenses.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
PANHANDLE				
Tallahassee	Kearney Center CESC	www.kearneycenter.org	(850) 792-9000	The Kearney Center is an entry point for individuals experiencing homelessness or economic hardship in the Big Bend region. Services include temporary emergency shelter, meal services, daytime services, and medical assistance.
Tallahassee	Oxford House, Inc.	www.oxfordhouse.org	(601) 402-6864	Oxford House is a self-run, self-supported addiction recovery house offering a supportive, clean and sober environment. Residents learn alcohol and drug-free living skills, receive 24-hour support from peers in recovery, share responsibilities, participate democratically in running the household, and equally share expenses. Move-in fee (\$150) due upon acceptance into the house; weekly cost is \$135 - \$175 per person. Open to anyone with substance abuse disorder and co-occurring disorders; no people with sex offenses.
Tallahassee	Shisa House Community Release & Re-Entry Center	www.shisa.org/	(850) 222-4859	Under contract with the Florida Department of Corrections, Shisa House operates a transitional home for female offenders in Tallahassee.
Tallahassee	Talley House	www.woodlands-camp-tally.org	(850) 574-CAMP (2267)	Talley House is a faith-based residential transition program for formerly incarcerated people and people recovering from addiction.



Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Tallahassee	Teen Challenge, Tallahassee Men's Center	www.teenchallenge.cc	(855) 934-4673 / (850) 385-8336	Provides Christian-based men's (18+) year-long residential program for recovery from substance abuse and other life controlling problems. Provides one-on-one mentoring, job training and GED® study if needed. Program requires Bible study and regular church attendance. Sliding scale fee; scholarships may be available. Court ordered and self-referred clients accepted; no sex offenses.
Tallahassee	The Living Harvest (TLH)	www.thelivingharvest.org	(850) 900-5930	The Living Harvest (TLH) is a faith-based long-term residential 12 Step Recovery and Substance Abuse focused program for individuals with criminal justice involvement in transition.
Tallahassee	Westgate	https://westgatetlh.org/	(850) 574-0624	Provides a residential program designed to assist people transitioning to an independent living environment. Each resident is provided an individualized case plan that is managed by the staff on site. Each prospective resident should walk in to complete an assessment and interview. Bring proof of income (Social Security award letter, check stub, etc.) and state-issued ID. People with sex offenses are not eligible.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
PANHANDLE				
Tallahassee	Wisdom's Wellspring	www.wisdomswellspring.org	(850) 294-6932	Faith-based residential housing program for women experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Wisdom's Wellspring is a structured residential experience offering mentorship and support. Residents are required to participate in life skills and community service programs designed to foster financial self-sufficiency. No religious affiliation is necessary to be considered for residency. Residents pay program fees of \$200 / month and should be working or looking for work. Inability to pay will not disqualify applications, but residents are expected to begin paying a program fee after two months of residency. Women with criminal histories are welcome to apply and will be considered depending on nature of the crime.
NORTH				
Jacksonville	City House-Sober Living	https://cityhouses.org/	(904) 866-0088	City Houses is dedicated to providing a safe and sober living environment. House rules include: drug testing, chores, curfew and attendance at AA and NA meetings. Not open to those with sex offense or violent charge.





Housing Resources

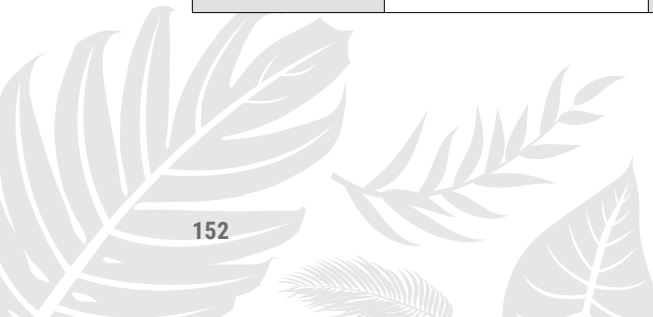
City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Jacksonville	City Rescue Mission	https://www.crmjax.org/	(904) 421-5161	City Rescue Mission, Inc. provides food, clothing, shelter, emergency services and residential recovery programs to homeless men, women, and women with children for the purpose of transforming the lives of the homeless and needy, serving them through the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.
Jacksonville	Clara White Mission	https://clarawhitemission.org/	(904) 354-4162	purpose is to prevent and reduce homeless through advocacy, housing, job training and employment, and through working in partnership with the community; targets unemployed homeless and low-income prioritizing veterans and ex-offenders.
Jacksonville	IM Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless	https://sulzbacherjax.org/	(904) 359-0457	Full service shelter for all includes medical, dental, vision, and behavioral health care; offers a stable environment for homeless men, women and children. For families, individual dorm rooms allow parents and children to live together.
Jacksonville	Salvation Army/Towers Center of Hope Homeless/Social Services	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/jacksonville-ac/	(904) 301-4800	Homeless shelter; also provides housing for single women and families, and transitional housing for men.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
NORTH				
Jacksonville	Trinity Rescue Mission	https://trinityrescue.org/	(904) 355-1205	Trinity Rescue Mission plays a critical role in the continuum of care for homeless services in Jacksonville and Northeast Florida. As a member of the Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition of Northeast Florida, Trinity Rescue Mission provides a complete menu of homeless restoration services within one organization, from emergency shelter and meals, to short term programs, to long term addiction recovery, to re-employment and transitional housing.
CENTRAL				
Tampa	Abe Brown Ministries, Inc. Transitional Housing	http://www.abebrown.org/transitional-living	(813) 247-3285	Faith-based 12-month transitional living program (TLP) established to provide returning citizens with a safe residence, afford him the opportunity to attain employment, assist him in re-acclimating to society, and disciple him to be accountable and productive in mainstream living.
Tampa	ACTS Tampa	https://www.actsfl.org/housing.html	(813) 246-4899	Provides 90 day and emergency shelter and recovery services along with permanent supportive housing to homeless individuals with co-occurring (substance abuse/mental health) disorders.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Daytona Beach	Beacon Center Emergency Shelter Program	http://www.mybeaconcenter.com/	(386) 255-2102 (24-hour hotline)	Beacon Center offers a 60-bed emergency shelter facility for survivors and their children to stay while they recover from the trauma of abuse and make plans for their future. During this time survivors will be provided an opportunity to take advantages of all services offered by the organization. Basic needs including food and personal hygiene items will be provided during their stay.
Clearwater	City of Refuge Ministries	https://cityofrefugeclearwater.org/	(727) 530-3350	Faith-based transitional housing committed to providing recently incarcerated women a safe living environment which includes education, job assistance, life skills, and Christian discipleship.
Orlando	Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida	https://www.centralfloridahomeless.org/	(407) 426-1250	Emergency and transition shelter for homeless single men and women and families.
Tampa	Dawning Family Services Emergency Shelter	https://www.dawningfamilyservices.org/get-help	(813) 875-2024	For those who enter shelter, we provide a safe, welcoming environment that promotes and supports the hard work of obtaining permanent, stable housing.
Winter Park	Phoenix Housing	https://housing4offenders.com/	(407) 800-2275	Phoenix Housing offers rooms for rent suited for ex-offenders, including sex-offenders. Similar to roommate rentals, residents rent a private room and share common areas. Our homes feature a fully-equipped kitchen, living area, and clothes washer and dryer.



Housing Resources

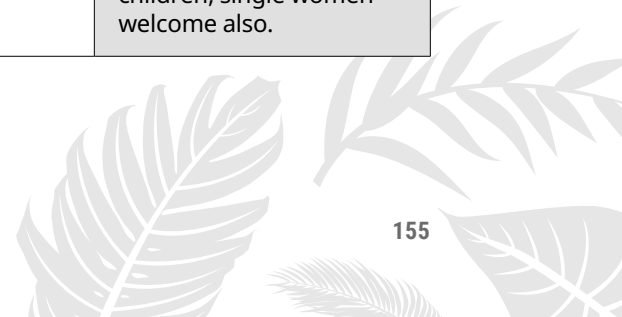
City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
CENTRAL				
Daytona Beach	Family Renew Community, Inc. (Daytona)	http://www.familyrenew.org/	(386) 258-9553	Ten one-bedroom and one two-bedroom apartments for homeless single mothers with children.
DeLand	Family Renew Community, Inc. (DeLand)	http://www.familyrenew.org/	(386) 736-0500	Four one-bedroom and three two-bedroom apartments for homeless single mothers, single fathers and two-parent families with children. Homelessness prevention services also available at this campus.
Holly Hill	Family Renew Community, Inc. (Holly Hill)	http://www.familyrenew.org/	(386) 252-0711	Fourteen one-bedroom apartments for homeless single mothers, single fathers and two-parent families with children. Family Renew Community's homelessness prevention services also are headquartered at this campus.
Daytona Beach	First Avenue to Freedom	https://www.1stavenueoffreedom.com/	(386) 295-5872	First Avenue to Freedom offers sober living to men in early recovery. Their mission is to provide a safe and structured living environment so that men can build a strong foundation in their recovery, as well as become productive members of society.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Daytona Beach	First Step Shelter, Inc.	https://firststepshelter.org/	(386) 361-3800	First Step Shelter is a 15,000-square-foot facility that serves males and females, but not families, and has a medical treatment unit and counselors at the facility to assist with mental health and substance abuse. The shelter also provides employment services, jail diversion, help with old criminal cases, housing, transportation, case management and more. To become a resident of the shelter, a homeless person must be referred by a church, social service agency or law enforcement.
Daytona Beach	Hope Place (Halifax Urban Ministries)	https://halifaxurbanministries.org/	(386) 317-5886	Hope Place provides emergency housing for up to 3 months for over 100 families with children each year. Their Rapid Rehousing Program helps families quickly establish a new residence each year through financial assistance and provides support services to help families return to being self-sustaining members of our community.
Apopka	Lighthouse Mission of Orlando	https://lighthousecfl.org/	(407) 291-0124	Program provides long-term housing for registered sex offenders. Program also includes meals and faith-based worship services.
Ruskin	Mary & Martha House Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing for Women	https://marymarthahouse.org/	(813) 641-7027	Emergency shelter/ transitional housing for homeless and or abused women and their children, single women welcome also.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
CENTRAL				
Tampa	Metropolitan Ministries	https://www.metromin.org/what-we-do/housing/	(813) 209-1000	Offering short- and long-term residential programs in Hillsborough and Pasco counties for women and families at Hope Hall, Uplift Hall, and Miracles for Pasco.
DeLand	Neighborhood Center of West Volusia, Inc.	https://neighborhoodcenterwv.org/	(386) 734-8120	The Neighborhood Center of West Volusia's Emergency Shelter serves those in crisis and who are homeless. Additional services provided during an individual's shelter stay include meals, counseling, job counseling, and a supportive drug/alcohol free environment.
Tampa	New Beginnings of Tampa	https://www.newbeginningsoftampa.org/	(813) 971-6961	Faith-based transitional housing and homeless recovery programs for men and women; provides support services including mental health and substance abuse counseling and job placement.
Orlando	Offender Housing	https://offenderhousing.org/	(407) 807-0733	Offender Housing is an independent-living halfway house based in Orlando, Florida. We mediate resources for offenders (including sex offenders) who are wholly committed to successfully reintegrating into local communities throughout Florida.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Orlando	Orlando Union Rescue Mission (Men's Division)	https://www.ourm.org/	(407) 423-3596	The Mission provides for immediate physical needs, including food, clothing and shelter, however, our programs are designed to lead the homeless to permanent independence built upon a personal relationship with Christ.
Daytona Beach	Palmetto House	https://www.mfhp.org/Palmetto-House-6-60.html/	(386) 253-4895	Palmetto House, with its forty-eight rooms, is the largest temporary housing facility in Volusia and Flagler Counties. Its purpose is to facilitate the movement of homeless individuals to permanent housing within a reasonable amount of time (usually 24 months).
Clearwater	Pinellas Ex-Offender Re-entry Coalition (PERC) Housing	https://www.exoffender.org/programs/programs-ex-offenders/housing/	(855) 505-7372	Transitional living community that offers a safe, sober, and stable living environment for males returning to the community from incarceration and/or recovery programs.
Sanford	Project 180 Residential Program	https://www.project180reentry.org/portfolio-item/residential-program/	(941) 677-2281	Offers a limited number of formerly incarcerated men up to two years of stable residency, nutritious food, clothing, transportation, help in paying fines that prevent the restoration of driving privileges, cultural opportunities in the community, assistance in finding full-time employment, and more.





Housing Resources

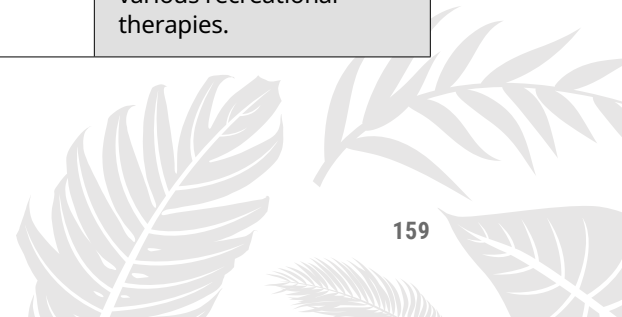
City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
CENTRAL				
St. Petersburg	Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center (St. Petersburg)	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/adult-rehabilitation-center/	(727) 541-7781 questions@lionheart.org	Offers men struggling with alcohol and drug dependence residential housing, work, and group and individual therapy, all in a clean, wholesome environment for the purpose of preparing them to re-enter society.
Tampa	Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center (Tampa)	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/adult-rehabilitation-center/	(813) 972-0471	Offers men residential housing, work, and group and individual therapy, all in a clean, wholesome environment for the purpose of preparing them to re-enter society.
Orlando	Salvation Army Men's Shelter (Orlando)	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/orlando/	(407) 423-8581	The Men's Shelter is not just a place to rest but also a place that offers programs designed to meet the needs of men who are hungry, unemployed and in need of guidance in their lives.
Tampa	Salvation Army Red Shield Lodge Emergency Shelter	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/tampa/#assistance	(813) 549-0641	Faith-based 132-bed emergency shelter for adult men and women; provides programs and workshops to promote self-sufficiency and personal development, including working with clients to help them transition into a more permanent housing situation.
St. Petersburg	Salvation Army of St. Petersburg Shelter	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/stpetersburg/#tab-id-5	(727) 822-4954	Services include emergency assistance, self-sufficiency programming, counseling, and referral services.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Orlando	Salvation Army Women's and Children Shelter (Orlando)	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/orlando/	(407) 423-8581	This shelter provides a 62-bed facility for women and children experiencing homelessness and in need of emergency shelter and also women and children seeking to make the transition from homelessness to stable housing.
Orlando	Sex Offender Housing of Orlando	https://sohofl.org/	(407) 616-7757	Program provides sex offender housing available to rent at multiple locations.
St. Petersburg	St. Petersburg Suncoast Residential Re-entry Center	https://goodwill-suncoast.org/work-release-programs/#stpetecenter	(727) 563-9735	Serves female offenders transitioning from Florida correctional facilities, assisting them with their re-entry into society.
Daytona Beach	Solutions by the Sea	http://solutionsbytheseaflorida.com/	(386) 295-1082	Solutions by the Sea is a safe and supportive, sober living environment for men located just moments away from the beach in Daytona Beach, Florida.
Daytona Beach	Stewart-Marchman-Act (SMA) Healthcare	https://smahealthcare.org/	(800) 539-4228 (24/7 hotline)	SMA offers residential addiction treatment for adolescents and adults, crisis shelter for adolescents, and supportive housing for adults.
Tampa	Tampa Crossroads Rose Manor for Women	https://sobernation.com/listing/tampa-crossroads-inc-rose-manor-womens-residential-program-tampa-fl/	(813) 238-8557	Rose Manor is a co-occurring Women's Residential Program. It is typically 3 months of residential treatment, followed by 6 months of aftercare. Rose Manor offers individual and group counseling, case management, and various recreational therapies.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
CENTRAL				
Tampa	Unique Ladies of Character Transitional Housing Program	http://www.uniqueladies.org/transitional-housing-program/	(813) 489-4500 april.buckner@tn.gov	Faith-based transitional housing helping women from all walks of life by providing case management, client advocacy, community referrals, life skills, job coaching, 12 step meetings, cognitive thinking, support groups, a curfew, drug testing on-site, and church.
SOUTH				
Fort Lauderdale	Broward County (BC) Central Homeless Assistance Center	https://bphi.org/get-help/	(954) 563-HELP (4357)	Operated by The Broward Partnership for the Homeless, 200 bed facility with comprehensive services for men, women and families. Admission by referral only. Call the number provided for full details.
Miami	Concept House, Inc.	https://www.concepthouse.org/	(305) 751-6501	Offers comprehensive and specialized residential, outpatient and supportive housing programs for females and males afflicted with alcohol or other drug dependency/addiction problems and/or mental health disorders. Our Treatment philosophy is a comprehensive approach that includes education, prevention, intervention, risk reduction, relapse prevention and the right level of care for each individual.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
Miami	Homeless Assistance Center	https://chapmanpartnership.org/	(1-877) 994-HELP (4357)	Chapman Partnership manages two Homeless Assistance Centers located in Miami and Homestead. Our residents work together with case managers to create a comprehensive personalized plan, guiding them throughout their journey with us. With fully equipped medical and dental clinics, family dorms, cafeterias, classrooms, Wi-Fi, day-care, basketball courts, and even a dog kennel – we help provide all the resources needed for motivated residents to become self-sufficient.
Fort Lauderdale	Hope South Florida	https://www.hopesouthflorida.org/	(954) 566-2311	HOPE South Florida's Rapid Re-Housing program provides housing solutions for homeless families and veterans throughout Broward County. Rapid re-housing is an intervention that assists individuals and families with short-term rental assistance and support services to quickly end their homelessness and return them to permanent housing.
Miami	Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department	https://www.miamidade.gov/global/socialservices/home.page	(786) 469-4600	Rental Assistance Program Emergency Food and Shelter Assistance (EFSA) is utilized to assist individuals and families in need of emergency assistance with issues regarding payment of utility bills, rent and mortgage payments and also provides temporary shelter and food.



Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
SOUTH				
Miami	Miami Rescue Mission	http://www.miamirescuemission.com/	(305) 571-2273	Helping men, women, and children with meals, safe shelter, life-changing residential programs, employment, and housing resulting in transformed lives. Our passion is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ's great commission by serving others.
West Palm	Senator Philip D. Lewis Center	https://homelesscoalitionpbc.org/	(561) 904-7900	The Lewis Center provides temporary housing to individuals. Clients can stay up to 90 days. There are 20 beds in the women's dorm and 40 beds for men. You can get a referral to the Lewis Center on a 24-hour basis, 365 days per year. However, you cannot go directly to the Lewis Center to access services without first receiving a screening from a provider partner. Your first step is to call (561) 904-7900 to request a referral to enter the Lewis Center.
West Palm	St. Ann Place Outreach Center	https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/shelter/fl_st-ann-place-outreach-center	(561) 805-7708	St. Ann Place is the Church's outreach center for services to homeless women and men. Its mission is to witness Gospel values by providing a comfortable, clean, safe place where clients receive services in a dignified and respectful manner regardless of race, religion, or gender.





Housing Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
West Palm	Salvation Army Center of Hope	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/westpalmbeach/	(561) 689-1212	This is a Residential Re-entry Center (RRC) with a contract under the Federal Bureau of Prisons to house federal non-violent offenders and prepare them to return to society. This is a self-sufficient program that operates under a daily per-diem. Referrals are from Federal Correctional Institutions and the average placement is from one to six months. These residents are allowed to work in the community and return to the center in the evenings.
Miami	Salvation Army Miami Area Command	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/miami/	(305) 637-6700	Salvation Army Miami Area Command offers 236 beds distributed among three lodges that provide temporary housing to women and families, single men, veterans, and persons dealing with HIV/AIDS.
Fort Lauderdale	Salvation Army-Fort Lauderdale	https://salvationarmyflorida.org/fortlauderdale/	(954) 524-6991	The emergency night shelter is an open-door shelter that provides beds to homeless individuals without children. Homeless individuals can place their name on the list for drawing by calling or by walking in.





Health Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Category
PANHANDLE				
Tallahassee	Apalachee Center	https://apalachee-center.org/	(850) 523-3333	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Fort Walton Beach, Crestview	Bridgeway Center	http://www.bridgewaycenter.org/services-list3.html	(850) 833-7500	Mental health
Panama City	Chemical Addictions Recovery Effort	https://care4000.com/	(850) 872-7676	Substance abuse treatment
Tallahassee	DISC Village	https://discvillage.com/	(850) 561-0717	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Pensacola	Lakeview Center	https://elakeviewcenter.org/	(850) 437-8952	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Panama City	Life Management Center	https://lmccares.org/	(850) 522-4485	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
NORTH				
Middleburg, Green Cove Springs	Clay Behavioral Health Center	https://ccbhc.org/	(904) 291-5561	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
St. Augustine	Epic Behavioral Health Center	https://www.epicbh.org/	(904) 829-2273	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Jacksonville	Gateway	https://www.gatewaycommunity.com/	(877) 389-9966	Substance abuse treatment
Deland, Palm Coast, Deltona	The House Next Door	https://www.thehnd.com/	(386) 734-7571	Mental health





Health Resources

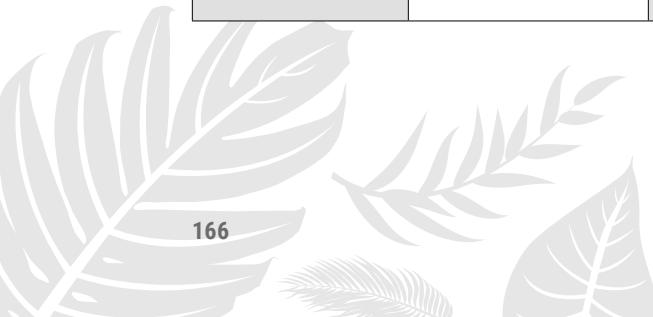
City	Name	Website	Phone	Category
Jacksonville, Clearwater, Gainesville, Kissimmee, Rockledge, Tampa, Winter Haven	Mental Health Resource Center	http://www.mhrcflorida.com/	(904) 695-9145	Mental health
Gainesville, Starke, Macclenny, Lake City, Cross City, Trenton, Mayo, Chiefland, Ocala, Palatka, Live Oak, Lake Butler	Meridian Behavioral Healthcare	https://www.mbhci.org	(352) 374-5600	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Bunnell, Ocala, Palatka, St. Augustine, Daytona Beach	SMA Behavioral Healthcare	https://smahealthcare.org/	(800) 539-4228	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Yulee, Fernandina Beach, Hilliard	Starting Point Behavioral Healthcare	https://www.spbh.org/	(904) 225-8280	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Green Cove Springs	The Way Clinic	https://thewayclinic.org/	(904) 531-9507	Low-cost medical care
CENTRAL				
Orlando, Fern Park, Sanford	Aspire Health Partners	https://aspirehealthpartners.com	(407) 875-3700	Mental health
Many locations	BayCare Behavioral Health	https://baycare.org	(800) 229-2273	Mental health
St. Petersburg	Boley Centers	http://boleycenters.org/	(727) 821-4819	Mental health





Health Resources

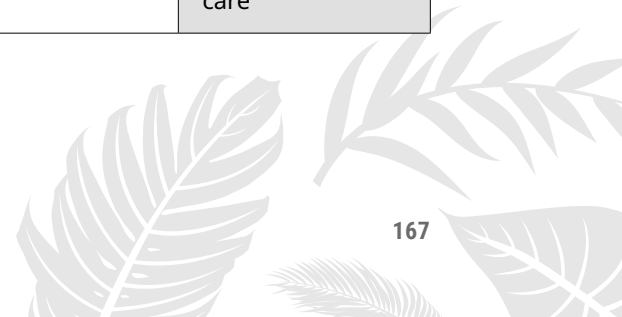
City	Name	Website	Phone	Category
CENTRAL				
Labelle, Bradenton, Sarasota, Fort Myers, Jacksonville	Centerstone	https://centerstone.org/	(877) 467-3123	Mental health
Orlando	Central Florida Cares Health System	https://centralfloridacares.org/	(407) 985-3560	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Punta Gorda, Port Charlotte, Arcadia	Charlotte Behavioral Health Care	https://www.cbhcfi.org/	(941) 639-8300	Mental health
Clearwater	Clearwater Free Clinic	https://www.clearwaterfreeclinic.org/	(727) 447-3041	Low-cost medical care
Sarasota, Venice, North Port, Punta Gorda	Coastal Behavioral Healthcare	https://www.fsos.org/	(941) 366-5333	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Orlando	Community Counseling Center of Central Florida	http://www.ccccf.org/	(407) 291-8009	Mental health
Lake Mary	Compassionate Souls Counseling	http://www.compassionatesouls.counseling.weebly.com/	(321) 262-3442	Mental health / LGBTQ+ support services
Labelle, Naples	Crossroads Behavioral Health Center	https://www.crossroadsflorida.org/	(239) 692-1020	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Naples, Marco Island, Immokalee	David Lawrence Center	https://davidlawrencecenter.org/	(239) 455-8500	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Clearwater, Largo	Directions for Living	https://directionsforliving.org/	(727) 524-4464	Mental health
St. Petersburg	Empath Partners in Care (EPIC)	https://myepic.org/	(727) 328-3260	LGBTQ+ support services





Health Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Category
Tampa	Gracepoint	https://www.gracepointwellness.org/	(813) 244-4906	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Orlando	Hispanic Family Counseling	https://www.hispafam.com/	(407) 382-9079	Mental health
Leesburg	LifeStream Behavioral Center	https://www.lsbcb.net/	(866) 355-9394	Mental health
Tampa	Northside Behavioral Health Center	http://www.northsidebhc.org/	(813) 977-8700	Mental health
Pinellas Park	Operation PAR	https://www.operationpar.org/	(727) 545-7564	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Brandon	Outreach Free Clinic	https://theoutreachclinic.com/	(813) 654-1388	Low-cost medical care
Kissimmee, Ocala	Park Place Behavioral Healthcare	https://www.ppbh.org/	(407) 846-0023	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Bartow, Lakeland	Peace River Center	https://www.peacrivercenter.org/	(863) 248-3311	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Pinellas Park	Personal Enrichment Through Mental Health Services	https://pemhs.org/	(727) 545-6477	Mental health
Orlando	Planned Parenthood (East Orlando Health Center)	https://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center/florida/orlando/32817/east-orlando-health-center-2857-90300	(407) 246-1788	Low-cost medical care
Fort Myers	SalusCare	https://www.saluscareflorida.org/	(239) 275-3222	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
St. Petersburg	St. Pete Free Clinic	https://stpetersburgfreeclinic.org/	(727) 821-1200	Low-cost medical care





Health Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Category
CENTRAL				
St. Petersburg	Suncoast Center	https://www.suncoastcenter.org/emotional-wellness	(727) 388-1220	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Lakeland	Tri-County Human Services	https://tchsonline.org/	(863) 709-9392	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Orlando	United Medical and Social Services	https://www.umssclinic.org/	(321) 413-0008	Low-cost medical care
SOUTH				
Tampa	Agency for Community Treatment Services	https://www.actsfl.org/	(813) 246-4899	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Miami	Banyan Health Systems	https://banyanhealth.org/	(305) 774-3400	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Fort Lauderdale	Broward County Addiction Recovery Center	https://www.broward.org/AddictionRecovery/Pages/AboutBARC.aspx	(954) 357-4880	Substance abuse treatment
West Palm Beach	Center for Family Services of Palm Beach County	https://ctrfam.org/	(561) 616-1222	Mental health
Multiple cities	Chrysalis Health	https://www.chrysalishealth.com/	(888) 587-0335	Mental health
Hialeah	Citrus Health Network	https://www.citrushealth.org/#/how-can-we-help	(305) 825-0300	Mental health
Miami	Community Health of South Florida	https://chisouthfl.org/	(305) 253-5100	Low-cost medical care / Mental health
Miami	Concept Health Systems, Inc.	https://www.concepthouse.org/	(305) 751-6501	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment





Health Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Category
Miami Beach	Douglas Gardens Community Mental Health Center	https://dgcmmhc.org/	(305) 531-5341	Mental health
Key Largo	Guidance/Care Center	http://www.guidancecarecenter.org/	(305) 434-7660	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Clearwater	Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services	https://gulfcoastjewishfamilyandcommunityservices.org/	(727) 479-1800	Mental health
Fort Pierce	Hands of St. Lucie County	https://www.handsofslc.org/	(772) 462-5646	Low-cost medical care
Multiple Cities	Henderson Behavioral Health	https://www.hendersonbh.org/	(954) 606-0911	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Multiple Cities	Legacy Behavioral Health Center	https://legacybhc.com/	(888) 975-3422	Mental health
Oakland Park	Light of the World Clinic	https://www.lightoftheworldclinic.org/	(954) 563-9876	Low-cost medical care
Hollywood	Memorial Healthcare System Outpatient Program	https://www.mhs.net/services/mental-health/treatments/outpatient-psychiatric	(954) 276-3400	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Fort Pierce, Stuart, Vero Beach	New Horizons	https://nhcinc.org/	(772) 468-5600	Mental health / Substance abuse treatment
Miami	Pridelines	https://pridelines.org/	(305) 571-9601	LGBTQ+ support services
Plantation	Smith Community Mental Health	http://www.smithcmh.com/	(954) 321-2296	Mental health
Delray Beach	South County Mental Health Center	https://www.scmhcinc.org/	(561) 495-0522	Mental health
Wilton Manors	SunServe	https://www.sunserve.org/	(954) 764-5150	LGBTQ+ support services
Miami	UMC Free Clinic	https://www.miamifreeclinic.org/	(305) 974-5995	Low-cost medical care



Employment Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
SOUTH				
Miami	Bridge for Hope, Inc.	https://www.bridgeforhope.info/	(786) 693-2612	provides job placement services for people with disabilities and returning citizens
PANHANDLE, NORTH, CENTRAL, SOUTH				
Tallahassee	CareerSource Florida	https://careersourceflorida.com/	(850) 792-5242	oversees twenty-four local workforce development boards throughout the state offering resources to assist individuals with job searches, career development and training
PANHANDLE, NORTH, CENTRAL				
N/A	Florida HIRES (Helping Inmates Realize Employment Success)	https://www.floridareadytowork.com/florida-hires	(888) 717-9461 (option 3)	state sponsored program providing a pre-release career readiness pathway to post-release employment for returning citizens
ONLINE				
N/A	Help for Felons	https://helpforfelons.org/jobs-for-felons-in-florida/	N/A	website providing listing of some employers in Florida that hire returning citizens
N/A	Indeed	https://www.indeed.com/q-Felony-Friendly-l-Florida-jobs.html	N/A	website providing listings of "felon friendly" jobs in Florida



Employment Resources

City	Name	Website	Phone	Description
NORTH, CENTRAL				
Jacksonville	Operation New Hope	https://operationnewhope.org/	(904) 354-4673	provides support, life and job skills training for people affected by the criminal justice system and places them in employment that offers a sustainable quality of life
CENTRAL				
Rockledge	Rise: Re-entry to Employment	https://careersourcebrevard.com/special-programs/rise-re-entry-to-employment/	(321) 394-0631	a free and innovative program designed to help those whose careers are in transition due to some degree of justice involvement





Part 5: Forms

- Social Security Card Request Form
- Birth Certificate
- Sample Resumes
- Veterans Beneficiary Apportionment Form

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION Application for a Social Security Card

Form Approved
OMB No. 0960-0066

1	NAME TO BE SHOWN ON CARD		First	Full Middle Name	Last
	FULL NAME AT BIRTH IF OTHER THAN ABOVE		First	Full Middle Name	Last
	OTHER NAMES USED				
2	Social Security number previously assigned to the person listed in item 1				
3	PLACE OF BIRTH (Do Not Abbreviate)			Office Use Only	4
	City	State or Foreign Country	FCI	DATE OF BIRTH MM/DD/YYYY	
5	CITIZENSHIP (Check One)		<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Citizen	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Alien Allowed To Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Alien Not Allowed To Work(See Instructions On Page 3)
			<input type="checkbox"/> Other (See Instructions On Page 3)		
6	ETHNICITY Are You Hispanic or Latino? (Your Response is Voluntary)		7	RACE Select One or More (Your Response is Voluntary)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<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	
8	SEX		<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female		
9	A. PARENT/ MOTHER'S NAME AT HER BIRTH		First	Full Middle Name	Last
	B. PARENT/ MOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (See instructions for 9 B on Page 3)		<div style="text-align: center;"> — — — — — <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown </div>		
10	A. PARENT/ FATHER'S NAME		First	Full Middle Name	Last
	B. PARENT/ FATHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (See instructions for 10B on Page 3)		<div style="text-align: center;"> — — — — — <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown </div>		
11	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.)				
12	Name shown on the most recent Social Security card issued for the person listed in item 1		First	Full Middle Name	Last
13	Enter any different date of birth if used on an earlier application for a card				MM/DD/YYYY
14	TODAY'S DATE MM/DD/YYYY		15	DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER Area Code Number	
16	MAILING ADDRESS (Do Not Abbreviate)		Street Address, Apt. No., PO Box, Rural Route No.		
			City	State/Foreign Country	ZIP Code
17	YOUR SIGNATURE		18	YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON IN ITEM 1 IS:	
				<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	ITV
PBC	EVI	EVA	EVC	PRA	NWR DNR UNIT
EVIDENCE SUBMITTED				SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EMPLOYEE(S) REVIEWING EVIDENCE AND/OR CONDUCTING INTERVIEW	
				DATE	
				DATE	

Forms



APPLICATION FOR FLORIDA BIRTH CERTIFICATE

Applicant Information (Eligibility Requirements on Reverse Side)

Any person who willfully and knowingly provides any false information on a certificate, record or report required by Chapter 382, Florida Statutes, or on an application or affidavit, or who obtains confidential information from any vital record under false or fraudulent purposes, commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in Chapter 775, Florida Statutes.

Applicant's Name: _____
(Person requesting the record)

Mailing Address: _____ Apt.#: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Phone (with area code): _____ email: _____

Relationship to Person on Birth Record: _____ Signature: _____

VitalChek.com is the ONLY online vendor approved by the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics to assist customers in completing the application process. Be cautious when sharing personal information online with unknown entities and maintain appropriate security on computers and electronic devices.

If applicant is an attorney, provide name of client you represent: _____,
client's relationship to registrant: _____, and your bar/professional license #: _____.

Information for Birth Search

Full Name on Birth Record: _____

Sex: _____ Date of Birth: _____ City/County: _____

Mother's / Parent's Full Name Prior to First Marriage: _____

Father's / Parent's Full Name Prior to First Marriage: _____

Ordering Information (Definitions on Reverse Side)

Normal processing time for computer certification is 3-5 business days. Amended records require additional processing time.

	Fee		Quantity		
Computer Certification: \$9.00 first computer certification	\$9.00	X	<input type="text"/>	=	\$0.00
Additional Computer Certifications: \$4.00 each additional computer certification	\$4.00	X	<input type="text"/>	=	\$0.00

Photocopy certificates require additional processing time.

	Fee		Quantity		
Photocopy Certificate: \$14.00 first photocopy certificate	\$14.00	X	<input type="text"/>	=	\$0.00
Additional Photocopy Certificates: \$4.00 each additional photocopy certificate	\$4.00	X	<input type="text"/>	=	\$0.00

Additional Years Searched: \$2.00 per year
(Required when exact year is unknown. Maximum fee is \$50.00)

	Fee		Quantity		
	\$2.00	X	<input type="text"/>	=	\$0.00
Rush Order (Optional): Rush orders are given priority processing and requires an additional \$10 fee. Mark the outside of your envelope "RUSH". Expedite shipping is NOT included.	\$10.00	X	<input type="text"/>	=	\$0.00

Total Amount Enclosed	\$0.00
------------------------------	--------

APPLICANT'S VALID PHOTO IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED (see list on reverse side). A \$9 search fee is included in all orders and is non-refundable. If no record is found, a certified "No Record Found" statement will be issued. Application must include signature of eligible applicant.

INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR FLORIDA BIRTH CERTIFICATE APPLICATION

If you need assistance, please contact our Vital Records Section at 904-359-6900 ext. 9000

COMPUTER CERTIFICATION OF BIRTH: Computer certification of birth printed on security paper with the Florida embossed seal, which is accepted by all state and federal agencies. Computer certifications are available from 1850 to present, but are limited from 1850-1916. A Computer certification has two different formats based on the year of birth:

- **2004 to Present includes:** Registrant (name on the record), Date of Birth, Sex, Time, Weight, Place of Birth (City/County); and Parent(s) Name, DOB, Place of Birth.
- **1850 to 2003 includes:** Registrant (name on the record), Date of Birth, Sex, County of Birth and Parent(s) Name.

PHOTOCOPY CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH: Photocopy certificate of birth manually produced from the original record on file and printed on security paper with the Florida embossed seal, which is accepted by all state and federal agencies. Photocopy certificates require additional processing time. The information collected at the time of birth varies based on the filing requirements at that time. **Time of Birth** was not collected on birth events between 1949 -1969.

AVAILABILITY: Birth registration was not required by state law until 1917, but there are some records on file dating back to 1850. Birth records under seal by reason of adoption, paternity determination or court order cannot be ordered in this manner.

ELIGIBILITY (Section 382.025, Florida Statutes): Birth certificates less than 100 years old can only be issued to:

1. Registrant (name on the record) if of legal age (18)
2. Parent(s) listed on the birth record
3. Legal Guardian (must provide guardianship papers)
4. Legal representative of one of the above persons (must provide documentation)
5. Other person(s) by court order (must provide certified copy of court order)
6. Upon receipt of registrant's death record, a birth certificate marked "Deceased" may be issued to registrant's spouse, child, grandchild, sibling, if of legal age (18). Please notate "Registrant Deceased" on the application and include a photocopy of the death certificate.

If applicant is not one of the above, the application must be accompanied with a notarized Affidavit to Release a Birth Certificate form (DH 1958) signed by an eligible person (form is available on our website) and a copy of valid photo identification of both, the person authorizing release and the applicant.

REQUIREMENT FOR ORDERING: Eligible applicant must provide a completed application, a copy of a valid photo identification, and any documentation required for proof of eligibility.

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION: Driver License, State Identification Card, Passport, Military Identification Card. A foreign issued driver license, identification card, consular card, or Matricula card require two additional forms of identification, such as a vehicle title or registration, health insurance card, employment ID, school ID, tax document, or mail with current address.

FEES: Check or Money Order Payable to: Vital Statistics. DO NOT SEND CASH. International payments must be made by Cashier's Check or Money Order in U.S. Dollars drawn upon a U.S. Bank. Florida Law imposes an additional service charge of \$15.00 for dishonored checks. Fees are nonrefundable, except fees paid for additional copies when no record is found. These are refunded on written request.

OPTIONS FOR ORDERING:

CREDIT CARDS: The Bureau of Vital Statistics office currently does not accept credit cards by phone or mail, if you wish to order by credit card, you may contact VitalChek, our only approved vendor. VitalChek charges an additional processing fee of \$7.00 in addition a \$10.00 Rush Fee charged by the Bureau of Vital Statistics. Expedite shipping is available for an additional fee. VitalChek may be reached by telephone at 1-877-550-7330, by fax at 1-877-550-7428, or online at VitalChek.com.

MAIL IN: Normal processing time is 3-5 business days for computer certifications. Photocopy certificates require additional processing time. If requesting rush service mark the outside of your envelope "RUSH". Rush orders are given priority processing. Expedite shipping is NOT included in rush fee. All orders are mailed Standard U.S. Postal delivery unless a special prepaid express delivery envelope is provided. Records that have been previously amended require additional processing time.

WALK-IN SERVICE: Visit 1217 North Pearl Street, Jacksonville, Florida, between 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. Eligible applicants must present a valid ID when requesting confidential records. Photocopy certificates require the \$10 rush fee and may not be available for same day service.

MAIL THIS APPLICATION WITH PAYMENT AND COPY OF VALID ID TO:

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
ATTN: VITAL RECORDS SECTION
P.O. BOX 210
JACKSONVILLE, FL 32231-0042**

Express Mail and Courier Deliveries to: 1217 North Pearl Street, Jacksonville, Florida, 32202

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.floridahealth.gov/certificates

John Smith

Contact

123 W. Main St. #5
Peoria, IL 60000
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

Mary Jones, Associate Professor of Sociology
University of IL-Springfield
name@gmail.com 600-300-4000

Fred Thomas, General Manager
Smith Foundation
1323 Main St., Peoria, IL 60000
f.thomas@email.com 300-400-5000

JOHN ALBERT JOHNSON

500 Main St, Anytown, IL 60606 · (555) 555-0000

JohnJohnson@email.com

EXPERIENCE

2015 TO PRESENT

TEMP WORKER

ABC PACKING CHICAGO, IL

Pick products and package orders for shipment.

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

GENERAL STUDIES

- Education coursework: English composition, Financial accounting, Automotive fundamentals, Intro to substance abuse, Business calculus

CERTIFICATE, PEER COUNSELING

2009

NORTHERN ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CERTIFICATE IN CUSTODIAL MAINTENANCE

REFERENCES

Sharon Mendez, Coordinator
Adult Learning Center
1010 Center Street
Our Town, IL 60000
sharonmendez@email.com
555.555.5555

William Smith, Director
Friendly Temp Agency
40 North Ave.
Our Town, IL 66666
williamsmith@email.com
555.555.5555

Peter Smith

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



INFORMATION REGARDING APPORTIONMENT OF BENEFICIARY'S AWARD

(DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE)
 (VA DATE STAMP)

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				

Forms

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. If desired, you can call 1-800-827-1000 to get information on where to send comments or suggestions about this form.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
SUPERVISION REPORT
(FOR THE MONTH OF _____)

NAME: _____ DC#: _____

OFFICER NAME/LOCATION: _____

RESIDENCE:

Street Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Building: _____ Apt#: _____ Lot#: _____ Code to access security gate: _____

LIST FULL NAMES, AGES, AND RELATIONSHIP OF OTHERS WHO CURRENTLY LIVE AT THIS RESIDENCE (Note if anyone is on supervision):

HOME PHONE NUMBER: _____ CELLULAR PHONE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

MAILING ADDRESS (IF DIFFERENT FROM RESIDENCE): _____

VEHICLE - _____

MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COLOR	TAG#
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CHECK CURRENT STATUS OF DRIVER'S LICENSE: Valid Revoked (Date: _____) Suspended (Date: _____)

EMPLOYMENT:

Employer Name: _____

Supervisor Name: _____ Phone: _____

Employment Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Your job title: _____

Job Duties: _____

SALARY/INCOME EARNED (for past month): _____ DATE BEGAN: _____ DATE ENDED: _____

Typical Days/Hours Worked: _____

NOTE: If unemployed (and not retired, disabled or a full-time student), attach completed Job Search form or list for the month.

STUDENT/SCHOOL: N/A

Type of Class/School Attending: High School College Adult Education Vocational Other Course Online Classes

School/Class Name: _____ Phone#: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Total Semester/Quarter Hours Enrolled: _____

Date Class or Semester Began: _____ Date Ended: _____ (Attach proof of enrollment or ending report)

Page 1 of 2 - Please complete the other/reverse side of this report (OVER)

SPECIAL CONDITIONS OF SUPERVISION – List progress made this past month on special conditions ordered, including:

PUBLIC SERVICE HOURS: _____ **MONETARY PAYMENT:** _____ **OTHER:** _____

TREATMENT ATTENDED THIS PAST MONTH: _____

NOTE: Attach required Support Group Attendance forms, driving logs, public service work documentation, etc. as required.

PAYMENTS: Payments may be made by either U. S. Mail or credit card using one of the services described on the DC Public Web site, www.dc.state.fl.us under the Probation link “FAQS” - Frequently Asked Questions– Four Ways to Pay Court Ordered Payments.

CONTACT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT – If you had any contact with law enforcement this past month, explain details here: _____

.....

Do you have a problem or concern you would like to discuss with your probation officer? YES NO

How did you spend your free time last month? _____

PERSONAL GOALS: Write each of your top 2 goals you are working to achieve. Indicate at least 2 action steps you took last month and 2 action steps you will take this month to achieve each goal.

GOAL # 1:

ACTION STEPS I TOOK LAST MONTH:

1. _____

2. _____

ACTION STEPS I WILL TAKE THIS MONTH:

1. _____

2. _____

GOAL # 2:

ACTION STEPS I TOOK LAST MONTH:

1. _____

2. _____

ACTION STEPS I WILL TAKE THIS MONTH:

1. _____

2. _____

Signature

Date

Signature of Officer Receiving Report

Date Report Reviewed

Officer Comments: _____

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
REPORTE DE SUPERVISION
(PARA EL MES DE: _____)

NOMBRE: _____ DC#: _____

NOMBRE DEL OFICIAL/UBICACIÓN: _____

RESIDENCIA:

DIRECCIÓN: _____ Ciudad: _____ Codigo Postal: _____

Edificio: _____ Apt#: _____ Lot#: _____ Código para acceder puerta de seguridad: _____

LISTA DE NOMBRES COMPLETOS, EDADES, Y RELACIÓN DE PERSONAS QUE VIVEN ACTUALMENTE EN ESTA RESIDENCIA (Indique si alguno está bajo supervisión):

NUMERO DE TELEFONO DE LA CASA: _____ NUMERO DE TELEFONO CELULAR: _____

DIRECCION DE CORREO ELECTRONICO: _____

DIRECCION POSTAL (SI ES DIFERENTE DE LA DIRECCION DE RESIDENCIA): _____

VEHÍCULOS - _____

MARCA	MODELO	AÑO	COLOR	PLACA#
-------	--------	-----	-------	--------

VERIFICAR EL ESTADO ACTUAL DE LA LICENCIA DE CONDUCIR: Valida Revocada (fecha: _____) Suspendida (fecha: _____)

EMPLEO:

Nombre del empleador: _____

Nombre del supervisor: _____ Telefono: _____

Dirección del empleador: _____

Calle _____ Ciudad _____ Estado _____ Codigo Postal _____

Posición Laboral: _____

Responsabilidades del trabajo: _____

SALARIO/INGRESO DEL TRABAJO (por el ultimo mes): _____ Fecha de Inicio: _____ Fecha en que terminó: _____

Típicos Días/Horas Trabajadas: _____

NOTA: Si no está trabajando (y no esta jubilado, desabilitado o eres estudiante de tiempo completo), agrega el formulario de busqueda de trabajo o una lista por el mes

ESTUDIANTE/ESCUELA: N/A

Tipo de clases/Escuela de asistencia: Escuela Secundaria Universidad Educaion de Adultos Vocacional Otros cursos Clases en linea/Internet

Nombre de Escuela/Clase: _____ Telefono#: _____

Direccion: _____

Calle _____ Ciudad _____ Estado _____ Codigo Postal _____

Total del semestre/Horas Matriculadas: _____

Fecha de comienzo de la clase/semestre: _____ Fecha de termino: _____ (agregue comprobante de inscripción o el informe final)

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

CONDICIONES ESPECIALES DE SUPERVISIÓN – Liste los progresos hechos el pasado mes sobre las condiciones especiales ordenadas, incluyendo:

SERVICIOS DE HORAS PUBLICAS: _____ PAGOS MONETARIOS: _____ OTROS: _____

TRATAMIENTO ASISTIDO EN EL MES PASADO: _____

NOTA: agregue los formularios de apoyo Del grupo de asistencia, registros de conducir, documentacion de trabajo de servicio publico, etc. segun sea necesario.

PAGOS: Los pagos pueden hacerse por cualquier correo de los EE.UU., o tarjeta de crédito a través de uno de los servicios descritos en el sitio Web público DC www.dc.state.fl.us en el enlace de Libertad Condicional "preguntas más frecuentes" - Cuatro maneras de cortejar pagos ordenados.

CONTACTO CON LA POLICIA– Si tuvo algun contacto con la policia el mes pasado, explicar los detalles aqui:

Tienes algun problema o una preocupacion que le gustaria discutir con su official de Libertad Condicional? SI NO

Como paso su tiempo libre el mes pasado? _____

METAS PERSONALES: *Escriba cada una de sus 2 principales objetivos que está trabajando para lograr. Indicar al menos 2 pasos de acción que tomó el mes pasado y 2 pasos de acción que tomará este mes para lograr cada meta*

META # 1:

PASOS A SEGUIR QUE TOMÉ EL ULTIMO MES:

1. _____
2. _____

PASOS A SEGUIR QUE TOMARE ESTE MES:

1. _____
2. _____

META # 2:

PASOS A SEGUIR QUE TOMÉ EL ULTIMO MES:

1. _____
2. _____

PASOS A SEGUIR QUE TOMARE ESTE MES:

1. _____
2. _____

Firma

Fecha

Firma oficial que recibe el reporte

Fecha reporte revisado

Comentarios del oficial: _____