

Reentry Survival Manual

Manual for People Leaving Prison

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



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Message to People Leaving Prison

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

This manual is designed to help you, the person inside prison, help yourself and others inside prison to plan for successful community living. Its goal is simply to help you increase the odds of winning at community living. Please keep in mind that the manual is written to benefit people in prisons in all states. And, because the state where you are incarcerated affects your conditions upon release, the public services you will have access to in the community, and the agencies providing you with information and documents, you will need to add information to this manual. You will need to customize the manual to your state. The manual will guide you through the process of planning by first asking a question, such as “do you have identification?” If the answer is “no”, then a series of steps are shown that guide you towards a “yes” response to the question. Space is left for you to add information for your state. The experiences of people who have walked this journey before you are shown in boxes along the right-hand side of the page.

This manual is for you and for those who will walk this journey after you. It is a work in progress. It becomes more useful to those following in your foot steps if you help to improve the manual through your experiences. Please let me know if there are ways to improve the manual to help people leaving prison help themselves survive reentry and live successfully in the community. **May successful living in the community be yours!**

Steps to Successful Community Living

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In the Community Steps: (under development)

Appendices

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- B: Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5)**
- C: Annual Credit Report Request Form**
- D: Deter-Detect-Defend Avoid Identity Theft Pamphlet**
- E: How to apply for public assistance and public benefits**
- F: Employment Resources (describing bonding and tax credits)**
- G: How to apply to Medicaid and Medicare**
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- I: Resources for People Leaving Prison**

Step One: Getting the Paper “You” in Order

Question: Do you have identification?

- NO
- YES
 - Is it a photo ID?
 - Is it a “proof” ID?

If you don’t have a photo ID that is based on proof verification (social security number and birth certificate), you will need to get proof verification documents.

Since 9-11, **photo** identification has become essential but also hard to get.

Some DOCs provide “proof” ID at the time of release. The ID has “DOC” on the card.

While in prison, driver’s licenses have expired, were lost, or were relinquished as part of the court’s sentence.

Getting Proof Verification Documents

To get identification, you will need originals of your social security card and birth certificate.

Birth Certificate

- Get a birth certificate application form from the state where you were born
- Complete and sign the application
- Include the application fee

Address of Vital Records Office:

Application fee: _____

Proof of Identification: _____

Birth certification applications can be requested by mail or downloaded.

Birth certificates are requested from the state where you were born.

Birth certificates are requested from the Vital Records offices of the state. (Use the **Telephone Directory** – State Government Pages, Vital Records or Vital Statistics, which may be under the Department of Health or Human Services)

Most states charge an application fee and require proof of identification.

States will accept government issued identification cards.

Social Security Cards

- Get an Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) from the Social Security Administration
- Complete and sign the application
- Must show proof identification

Unless the prison has made different arrangements, SS-5 applications are processed at the nearest Social Security Administration Office. You must present identification with your completed application.

Address of Social Security Administration:

Some DOCs request SS cards prior to release and give them to the person at the time of release.

Copies of the SS-5 application may be requested by mail or downloaded.

The forms are free and there is no application fee. To request an SS-5 form, call 1-800-772-1213.

An SS-5 application appears in the Appendix B of the manual.

Step One: Getting the Paper “You” in Order

Driver’s License

- Get a driver’s license application form from the Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) in the state where you will reside
- Request a driver handbook from the state DMV
- Complete and sign the application
- Must show proof identification

Driver’s license applications are processed at the nearest Department of Motor Vehicle Office. You must present identification with your completed application.

Address of DMV office:

Phone Number of DMV office: _____

Internet address: _____

Application fee: _____

Proof of Identification requirement:

Some types of convictions, such as DWI or drug possession/distribution convictions, place lifetime or time limit suspensions on the ability to get a driver’s license. Check the laws in your state to determine whether this affects you.

Some states now provide non-driver photo identification.

Driver’s license application forms and driver handbooks can be requested from the DMV of the state where you will reside. (Use the **Telephone Directory** – State Government Pages, Department of Motor Vehicles)

Many states require a written test prior to issuing a new or expired license. You can request a driver handbook to prepare for the test. The tests are taken at the DMV office and are taken on computers there.

There are application fees.

Getting a driver’s license requires two or more documents, usually birth certificate and social security card.

States have complicated rules on proof of identification. Details are provided by the DMV.

Other details to remember about getting your identification in order:

Step Two: Things to Know about Your Identity

<p>Question: Is your identity clear of trouble?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Active warrants or detainers <input type="checkbox"/> Active fees or charges <input type="checkbox"/> Possible “identity theft” <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES</p> <p>If your identity is “clear of trouble,” move to the Step 3. If you are unsure, continue on this step.</p>	<p>Many people reported that they have pending warrants and detainers and that they were unsure whether they would be picked up at the gate by federal or local agencies.</p> <p>Others had fees or charges associated with child support, court rulings to pay damages or restitution, and/or court or defense costs.</p> <p>Others reported that their “identities” have been used while they were in prison resulting in municipal fines and fees or, more likely, credit problems. Identity theft is a growing problem for people coming out of prison.</p>
<p>Doing a “Background Check” on Yourself</p>	
<p><u>Legal Background Check</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request information about detainers and warrants from DOC social workers <input type="checkbox"/> Request help from para-legals to find information about any detainers or warrants <input type="checkbox"/> Request legal aid assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Contact local authorities and request information <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for someone on the outside to do a background check on you. 	<p>Employers and landlords routinely do criminal and civil background checks. What they will find out about you varies by search site. The most reliable search sites are Net Detective, Reverse-Records.org, and CourtRecords.org. All charge about \$29.00 for a three-year membership fee.</p> <p>You need to know what employers and landlords are likely to see before they see it!</p>
<p><u>Credit Background Check</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete an Annual Credit Report Request Form <input type="checkbox"/> Send the completed form to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Credit Report Request Service P.O. Box 105281 Atlanta, GA 30348-5281 <p>If you are a victim of identity theft, see the pamphlet in Appendix D called <i>Deter-Detect-Defend AVOID Identify Theft</i>. It provides a step-by-step guide to repairing the situation.</p>	<p>The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires several nationwide companies to provide you with a <u>free</u> copy of your credit report, at your request, <u>once every 12 months</u>.</p> <p>You can order a <u>free</u> report by internet (annualcreditreport.com), phone (1-877-322-8228), or mail.</p> <p>A copy of the credit report form appears in the Appendix C and can be ordered from the Annual Credit Report Request Service.</p>

Step Three: Things to Know about Your Conviction

<p>Question: Does your conviction affect reentry?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NO My conviction doesn't affect where I will live, the jobs I can apply for, my application for public benefits, or my ability to obtain a driver's license. Skip to Step 4.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES</p>	<p>Many people report that they cannot find affordable housing or transportation, decent jobs, or treatment services; and that they don't know how to find them.</p>
<p><u>Housing</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for public housing in the state where you will live</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Contact the Public Housing Authority to request information on conditions for public housing (Use the Telephone Directory, state and local government, Public Housing)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide accurate information on all housing applications – public agencies and private landlords conduct electronic background checks on tenant applications.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Federal law provides states with discretion in determining eligibility for public housing with only a few exceptions. States may not provide public housing to people with sex offense convictions and those convicted of production of meth on public housing premises. People with these types of convictions are banned for life from public housing.</p> <p>Many states deny public housing to people with a history of violence and those with felony drug convictions.</p> <p>Public housing authorities conduct background checks on all applicants.</p> <p>A leading reason for denying a public housing application is "false" information on the application.</p> <p>Eviction can occur if a person receiving public housing benefits lets a convicted drug offender live with him or her within 2 years of release.</p> <p>Private landlords can reject applicants or evict residents for arrests or convictions.</p>
<p><u>Public Assistance (including food stamps)</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for public assistance and food stamps in the state where you will live</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Contact the Public Assistance Office to request information on conditions for these benefits (Use the Telephone Directory, state and local government, Public Assistance)</p>	<p>The 1996 federal welfare law prohibits the provision of federally-funded food stamps and cash assistance to anyone convicted of a drug-related felony. This is a lifetime ban.</p> <p>Some states have passed legislation to limit the ban or eliminate it. 12 states have eliminated the lifetime ban and 21 have limited the ban.</p>

See Appendix E: **How to apply for public assistance funds** and **How to apply for public benefits.**

Completion of a state-approved drug treatment program is typically required in these states that have limited the ban.

Employment

- Request information on felon-friendly employers from the DOC, parole, reentry programs, social workers, vocational staff
- Search for internet sites that identify employers willing to hire felons
- Contact the Department of Labor or Work Force agencies in the state where you will live to learn about the state laws that bar people with criminal records from employment and about programs within the state that are helping people with criminal records get jobs. (Use the Telephone Directory, state and local government, labor department)

See Appendix F: **Employment Resources.**

Most states allow private employers to deny jobs to or fire anyone with a criminal record.

States can deny occupational licenses based on criminal conviction.

People applying for jobs must report felony convictions on employment and license applications.

Employers conduct background checks on job applicants.

Some states offer certificates of rehabilitation allowing employers to hire people with criminal convictions.

Some states are removing occupational and licensing bars.

Some states are developing transitional employment opportunities and partnerships with employers to hire people leaving prison.

Web-sites (search on employment or jobs for felons) and information guides are available on employers willing to hire people leaving prison.

The federal government offers a federal tax credit of up to \$2,400 for employers hiring people with felony records. States may offer additional tax breaks to employers who hire people with criminal records.

Being “bonded” against money or property loss due to employee dishonesty is required of some job applicants. Many private bonding agencies will not bond job applicants with criminal histories. The Federal Bonding Program “bonds” applicants with criminal histories.

Step Four: “Get Real” with Community Living

Question: Do you have a “recovery” plan?

YES

I have a recovery plan that includes a plan to regain my community living skills, my need to work to pay bills, my parenting responsibilities, my ability to talk with men, women, and children, and my emotions.

NO

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

YES

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

NO

If you answered “yes” to both of these questions, skip to Step 5.

People leaving prison report being scared by all they don’t know or forgot about living in the community.

Some people were concerned about all the choices that have to be made and about paying for all the choices.

Some feel pressured by needing to catch up on the time that was lost.

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

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

Recovery Plan

- Request books on the internet and searching the internet, *The Internet for Dummies* book is particularly good.
- Enroll in a computer class and practice
- Request books and materials on how to budget your money, save, use credit, and use checking accounts and ATM cards. Practice budgeting and saving while in prison.
- Get involved in any program or opportunity that brings you into contact with community members. Look into mentoring programs. Look for ways to talk with people on the outside to practice talking with people and learning about community life.
- Read the newspaper – learn about what is happening in the outside world.
- Request self help books on building self confidence, a positive self image, and parenting.

Some people express concern about not knowing how to use the internet or ATM cards or self pay-lines.

Some employers require job applications to be completed and submitted on line.

Many people reported problems managing money, using check cashing services that charge high fees, getting too many credit cards and misusing them, and not knowing how to get or use checking account.

People report feeling like an “alien” when they return to the community. People, places, and situations have changed. Nothing looks the same. Bus and train tickets are purchased from machines, not people. People talk on cell phones everywhere.

People report feeling like they need a “human upgrade.” They need to get their feelings back.

“Real men have real feelings.”

Step Four: “Get Real” with Community Living

Reentry Plan

- Complete the reentry plan form and follow the plan. (see next page)
- Get information on all types of housing options.
- Get information on communities that have public transportation.
- Get information on communities that will keep you away from trouble.
- Get information about felon-friendly employers.
- Get classified ads on jobs in the community where you will be living and send for information or apply by mail.
- Write a statement about your work ethic and send it with your job application.
- Get at least one job skill while in prison.
- Apply for union membership.
- Apply for apprenticeship programs.
- Apply for admission to state-sponsored transition employment programs.
- Identify agencies that help people leaving prison on the outside.
- Learn about parole supervision and contact your parole officer before leaving prison.
(WARNING: This may NOT be permissible in your state. Please check the rules and regulations in your state.)

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

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

People can't get ready in 3 months or 3 weeks – it takes years to get ready!

People don't know how to get ready or how to plan.

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

People report that information on housing and jobs available inside prison is dated or focused on big cities or urban areas.

Getting a job requires sending lots of job applications.

Ask, search, ask, search...

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

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

Do not count on the DOC to provide the information that you will need to prepare for living in the community. Search the telephone directory and the prison library for names of agencies that help people leaving prison or that can provide housing and job information. Talk to each other about programs available in different communities or about resources that are available to help people with food, clothing, jobs, transportation, and housing.

Work together to collect information and then share it!

Reentry Planning Form

Do you have proof identification?

- Birth certificate
- Social security number
- Photo identification
- Current driver's license

Do you have a home plan?

- Goal: Find a safe and stable place to live.** A place that keeps you away from bad influences and that gives you privacy to deal with the “stuff” of returning to the community.
- Goal: Know the things and behaviors that get you in trouble.** Know your risk factors and then manage them in smart ways. Trouble doesn't just happen, you let it happen!
- Goal: Have a back-up plan.** Things happen so plan for it.
- Goal: Living with family can be stressful.** Understand what is expected of you before living with family. Some things don't change so plan for it.

Check the options that best describe your housing arrangements. Remember the importance of a back-up plan!

- Choice 1: Safe, stable place to live
- Choice 2: Safe, stable place to live
- Choice 3: Safe, temporary place
- Choice 4: Safe, temporary place
- Choice 5: Risky, temporary place
- Choice 6: Risky, temporary place

Do you have a career plan?

- Goal: Find a living wage job.** A job that pays enough to pay your bills and fines, as well as save. Your first job out of prison is a stepping stone. Establish your reputation as a “good” employee and use your reputation and skills to get a better job.
- Goal: Find a career that will provide satisfying work.** Look into employment counseling to identify careers that interest you and what you need to get that type of job.
- Goal: Think about more education or vocational training.** Getting a better paying job requires schooling and training. Think about night school, distance learning, or apprenticeship programs. Invest in your abilities!
- Goal: Have a back-up plan.** Things happens so plan for it.
- Goal: Get health insurance and other benefits.** Getting sick is expensive. You can lose a job. Run up large medical bills. Look for jobs that offer health insurance and sick days, as well as other employee benefits.
- Goal: Build your reputation as an employee.** Identify the characteristics that you want to define you as an employee and then perform your job that way. (Do you want to be known as trustworthy? Reliable? Hardworking? Responsible? Smart? Competent?) You are in control of your reputation!

Check the options that best describe your employment arrangements. Remember the importance of a back-up plan!

- Choice 1: Living wage job with benefits
- Choice 2: Living wage job with benefits
- Choice 3: Living wage job w/out benefits
- Choice 4: Living wage job w/out benefits.
- Choice 5: Minimum wage job with benefits
- Choice 6: Minimum wage job with benefits
- Choice 7: Minimum wage job w/out benefits
- Choice 8: Minimum wage job w/out benefits

Reentry Planning Form

Do you have a parole plan?

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

Goal: Meet your parole officer before release if possible. Get right with your PO before you leave prison. Send a letter introducing yourself if allowed in your state! You want your PO to work with you! Nothing good is gained by attitude.

Goal: Prepare for your first meeting with your PO. Prepare for the fact that your PO will not be prepared for your arrival. You will likely have to wait to see him/her. You may have to wait 30, 60, 90 minutes. When you finally meet him/her, expect disinterest and burn-out. It is not about you! It is about the job for them. Don't make this your issue. Just listen and be respectful. Your PO will not be your friend but he/she doesn't need to be your enemy. Just do what needs to be done and get on with living!!

Other Goals:

- Know your stipulations
- Know the name of your PO
- Know the address and phone number of the Parole Office where you are to report
- Make travel arrangements to get to Parole Office on the day of release
- Choice 1: Have a "plan" for working with your PO
- Choice 2: Just react to your PO and to the situation at the parole office

Do you have a social support plan?

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

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

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

Other Goals:

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

Reentry Planning Form

Do you have an “idle time” plan?

Goal: Plan things to do with “idle time.” Identify a list of activities that will keep you busy and focused when you are not working or taking care of responsibilities. **Idle time is one of your biggest risk factors!**

Goal: Have a list of places where you can go when you get lonely or feel bored. Some people and places will remind you of old ways and habits that brought you to prison. Engage your mind and think of alternatives for yourself. Don't be a victim of old habits. Choose to be in control of your destiny! Find new places and people that will keep you focused on your goals of living successfully in the community. Remember that you can help others – consider volunteering to use your expertise to help others.

Other Goals:

Have a list of things to do when you have idle time that will keep you out of and away from trouble.

Have a list of places you can go to be with people or around positive influences.

Reentry Planning Form

Do you have a self care plan?

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

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

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

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

Other Goals:

- Fill out applications for Medicaid or other public health programs before leaving prison
- Get a copy of your medical records (all prescriptions) from the DOC before you leave prison
- Know programs or places that will fill prescriptions and see patients without insurance
- Identify a list of healthy foods and plan how to get them into your diet
- Set a weight goal for yourself and get a plan to get to that weight
- Develop an exercise plan (walk 30 minutes every day – focus on exercise that increases your heart rate)
- Develop a stress management plan
- Practice stress management in your daily life
- Practice positive thinking
- Learn positive thinking from people – watch and learn from people who stay positive
- Label your emotions when you feel them and choose how to manage them
- Learn emotion management from people who feel and who are successfully managing their emotions
- Keep a list of emotions you feel and think about how you could manage them, not let them control you
- Think before you act in your daily life. Consider the consequences and ask whether this is the future that you want for yourself and others who care about you and who are counting on you.
- Know when the best of action is to let it go without getting involved.

Step Five: Getting “You” Ready for Community Living

Question: Are you ready for community living?

YES

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

NO

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

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

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

Get a Plan and Follow It

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

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

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

People report the characteristics of their “**old selves**” in roles as parent, son, daughter, partner, person, friend, neighbor, and employee were:

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

Step Five: Getting “You” Ready for Community Living

Question: Do you qualify for public benefits?

Social Security Benefits

- Request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for social security benefits from the Social Security Administration.
- Contact the Social Security Administration Office to request information on conditions for these benefits (Use the Telephone Directory, federal government, Social Security Administration)

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

See Appendix E: [How to Apply For Social Security Benefits.](#)

Social Security Disability Benefits

- Request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for social security disability benefits from the Social Security Administration
- Contact the Social Security Administration Office to request information on conditions for these benefits (Use the Telephone Directory, federal government, Social Security Administration)

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

See Appendix E: [How to Apply for SS Disability Benefits.](#)

Supplemental Security Income

- Request information on the eligibility and ineligibility conditions for social security disability benefits from the Social Security Administration
- Contact the Social Security Administration Office to request information on conditions for these benefits (Use the Telephone Directory, federal government, Social Security Administration)

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

See Appendix E: [How to apply for public benefits.](#)

Step Six: Getting and Staying Healthy

Question: Is your health in order?

YES

My health, mental health, and teeth are in good shape and I don't have any concerns about needing any services related to medical, mental health, or dental problems or substance abuse services in the community.

Skip to Step 7.

NO

People leaving prison report that they have some type of chronic medical problem, like hypertension, diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS, that requires follow-up treatment and medication in the community.

Some people leaving prison report needing follow-up treatment for mental health (for example, depression, PTSD, anxiety) and substance abuse problems.

Getting your health ready for reentry

- Make medical appointments to get chronic and acute medical problems treated while inside prison
- Make mental health appointments to manage problems related to depression, trauma, anxiety, or other types of emotional problems.
- Make dental appointments to get teeth repaired or to request dentures for teeth that have been extracted or lost while inside prison.
- Learn about the prison's policy regarding releasing people with a supply of medications for chronic medical problems. Arrange to qualify for receiving a supply of medications at release for all medications needed to manage health and mental health problems
- Ask for information about prescription plans or health insurance plans for people leaving prison.
- Complete and submit applications for Medicaid or other public programs covering the cost of medications and appointments with medical or mental health providers.
- Ask for information about state-approved substance abuse treatment programs.
- Complete and submit applications for treatment to state-approved substance abuse treatment programs. Think about how long you can count on having them support you.

See Appendix G: [How to apply for Medicaid.](#)

People inside prison have a constitutional right to receive medical and mental health treatment. This right does NOT follow the person into the community.

Teeth matter! They affect your appearance and your confidence.

Most prisons have a policy to release people with a two or more week supply of essential medications.

Access to health and mental health services in the community depends on ability to pay.

The 1996 federal welfare law prohibits the provision of federally-funded food stamps and cash assistance to anyone convicted of a drug-related felony.

Some states have passed legislation to limit the ban or eliminate it. Completion of a state-approved drug treatment program is typically required in these states that have limited the welfare law ban on receipt of public assistance.

Step Six: Getting and Staying Healthy

Getting your medical records in order

- Request copies of your medical records, especially medications and lab results.
- Request copies of your mental health records, especially medications and diagnostic tests.
- Request copies of dental records.

See Appendix H: [How to organize medical records.](#)

Maintaining health requires having documentation on medical treatments and medications that can be provided to community-based providers.

Most DOCs will provide medical records on request. You must request this information.

Usually there is a per page charge for copies of medical records.

Protecting your health on the outside

- Make an appointment at a community clinic to begin treatment for medical and mental health conditions prior to release.
- Find the location of the nearest AA/NA meeting prior to release.
- Arrange for a temporary AA/NA sponsor before leaving prison.

Use the telephone directory to find Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous in the area where you will be living. A list of local numbers can be found in the white pages. NA has a toll-free number, 1-800-922-6587. The telephone will be answered by a 12 Step volunteer who will provide information or a recording that gives day, times and locations of area meetings plus the first name and telephone numbers of members that you can call for more information.

Protecting your health requires staying on medications and remaining in treatment.

It can take weeks to get an appointment with a doctor in the community.

People leaving prison report lots of temptations, especially during the first few hours and days after release.

Getting support to stay sober and to control the temptations is critical to staying sober and enjoying your freedom.

Step Seven: Getting Your Family Ready for Your Return

Question: Is your family ready for “you”?

YES

I have talked with my family about my plans, their plans for me, and about how I have changed since being in prison and about what I need them to do to help me be who I am now, and not return to who I was before prison.
Skip this step.

NO

People leaving prison report that they rely most on mothers, girlfriends, and adult children for help.

Help from family includes providing a place to live, transportation, clothing, and food.

Many people report feeling uncomfortable asking family for help. They feel that their family has already been burdened by their incarceration and they should be helping them now.

Think “Real” About Living with Family

- Think about the kind of relationship you’ve had with your family in the past.
- How does the family member that you plan to live with support you? push your buttons?
- Think about what you can reasonably expect from your family.
- Think about what you are comfortable asking them for.
- Think about how long you can count on having them support you.
- Think about what you need to give them.
- Think about what they have already given to you while you were in prison and how your needs will affect their schedule, budget, and privacy.

People report needing their family for everything.

Family is a “trigger” for some people.

Some people report feeling overwhelmed by their family’s expectations for them.

One person reported that reality with her mother kicked in on the way home from prison. Old rules and expectations became the new rules and expectations.

Some people feel guilty about imposing their needs on their family.

Some people see family as the only alternative to a shelter.

Help Family Understand You as an Parolee/Ex-Prison Inmate

- Explain to your family what parole means in terms of staying out of prison.
- Explain that violating curfew or doing things that are not allowed can send you back to prison for the rest of your sentence.
- Explain that you need time alone to think about and understand how prison has changed you and how the community has changed while you were in prison
- Explain that you need time to feel again.

Family often doesn’t understand why you are not ready to work on the first day, week, or month after prison.

Family often doesn’t understand why you have to be in by curfew or why your PO knocks on the door at the door at 3:00am.

Family often doesn’t understand why you want to stay in your room or why you stay by yourself.

Family often doesn’t understand why you seem different.

Step Six: Getting Your Family Ready for Your Return

Get a Family Plan

- Before leaving prison put a family plan together with your family. In the plan, identify what you will need from them and for how long, and how you will contribute to the family. Also, ask them to be clear about “house” rules and their expectations for you. Indicate when you plan to be independent (have a job and your own place) and when you will resume your parenting responsibilities. Also, get a plan for managing conflict and frustration before it happens!
- Find agencies providing family counseling on a sliding fee scale. Reentry is hard on children. Reconnecting emotionally is difficult and can be painful. Find someone who can help guide the process so that you and your family have the best chance of loving and living together.
- Encourage your family to contact Al-Anon for support. They can call 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666) Monday thru Friday, 8 am – 6 pm ET for meeting information or find information on <http://www.alanon.alateen.org>.

Family wants to know what your plans are and how long you will be staying with them.

They want to know when you will take over parenting your children, paying rent, buying food, doing chores, moving out ...

Reconnecting with children is hard. They have grown up without you while you were in prison. Many people report that their children are angry with them and resentful.

Children have expectations about you and you have expectations about them. Often these expectations are not the same and cause conflict, disappointment, and hurt.

Families can learn to help support your recovery from addiction through Al-Anon.

Get a Mentor

- Find a mentor who you can talk openly and honestly with about challenges and struggles with life, family, and self.

People leaving prison report that they need a mentor – someone they trust and respect and can talk straight to them.

Reentry Survival Manual

Manual for People Leaving Prison

Appendices

- A: Basics on Internet searching**
- B: Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5)**
- C: Annual Credit Report Request Form**
- D: Deter-Detect-Defend Avoid Identity Theft Pamphlet**
- E: How to apply for public assistance and public benefits**
- F: Employment Resources (describing bonding and tax credits)**
- G: How to apply to Medicaid and Medicare**
- H: How to organize medical records**
- I: Resources for People Leaving Prison**

******Your Ideas to Improve the Manual******



**Center for Mental Health Services
& Criminal Justice Research**

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
RUTGERS

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Website: <http://ihcpar.rutgers.edu/cmhs-cjr>

Basics on Searching the Internet

[Sign in](#)



TYPE IN SEARCH TERMS

[Advanced Search](#)
[Preferences](#)
[Language Tools](#)

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

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

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

The box below shows some search terms that might be typed into the search screen to find job opportunities for felons (this search would look for opportunities in all states) and for job opportunities for felons in New Jersey (this search would look first for sites in New Jersey).

Once the search is completed, a list of sites will appear on the computer screen. Move the cursor to the first line of an item, click and the screen will change to that site.

Topic of interest	Search Terms
Job opportunities for felons	Jobs for felons Felon-friendly employers Employment ex-offenders
Jobs for felons in New Jersey	Jobs for felons New Jersey Employment Ex-Offenders New Jersey

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Application for a Social Security Card

Form Approved
OMB No. 0960-0066

1	NAME _____ <small>TO BE SHOWN ON CARD</small>		First	Full Middle Name	Last
	FULL NAME AT BIRTH IF OTHER THAN ABOVE		First	Full Middle Name	Last
	OTHER NAMES USED				
2	MAILING ADDRESS _____ <small>Do Not Abbreviate</small>				
	Street Address, Apt. No., PO Box, Rural Route No. City State ZIP Code				
3	CITIZENSHIP _____ <small>(Check One)</small>	<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 2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (See Instructions On Page 2)
4	SEX _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female		
5	RACE/ETHNIC DESCRIPTION _____ <small>(Check One Only - Voluntary)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Black (Not Hispanic)	<input type="checkbox"/> North American Indian or Alaskan Native
6	DATE OF BIRTH _____ <small>Month, Day, Year</small>	7	PLACE OF BIRTH _____ <small>(Do Not Abbreviate) City State or Foreign Country</small>		<small>Office Use Only</small>
8	A. MOTHER'S NAME AT HER BIRTH _____ <small>First Full Middle Name Last Name At Her Birth</small>				
	B. MOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (See instructions for 8B on Page 2) _____		_____		
9	A. FATHER'S NAME _____ <small>First Full Middle Name Last</small>				
	B. FATHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (See instructions for 9B on Page 2) _____		_____		
10	Has the applicant 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 11-13.) <input type="checkbox"/> No (If "no," go on to question 14.) <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know (If "don't know," go on to question 14.)				
11	Enter the Social Security number previously assigned to the person listed in item 1. _____		_____		
12	Enter the name shown on the most recent Social Security card issued for the person listed in item 1. _____		First	Middle Name	Last
13	Enter any different date of birth if used on an earlier application for a card. _____		_____ <small>Month, Day, Year</small>		
14	TODAY'S DATE _____ <small>Month, Day, Year</small>		15	DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER () - _____ <small>Area Code Number</small>	
16	I declare under penalty of perjury that I have examined all the information on this form, and on any accompanying statements or forms, and it is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.				
	YOUR SIGNATURE _____		17 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		

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Application for a Social Security Card

Applying for a Social Security Card is free!

USE THIS APPLICATION TO APPLY FOR:

- An **original** Social Security card
- A **replacement** Social Security card
- A **change of information** on your record

IMPORTANT: You **MUST** provide the required evidence before we can process the application. Follow the instructions below to provide the information and evidence we need.

- STEP 1** Read the instructions on this application. They contain important information about documents that can be submitted as evidence, and how to complete and submit the application.
- STEP 2** Complete and sign the application using **BLUE** or **BLACK INK**. **Do not** use pencil or other colors of ink. Please write legibly. If you print this application from our website, you must print it on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper (if you live abroad and cannot obtain 8 1/2" x 11" paper, A4 size paper (8.25" x 11.7") is the only acceptable alternative).
- STEP 3** Submit the completed and signed application with all required evidence to a Social Security office.

HOW TO SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION

In most cases, you can mail or take this application with your evidence documents to any Social Security office. However, if you live in an area serviced by a Social Security Card Center, you may need to visit the Social Security Card Center in person for all SSN related business. We will return your documents to you.

IMPORTANT: If you are **age 12 or older** and have **never** been assigned a Social Security number before, you **MUST** apply **in person**.

If you have any questions about this form, or about the evidence documents we need, please visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov. Visiting our Internet site will help you make sure you have everything you need to apply for a card or change information on your record. You may also call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 or contact your local office. You can find your nearest office or Social Security Card Center in your local phone directory or on our website.

PROTECT YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER AND CARD

Protect your SSN card and number from loss and identity theft. **DO NOT** carry the card with you. Keep it in a secure location and only take it with you when you must show the card, e.g. to obtain a new job, open a new bank account, or to obtain benefits from certain U.S. agencies. **DO NOT** allow others to use your Social Security number as their own.

ABOUT YOUR EVIDENCE DOCUMENTS

You must provide the required documents based on your type of request. There will be situations when we must verify a document with the issuing agency. If your documents do not meet these requirements, we cannot process your application.

- We need **ORIGINAL** documents or **copies certified by the custodian of the record**. We will return your documents after we have seen them.
- **We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.**
- See **EVIDENCE DOCUMENTS WE NEED TO SEE** on page 3.

ORIGINAL CARD: To apply for an **original card**, you will need to provide **at least two** documents to prove **age, identity, and U.S. citizenship or current lawful, work-authorized immigration status**. **If you are not a U.S. citizen or do not have current lawful, work-authorized immigration status, you MUST prove that you have a valid nonwork reason for requesting a card.** (See **HOW TO COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION, Page 2, Item 3.**)

REPLACEMENT CARD: To apply for a **replacement card**, you must prove your **identity** (See **IDENTITY**, Page 3). If you were born outside of the U.S., you will also need to prove your **U.S. citizenship or current lawful, work-authorized immigration status**.

CHANGE OF INFORMATION: If you need to correct information on your SSN card, or information shown in our records (e.g., a name change, or corrected date of birth), you will need to prove your **identity and provide documents that support the change and establish the reason for the change (e.g., a birth certificate to show your corrected date or place of birth)**. A name change document (e.g., marriage document) must identify you by both your old and new names. If it does not have enough identifying information (See **IDENTITY**, Page 3), we will request an identity document in your prior name and another in your new legal name in addition to the name change document. If you were born outside of the U.S., you also need to prove your **U.S. citizenship or current lawful, work-authorized immigration status**.

LIMITS ON REPLACEMENT SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN) CARDS

Public Law 108-458 imposes **limits on the number of replacement SSN cards** you may receive at 3 per year and 10 in a lifetime. In determining these limits, SSA will not count changes in legal name (i.e., first name or surname), or changes to a restrictive legend (i.e., Valid for Work with DHS Authorization, Not Valid for Employment) shown on the SSN card. In addition, we may grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis if you provide evidence to establish a need for an SSN card **beyond these limits** (e.g., a letter from a social services agency stating you must show the SSN card in order to get benefits).

HOW TO COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION

Most items on the form are self-explanatory. Those that need explanation are discussed below. The numbers match the numbered items on the form. If you are completing this form for someone else, please complete the items as they apply to that person.

2. Show the address where you can receive your card 10 to 14 days from now.
3. If you check "Legal Alien **Not** Allowed to Work," you must provide a document from a U.S. Federal, State, or local government agency that explains why you need a Social Security number and that you meet all of the requirements for the U.S. government benefit. NOTE: Not all U.S. State or local benefits are acceptable for non-work SSN purposes. Contact SSA to see if your reason qualifies.

If you check "Other," you must provide a document from the U.S. government agency that explains why you need a Social Security number and that you meet all of the requirements for a Federal benefit except for the number.
5. Providing race/ethnic information is voluntary. However, providing this information helps us prepare statistical reports on how Social Security programs affect people. We do not reveal the identities of individuals in these reports.
6. Show the month, day and full (4 digit) year of birth, for example, "1998" for year of birth.
- 8.B. You **must** show the mother's Social Security number only when the application is for an **original** Social Security card for a person under age 18. However, this item may be left blank if the mother was never assigned a Social Security number, or if you do not know the mother's Social Security number and are unable to obtain it. We will still be able to assign a number to the person under age 18.
- 9.B. You **must** show the father's Social Security number only when the application is for an **original** Social Security card for a person under age 18. However, this item may be left blank if the father was never assigned a Social Security number, or if you do not know the father's Social Security number and are unable to obtain it. We will still be able to assign a number to the person under age 18.
13. If the date of birth you show in item 6 is different from the date of birth you used on a prior application for a Social Security card, show the date of birth you used on the prior application and submit evidence of age to support the date of birth in item 6.
16. If you are age 18 or older, you **must sign** the application. If you are under age 18, you or a parent or legal guardian may sign. If you are physically or mentally incapable of signing the application, generally a parent, close relative, or legal guardian may sign the application. If you cannot sign your name, you should sign with an "X" mark and have two people sign as witnesses in the space beside the mark. Please do not alter your signature by including any additional information on the signature line as this may invalidate your application. Call us if you need clarification about who can sign. (See the "IMPORTANT" note under evidence of **IDENTITY** on page 3.)

EVIDENCE DOCUMENTS WE NEED TO SEE

The following lists are not all inclusive. However, they provide examples of the types of documents we need to see. **All documents must meet the criteria shown under "ABOUT YOUR EVIDENCE DOCUMENTS" on Page 1 in order to be considered.** If you have questions or need to discuss additional documents, see "If you have any questions" also on Page 1. Some documents we **may** accept are as follows:

AGE: In general, we must see your birth certificate. In some situations, we may accept another document that shows your age. Some of the other documents we may accept are:

- U.S. Hospital record of your birth (created at the time of your birth)
- Religious record established before age five showing your age or date of birth
- Passport
- Final Adoption Decree (the adoption decree must indicate that the birth data was taken from the original birth certificate)

Call us for advice if you cannot obtain one of these documents.

IDENTITY: We must see evidence of identity in your legal name. Your legal name will be shown on the SSN card. Generally, we prefer to see documents issued in the U.S. Documents submitted to establish identity must show your legal name **AND** provide biographical information (your date of birth, age, or parents' names) **and/or** physical information (photograph, or physical description-- height, eye and hair color, etc.). Additionally, if you send a photo identity document but do not appear in person, the document **must** show your biographical information (e.g., your date of birth, age, or parents' names). To protect your Social Security card and number, identity documents **must** be of recent issuance.

WE MUST SEE YOUR:

- U.S. driver's license; **or**
- U.S. State-issued non-driver identity card; **or**
- U.S. passport

If you do not have one of these documents, or cannot get a replacement within 10 days, we may accept other documents such as a U.S. military identity card, Certificate of Naturalization, or employee identity card. For young children, we may accept medical records (clinic, doctor, or hospital) maintained by the medical provider. We may also accept a final adoption decree, or a school identity card or a school record maintained by the school.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, we **must** see your current U.S. immigration document and your foreign passport with biographical information or photograph.

WE CANNOT ACCEPT A BIRTH CERTIFICATE, HOSPITAL SOUVENIR BIRTH CERTIFICATE, SOCIAL SECURITY CARD OR CARD STUB, OR A SOCIAL SECURITY RECORD as evidence of identity.

IMPORTANT: If you are **applying for a card on behalf of someone else, you must provide evidence that establishes your authority to sign the application on behalf of the person to whom the card will be issued** (e.g., a minor child's birth certificate establishes the authority of a parent to sign on behalf of the child). **In addition**, we must see different documents as proof of identity for both you and the person to whom the card will be issued.

U.S. CITIZENSHIP: In general, we can accept your U.S. birth certificate or U.S. Passport. Other documents we may accept are a Consular Report of Birth, Certificate of Citizenship, or Certificate of Naturalization.

IMMIGRATION STATUS: We need to see a current document issued to you by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) showing your immigration status, such as Form I-551, I-94, I-688B, or I-766. We **CANNOT** accept a receipt showing you applied for the document. If you are not authorized to work in the U.S., we can issue you a Social Security card only if you need the number for a valid nonwork reason. (See HOW TO COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION, Page 2, Item 3.) Your card will be marked to show you cannot work. If you do work, we will notify DHS.

THE PAPERWORK/PRIVACY ACT AND YOUR APPLICATION

The Privacy Act of 1974 requires us to give each person the following notice when applying for a Social Security number.

Sections 205(c) and 702 of the Social Security Act allow us to collect the facts we ask for on this form.

We use the facts you provide on this form to assign you a Social Security number and to issue you a Social Security card. You do not have to give us these facts, however, without them we cannot issue you a Social Security number or a card. Without a number, you may not be able to get a job and could lose Social Security benefits in the future.

The Social Security number is also used by the Internal Revenue Service for tax administration purposes as an identifier in processing tax returns of persons who have income which is reported to the Internal Revenue Service and by persons who are claimed as dependents on someone's Federal income tax return.

We may disclose information as necessary to administer Social Security programs, including to appropriate law enforcement agencies to investigate alleged violations of Social Security law; to other government agencies for administering entitlement, health, and welfare programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, veterans' benefits, military pension, and civil service annuities, black lung, housing, student loans, railroad retirement benefits, and food stamps; to the Internal Revenue Service for Federal tax administration; and to employers and former employers to properly prepare wage reports. We may also disclose information as required by Federal law, for example, to the Department of Homeland Security, to identify and locate aliens in the U.S.; to the Selective Service System for draft registration; and to the Department of Health and Human Services for child support enforcement purposes. We may verify Social Security numbers for State motor vehicle agencies that use the number in issuing drivers' licenses, as authorized by the Social Security Act. Finally, we may disclose information to your Congressional representative if they request information to answer questions you ask him or her.

We may use the information you give us when we match records by computer. Matching programs compare our records with those of other Federal, State, or local government agencies to determine whether a person qualifies for benefits paid by the Federal government. The law allows us to do this even if you do not agree to it.

Explanations about these and other reasons why information you provide us may be used or given out are available in Social Security offices. If you want to learn more about this, contact any Social Security office.

This information collection meets the requirements of 44 U.S.C. §3507, as amended by Section 2 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. You do not need to answer these questions unless we display a valid Office of Management and Budget control number. We estimate that it will take about 8.5 to 9.5 minutes to read the instructions, gather the facts, and answer the questions. *You may send comments on our time estimate above to: SSA, 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21235-6401. **Send only comments relating to our time estimate to this address, not the completed form.***

MAIL OR TAKE THE COMPLETED FORM TO A LOCAL SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE. The office is listed under U.S. Government agencies in your telephone directory or you may call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. You may also locate the nearest Social Security office on the Internet at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov>.

COMMON WAYS ID THEFT HAPPENS:

Skilled identity thieves use a variety of methods to steal your personal information, including:

- 1. Dumpster Diving.** They rummage through trash looking for bills or other paper with your personal information on it.
- 2. Skimming.** They steal credit/debit card numbers by using a special storage device when processing your card.
- 3. Phishing.** They pretend to be financial institutions or companies and send spam or pop-up messages to get you to reveal your personal information.
- 4. Changing Your Address.** They divert your billing statements to another location by completing a “change of address” form.
- 5. “Old-Fashioned” Stealing.** They steal wallets and purses; mail, including bank and credit card statements; pre-approved credit offers; and new checks or tax information. They steal personnel records from their employers, or bribe employees who have access.



To learn more about ID theft and how to deter, detect, and defend against it, visit ftc.gov/idtheft. Or request copies of ID theft resources by writing to:



Consumer Response Center
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, H-130
Washington, DC 20580

DETER·DETECT·DEFEND



www.ftc.gov/idtheft



FIGHTING BACK AGAINST
IDENTITY THEFT

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION



DETER



DETECT



DEFEND

Identity theft is a serious crime. It occurs when your personal information is stolen and used without your knowledge to commit fraud or other crimes. Identity theft can cost you time and money. It can destroy your credit and ruin your good name.

Deter identity thieves by safeguarding your information.

- **Shred** financial documents and paperwork with personal information before you discard them.
- **Protect** your Social Security number. Don't carry your Social Security card in your wallet or write your Social Security number on a check. Give it out only if absolutely necessary or ask to use another identifier.
- **Don't give out** personal information on the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you know who you are dealing with.
- **Never click** on links sent in unsolicited emails; instead, type in a web address you know. Use firewalls, anti-spyware, and anti-virus software to protect your home computer; keep them up-to-date. Visit OnGuardOnline.gov for more information.
- **Don't use** an obvious password like your birth date, your mother's maiden name, or the last four digits of your Social Security number.
- **Keep** your personal information in a secure place at home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help, or are having work done in your house.

Detect suspicious activity by routinely monitoring your financial accounts and billing statements.

Be alert to signs that require immediate attention:

- Bills that do not arrive as expected
- Unexpected credit cards or account statements
- Denials of credit for no apparent reason
- Calls or letters about purchases you did not make

Inspect:

- **Your credit report.** Credit reports contain information about you, including what accounts you have and your bill paying history.
 - The law requires the major nationwide consumer reporting companies—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion—to give you a free copy of your credit report each year if you ask for it.
 - Visit www.AnnualCreditReport.com or call 1-877-322-8228, a service created by these three companies, to order your free credit reports each year. You also can write: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.
- **Your financial statements.** Review financial accounts and billing statements regularly, looking for charges you did not make.

Defend against ID theft as soon as you suspect it.

- **Place a "Fraud Alert" on your credit reports, and review the reports carefully.** The alert tells creditors to follow certain procedures before they open new accounts in your name or make changes to your existing accounts. The three nationwide consumer reporting companies have toll-free numbers for placing an initial 90-day fraud alert; a call to one company is sufficient:
 - **Equifax:** 1-800-525-6285
 - **Experian:** 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742)
 - **TransUnion:** 1-800-680-7289

Placing a fraud alert entitles you to free copies of your credit reports. Look for inquiries from companies you haven't contacted, accounts you didn't open, and debts on your accounts that you can't explain.
- **Close accounts.** Close any accounts that have been tampered with or established fraudulently.
 - Call the security or fraud departments of each company where an account was opened or changed without your okay. Follow up in writing, with copies of supporting documents.
 - Use the ID Theft Affidavit at ftc.gov/idtheft to support your written statement.
 - Ask for verification that the disputed account has been closed and the fraudulent debts discharged.
 - Keep copies of documents and records of your conversations about the theft.
- **File a police report.** File a report with law enforcement officials to help you with creditors who may want proof of the crime.
- **Report the theft to the Federal Trade Commission.** Your report helps law enforcement officials across the country in their investigations.
 - Online: ftc.gov/idtheft
 - By phone: 1-877-ID-THEFT (438-4338) or TTY, 1-866-653-4261
 - By mail: Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580

DETER · DETECT · DEFEND



How to apply for Public Assistance Funds?

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

Instructions

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

Source: **eHow: How to do everything website. <http://www.ehow.com/>**

What Prisoners Should Know About Social Security



Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments generally are not payable for months that you are confined to a jail, prison or certain other public institutions for commission of a crime. And, you are not eligible for Social Security or SSI payments automatically when you are released.

Who can get Social Security benefits?

Social Security disability benefits can be paid to people who have recently worked and paid Social Security taxes and are unable to work because of a serious medical condition that is expected to last at least a year or result in death. The fact that a person is a recent parolee or is unemployed does not qualify as a disability. No benefits are payable for months you are in a jail, prison or other correctional facility or certain other public institutions.

Social Security retirement benefits can be paid to people who are 62 or older. Generally, you must have worked and paid Social Security taxes for 10 years to be eligible. Benefits are not paid for the months you have been sentenced to a jail, prison or correctional facility or confined to certain public institutions for committing a crime.

Although you cannot receive monthly Social Security benefit payments while you are confined, your spouse or children can be paid benefits on your record if they are eligible.

And if you have worked and paid Social Security taxes, survivors benefits also may be paid to certain family members in the event of your death.

Who can get SSI payments?

SSI payments can be paid to people who are 65 or older, or who are blind or disabled and whose income and resources are below certain limits. No benefits are payable for any month throughout which you reside in a jail, prison or certain other public institutions.

When you are ready to be released, contact Social Security to apply for SSI so that an SSI payment can be made right after your release if you meet all the requirements.

If you think you qualify for benefits

In all cases, if you think you may qualify for Social Security or SSI payments, you should contact Social Security to apply for benefits.

Contacting Social Security

For more information, visit our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call toll-free **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day.

We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.



Social Security Administration
SSA Publication No. 05-10133
October 2003 (Recycle prior editions)

www.socialsecurity.gov

Printed on recycled paper

What Prisoners Should Know About Social Security

How to apply for Social Security Disability Benefits?

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

Instructions

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

Tips & Warnings

- Hire an attorney for an appeal if your claim is denied.
- Go to the Social Security Administration Web site for a list of offices in your area.

Source: eHow: How to do everything website. <http://www.ehow.com/>

How to apply for Social Security Benefits?

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

Instructions

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

Source: eHow: How to do everything website. <http://www.ehow.com/>

Disability Benefits

SSA Publication No. 05-10029, January 2006, ICN 456000

Material extracted from the SSA website: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10029.html#part3>

Contacting Social Security

Our website is a valuable resource for information about all of Social Security's programs. There are a number of [things you can do online](#).

In addition to using our website, you can call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**. We can answer specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. We can provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. (You can use our automated response system to tell us a new address or request a replacement Medicare card.) If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**.

We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

This booklet provides basic information on Social Security disability benefits and is not intended to answer all questions. For specific information about your situation, you should talk with a Social Security representative.

We pay disability benefits through two programs: the Social Security disability insurance program and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. This booklet is about the Social Security disability program. For information about the SSI disability program for adults, see [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI) (Publication No. 05-11000). For information about disability programs for children, refer to [Benefits For Children With Disabilities](#) (Publication No. 05-10026). Our publications are available at www.socialsecurity.gov.

Social Security pays benefits to people who cannot work because they have a medical condition that is expected to last at least one year or result in death. Federal law requires this very strict definition of disability. While some programs give money to people with partial disability or short-term disability, Social Security does not.

Certain family members of disabled workers also can receive money from Social Security. This is explained in "[Family benefits](#)."

How do I meet the earnings requirement for disability benefits?

In general, to get disability benefits, you must meet two different earnings tests:

1. A "recent work" test based on your age at the time you became disabled; and
2. A "duration of work" test to show that you worked long enough under Social Security.

Certain blind workers have to meet only the "duration of work" test.

Who can get Social Security disability benefits?

The table below shows the rules for how much work you need for the “recent work” test based on your age when your disability began. The rules in this table are based on the *calendar quarter* in which you turned or will turn a certain age.

The calendar quarters are:

First Quarter: January 1 through March 31

Second Quarter: April 1 through June 30

Third Quarter: July 1 through September 30

Fourth Quarter: October 1 through December 31

The following table shows examples of how much work you need to meet the “duration of work test” if you become disabled at various selected ages. For the “duration of work” test, your work does not have to fall within a certain period of time.

NOTE: This table does not cover all situations.

Examples of work needed for the “recent work” test

If you become disabled... Then you generally need:

Before age 28	1.5 years of work
Age 30	2 years
Age 34	3 years
Age 38	4 years
Age 42	5 years
Age 44	5.5 years
Age 46	6 years
Age 48	6.5 years
Age 50	7 years
Age 52	7.5 years
Age 54	8 years
Age 56	8.5 years
Age 58	9 years
Age 60	9.5 years

How do I apply for disability benefits?

There are two ways that you can apply for disability benefits. You can:

1. Apply at www.socialsecurity.gov; or
2. Call our toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213**, to make an appointment to file a disability claim at your local Social Security office or to set up an appointment for someone to take your claim over the telephone. The disability claims interview lasts about one hour. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our toll-free TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on business days. If you schedule an appointment, a Disability Starter

	<p>Kit will be mailed to you. The Disability Starter Kit will help you get ready for your disability claims interview. If you apply online, the Disability Starter Kit is available at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability.</p>
<p>When should I apply and what information do I need?</p>	<p>You should apply for disability benefits as soon as you become disabled. It can take a long time to process an application for disability benefits (three to five months). To apply for disability benefits, you will need to complete an application for Social Security Benefits and the Disability Report. You can complete the Disability Report at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/3368. You can also print the Disability Report, complete it and return it to your local Social Security office. We may be able to process your application faster if you help us by getting any other information we need.</p> <p>The information we need includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Social Security number; • Your birth or baptismal certificate; • Names, addresses and phone numbers of the doctors, caseworkers, hospitals and clinics that took care of you and dates of your visits; • Names and dosage of all the medicine you take; • Medical records from your doctors, therapists, - hospitals, clinics and caseworkers that you already have in your possession; Laboratory and test results; • A summary of where you worked and the kind of work you did; and • A copy of your most recent W-2 Form (<i>Wage and Tax Statement</i>) or, if you are self-employed, your federal tax return for the past year. <p>In addition to the basic application for disability benefits, there are other forms you will need to fill out. One form collects information about your medical condition and how it affects your ability to work. Other forms give doctors, hospitals and other health care professionals who have treated you permission to send us information about your medical condition.</p>
<p>Who decides if I am disabled?</p>	<p>We will review your application to make sure you meet some basic requirements for disability benefits. We will check whether you worked enough years to qualify. Also, we will evaluate any current work activities. If you meet these requirements, we will send your application to the Disability Determination Services office in your state.</p> <p>This state agency completes the disability decision for us. Doctors and disability specialists in the state agency ask</p>

your doctors for information about your condition. They will consider all the facts in your case. They will use the medical evidence from your doctors and hospitals, clinics or institutions where you have been treated and all other information. They will ask your doctors:

- What your medical condition is;
- When your medical condition began;
- How your medical condition limits your activities;
- What the medical tests have shown; and
- What treatment you have received.

They also will ask the doctors for information about your ability to do work-related activities, such as walking, sitting, lifting, carrying and remembering instructions. Your doctors are not asked to decide if you are disabled.

The state agency staff may need more medical information before they can decide if you are disabled. If more information is not available from your current medical sources, the state agency may ask you to go for a special examination. We prefer to ask your own doctor, but sometimes the exam may have to be done by someone else. Social Security will pay for the exam and for some of the related travel costs.

How we make the decision

We use a five-step process to decide if you are disabled.

1. **Are you working?**

If you are working and your earnings average more than a certain amount each month, we generally will not consider you disabled. The amount changes each year. For the current figure, see the annual [Update](#) (Publication No. 05-10003).

If you are not working, or your monthly earnings average the current amount or less, the state agency then looks at your medical condition.

2. **Is your medical condition “severe”?**

For the state agency to decide that you are disabled, your medical condition must significantly limit your ability to do basic work activities—such as walking, sitting and remembering—for at least one year. If your medical condition is not that severe, the state agency will not consider you disabled. If your condition is that severe, the state agency goes on to step three.

3. **Is your medical condition on the List of Impairments?**

The state agency has a List of Impairments that describes medical conditions that are considered so severe that they automatically mean that you are - disabled as defined by law. If your condition (or combination of medical conditions) is not on this

list, the state agency looks to see if your condition is as severe as a condition that is on the list. If the severity of your medical condition meets or equals that of a listed impairment, the state agency will decide that you are disabled. If it does not, the state agency goes on to step four.

4. **Can you do the work you did before?**

At this step, the state agency decides if your medical condition prevents you from being able to do the work you did before. If it does not, the state agency will decide that you are not disabled. If it does, the state agency goes on to step five.

5. **Can you do any other type of work?**

If you cannot do the work you did in the past, the state agency looks to see if you would be able to do other work. It evaluates your medical condition, your age, education, past work experience and any skills you may have that could be used to do other work. If you cannot do other work, the state agency will decide that you are disabled. If you can do other work, the state agency will decide that you are not disabled.

Special rules for blind people

There are a number of other special rules for people who are blind. For more information, ask for [*If You Are Blind Or Have Low Vision—How We Can Help*](#) (Publication No. 05-10052).

We will tell you our decision

When the state agency reaches a decision on your case, we will send you a letter. If your application is approved, the letter will show the amount of your benefit and when your payments start. If your application is not approved, the letter will explain why and tell you how to appeal the decision if you do not agree with it.

What if I disagree?

If you disagree with a decision made on your claim, you can appeal it. The steps you can take are explained in [*The Appeals Process*](#) (Publication No. 05-10041), which is available from Social Security.

You have the right to be represented by an attorney or other qualified person of your choice when you do business with Social Security. More information is in [*Your Right To Representation*](#) (Publication No. 05-10075), which is also available from Social Security.

What do I need to tell Social Security?

If you have an outstanding warrant for your arrest

You must tell us if you have an outstanding arrest warrant for:

- A crime that is a felony under the laws of the state in which you live; or
- A crime punishable by death or imprisonment for more than one year in states that do not classify crimes as felonies.

You cannot receive disability benefits for any months in which there is an outstanding arrest warrant for a crime that is a felony (or a crime punishable by death or imprisonment for more than one year).

If you are convicted of a crime

Tell Social Security right away if you are convicted of a crime. Benefits generally are not paid for the months a person is confined for a crime, but any family members who are eligible for benefits based on that person's work may continue to receive benefits.

Benefits are usually not paid to someone who commits a crime and is confined to an institution by court order and at public expense. This applies if the person has been found:

- Not guilty by reason of insanity or similar factors (such as mental disease, mental defect or mental incompetence); or
- Incompetent to stand trial.

If you violate a condition of parole or probation

You must tell us if you are violating a condition of your probation or parole imposed under federal or state law.

You cannot receive disability benefits for any month in which you violate a condition of your probation or parole.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SSA Publication No. 05-11000, August 2005, ICN 480200

Contacting Social Security

Visit our website

Our website, www.socialsecurity.gov, is a valuable resource for information about all of Social Security's programs. At our website you also can:

- Apply for benefits;
- Get the address of your local Social Security office; and
- Get forms to request important documents, such as a *Social Security Statement*, a replacement Social Security or Medicare card or a letter to confirm your benefit amount.

Call our 1-800 number

In addition to using our website, you also can call toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**. We can answer specific questions and provide information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**.

We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service. That is why we have a second Social Security representative monitor some telephone calls.

This booklet explains what Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is, who can get it and how to apply. It provides basic information and is not intended to answer all questions. For specific information about your situation, you should talk with a Social Security representative.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

The SSI program makes payments to people with low income who are age 65 or older or are blind or have a disability.

The Social Security Administration manages the SSI program. Even though Social Security manages the program, SSI is not paid for by Social Security taxes. SSI is paid for by U.S. Treasury general funds, not the Social Security trust funds.

SSI makes monthly payments to people who have low income and few resources and are:

- Age 65 or older;
- Blind; or
- Disabled.

If you are applying for SSI, you also should ask for *What You Need To Know When You Get Supplemental Security Income (SSI)* (Publication No. 05-11011).

What is SSI?

Disabled or blind children also can receive SSI. You can get more information about benefits for children by visiting our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or calling us to get a copy of *Benefits For Children With Disabilities* (Publication No. 05-10026).

The basic SSI amount is the same nationwide. However, many states add money to the basic benefit. You can call us to find out the amounts for your state.

Rules for getting SSI Your income and resources

Whether you can get SSI depends on your income and resources (the things you own).

Income

Income is money you receive such as wages, Social Security benefits and pensions. Income also includes such things as food and shelter. The amount of income you can receive each month and still get SSI depends partly on where you live. You can call us to find out the income limits in your state.

Social Security **does not count** all of your income when we decide whether you qualify for SSI. **For example**, we do not count:

- The first \$20 a month of most income you receive;
- The first \$65 a month you earn from working and half the amount over \$65;
- Food stamps;
- Shelter you get from private nonprofit organizations; and
- Most home energy assistance.

If you are married, we also include part of your spouse's income and resources when deciding whether you qualify for SSI. If you are younger than age 18, we include part of your parents' income and resources. And, if you are a sponsored noncitizen, we may include your sponsor's income and resources.

If you are a student, some of the wages or scholarships you receive **may not** count.

If you are disabled but work, Social Security **does not** count wages you use to pay for items or services that help you to work. For example, if you need a wheelchair, the wages you use to pay for the wheelchair do not count as income when we decide whether you qualify for SSI.

Also, Social Security **does not** count any wages a blind person uses for work expenses. For example, if a blind person uses wages to pay for transportation to and from work, the wages used to pay the transportation cost are not counted as income.

If you are disabled or blind, some of the income you use (or save) for training or to buy things you need to work **may not** count.

Resources (things you own)

Resources that we count in deciding whether you qualify for SSI include real estate, bank accounts, cash, stocks and bonds.

You may be able to get SSI if your resources are worth no more than **\$2,000**. A couple may be able to get SSI if they have resources worth no more than \$3,000. If you own property that you are trying to sell, you may be able to get SSI while trying to sell it.

Social Security does not count everything you own in deciding whether you have too many resources to qualify for SSI. For example, we do not count:

- The home you live in and the land it is on;
- Life insurance policies with a face value of \$1,500 or less;
- Your car (usually);
- Burial plots for you and members of your immediate family; and
- Up to \$1,500 in burial funds for you and up to \$1,500 in burial funds for your spouse.

Other rules you must meet

To get SSI, you must live in the U.S. or the Northern Mariana Islands and be a U.S. citizen or national. In some cases, noncitizen residents can qualify for SSI. For more information, ask for *Supplemental Security Income (SSI) For Noncitizens* (Publication No. 05-11051).

If you are eligible for Social Security or other benefits, you should apply for them. You can get SSI and other benefits if you are eligible for both.

If you live in certain types of institutions, you may get SSI.

If you live in a city or county rest home, halfway house or other public institution, you usually cannot get SSI. But there are some exceptions.

If you live in a publicly operated community residence that serves no more than 16 people, you may get SSI.

If you live in a public institution mainly to attend approved educational or job training to help you get a job, you may get SSI.

If you live in a public emergency shelter for the homeless, you may get SSI.

If you live in a public or private institution and Medicaid is paying more than half the cost of your care, you may get a small SSI benefit.

How to apply for SSI

If you are applying for SSI, you can complete a large part of your application by visiting our website at www.socialsecurity.gov. You also can call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** to ask for an appointment with a Social Security representative.

Parents or guardians usually can apply for blind or disabled children under age 18. In some cases, other third parties can apply for children.

You should bring certain items when you apply. Even if you do not have all of the things listed below, apply anyway. The people in the Social Security office can help you get whatever is needed. Please bring:

- Your Social Security card or a record of your Social Security number;
- Your birth certificate or other proof of your age;
- Information about the home where you live, such as your mortgage or your lease and landlord's name;
- Payroll slips, bank books, insurance policies, burial fund records

- and other information about your income and the things you own;
- The names, addresses and telephone numbers of doctors, hospitals and clinics that you have been to, if you are applying for SSI because you are disabled or blind;
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or eligible noncitizen status.

You also should bring your checkbook or other papers that show your bank, credit union or savings and loan account number so we can have your benefits deposited directly into your account. Direct deposit protects benefits from loss, theft and mail delay. The money is always on time and ready to use without making a trip to the bank.

A note for people who are blind or disabled

If you work, there are special rules to help you. You may be able to keep getting SSI payments while you work. As you earn more money, your SSI payments may be reduced or stopped, but you may be able to keep your Medicaid coverage.

You also may be able to set aside some money for a work goal or to go to school. In this case, the money you set aside will not reduce the amount of your SSI.

Blind or disabled people who apply for SSI may get free special services to help them work. These services may include counseling, job training and help in finding work.

You can get more information by visiting our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or calling us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** to get a copy of [Working While Disabled—How We Can Help](#) (Publication No. 05-10095).

Right to appeal

If you disagree with a decision made on your claim, you can appeal it. The steps you can take are explained in [The Appeals Process](#) (Publication No. 05-10041).

You have the right to be represented by an attorney or other qualified person of your choice. More information is in [Your Right To Representation](#) (Publication No. 05-10075).

These Publications are available at www.socialsecurity.gov or by calling us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213**.

You may be able to get other help

If you get SSI, you also may be able to get help from your state or county. For example, you may be able to get Medicaid, food stamps or other social services. Call your local social services department or public welfare office for information about the services available in your community.

Food stamps

If everyone in your home signs up for SSI or gets SSI, Social Security will help you fill out the food stamp application.

If you do not live in a home where everyone signs up for SSI or gets SSI, you must go to your local food stamp office to get food stamps. You can get more information about food stamps by visiting our website at www.socialsecurity.gov or calling us to get a copy of *Food Stamps And Other Nutrition Programs* (Publication No. 05-10100).

Medicaid

When you get SSI, you also may get Medicaid which helps pay doctor and hospital bills. Your local welfare or medical assistance office can give you information about Medicaid.

Help paying for Medicare

If you get Medicare and have low income and few resources, your state may pay your Medicare premiums and, in some cases, other Medicare expenses such as deductibles and coinsurance. Only your state can decide if you qualify. To find out if you do, contact your state or local welfare office or Medicaid agency. You can get more information from *Medicare Savings For Qualified Beneficiaries* (Publication No. CMS 10126-S). To get a copy, call the Medicare toll-free number, **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)**, or visit www.medicare.gov on the Internet and click on "Publications."

You may be able to get Social Security

If you have worked and paid into Social Security long enough, you also may be eligible for Social Security benefits while you are receiving SSI. Retirement benefits can be paid to people age 62 or older and their families. Disability benefits go to people with disabilities and their families. Survivors benefits are paid to the families of workers who have died. If you think you may qualify for Social Security benefits, call us to make an appointment to talk with a Social Security representative

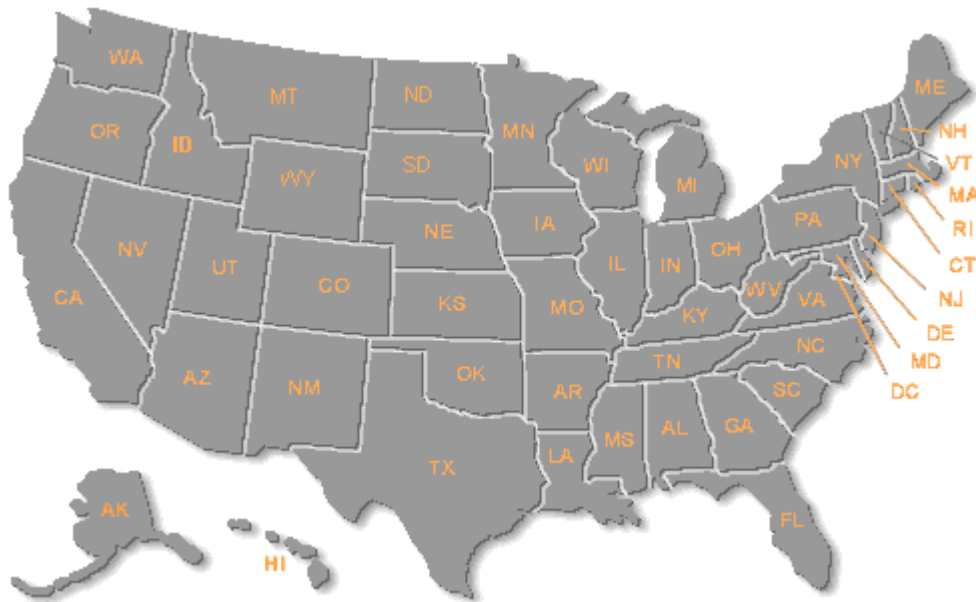
EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

National HIRE Network

<http://www.hirenetwork.org/resource.html> (this is the picture on the website for information on assistance by state)

Resources, Information & Assistance

This section includes state-specific governmental agencies and community-based organizations to assist people with criminal records, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. These agencies and organizations may be of assistance in providing job-related and legal services, answering questions arising from having a criminal record, or offering referrals to other useful organizations. To access this information, click on a state on the map, or choose from the alphabetical list below.



Highlights of the Federal Bonding Program

Fidelity bonding Services Are User-Friendly

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

What Is Fidelity Bonding?

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

Why Is Fidelity Bonding Needed for Job Placement?

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

Who Is Eligible for Bonding Services?

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

How Can Bonds Be Accessed Under the Federal Bonding Program?

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

THE McLAUGHLIN COMPANY • 1725 DeSales Street NW • Suite 700 • Washington DC
20036 PHONE: 800.233.2258 or 202.293.5566

SOURCE: Downloaded from <http://www.bonds4jobs.com/highlights.html> on 3/8/07.

State Tax Incentives to Benefit Employers Who Hire People with Criminal Records

The United States Government offers a [federal tax credit](#) of up to \$2,400 for employers who hire individuals from nine targeted groups of job seekers, including individuals with felony records. States can offer an additional tax break to business owners who hire people with criminal records as one way to support the re-entry of those who are legitimately trying to return to the job market in order to support their families and rejoin their communities.

Five states - California, Louisiana, Maryland, Texas and Iowa - provide state income tax credits to employers who hire people with criminal records. In 1998, the Hawaii Legislature proposed an employment discrimination measure that would have required the state to “appeal to the community spirit and good citizenship” in order to encourage employers to hire individuals with arrest and court records. Even though this measure was never passed, it was suggested that a tax incentive should be provided for employers who hired recently released felons.

Five states - Florida, Missouri, Indiana, Delaware and Pennsylvania - have statutes that allow for the receipt of tax credits for any business that contributes to crime prevention. Upon further inquiry, it is clear that crime prevention refers primarily to location, not to individuals.

A bill was recently introduced in the Ohio Legislature that would extend a tax credit against the state’s corporate franchise and personal income taxes for wages paid by employers to employees who have been convicted of felonies.

For contact information for each of the following state’s Department of Labor, please see the “[Resources and Assistance](#)” section of this website.

Summary of States Granting Additional Income Tax Credits

1. California

Any employer who hires an “ex-offender” may be eligible for a state tax credit. The credit given is equal to the sum of each of the following:

- (1) 50% of qualified wages in the first year of employment.
- (2) 40% of qualified wages in the second year of employment.
- (3) 30% of qualified wages in the third year of employment.
- (4) 20% of qualified wages in the fourth year of employment.
- (5) 10% of qualified wages in the fifth year of employment.

Additional Contact: California Employment Development Department

2. Louisiana

A tax credit is available to any taxpayer who provides full-time employment (at least 30 hours per week) to an individual who has been convicted of a first time drug offense and who is less than twenty-five years of age at the time of initial employment.

The credit is \$200 per taxable year per eligible employee. Only one credit is allowed per taxable year per employee and may be received for a maximum of two years per employee.

The credit is available upon certification by the employee’s probation officer that the employee has successfully completed a court-ordered drug treatment program and has worked 180 days full time for the employer seeking the credit.

Additional Contact: Louisiana Department of Revenue

3. Maryland

For each taxable year, for the wages paid to each qualified ex-felon employee, a credit is allowed in an amount equal to:

(1) 30% of up to the first \$ 6,000 of the wages paid to the qualified ex-felon employee during the first year of employment; and

(2) 20% of up to the first \$ 6,000 of the wages paid to the qualified ex-felon employee during the second year of employment.

For purposes of this credit, an ex-felon employee is anyone who has been convicted of a state or federal felony; is hired within a year of being convicted or released from prison; and is member of a family with an annual income 70% below the Bureau of Labor Statistics living standard.

Additional Contact: Maryland Department of Employment Services

4. Texas

The amount of the credit for wages paid by a corporation to an employee who was employed by the corporation when the employee was a work program participant is equal to 10% of that portion of the wages paid that, were the employee still a participant, the department would apportion to the state as reimbursement for the cost of the participant's confinement.

Additional Contact: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

5. Iowa

Employers in Iowa are allowed an additional deduction on their Iowa income tax returns for hiring a person who has been convicted of a felony (in Iowa, any other state, or the District of Columbia) or who is serving a parole or probation sentence or in participating in a work release program. This deduction is 65% of the wages paid in the first 12 months of employment; the maximum deduction is \$20,000 per employee.

Additional Contact: Iowa Department of Revenue or <http://www.state.ia.us/tax/educate/78522.html>

SOURCE: NATIONAL HIRE NETWORK website, downloaded from:

http://www.hirenetwork.org/state_tax_credits.htm on 3/8/07/

How to apply for Medicaid?

To apply for **Medicaid** you need to contact your local social services department and show proof of your financial need for this assistance.

Instructions

- **STEP 1:** Understand that Medicaid is a state-run program that provides **medical insurance** for low-income people. Each state has different eligibility requirements and different application procedures.
- **STEP 2:** Know that if you receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income) from the Social Security Administration, you will probably qualify for Medicaid.
- **STEP 3:** Recognize that there have been recent limits placed on this program at the federal level, so the benefits are not as wide as they used to be.
- **STEP 4:** Contact your local state Department of Social Services or Human Services. Your state may have a different name for this agency. It is the agency that provides food stamps and financial assistance. Call your county building and ask for the name of it if you don't know it.
- **STEP 5:** Ask for a Medicaid application. You will need to complete it in the office.
- **STEP 6:** Take your birth certificate, driver's license, pay stubs, Social Security card, proof of address, proof of other insurance if you have it and information about any bank accounts you have.
- **STEP 7:** Be prepared to answer questions about your finances. Eligibility is based on your income level.
- **STEP 8:** Ask office personnel for assistance if you do not know how to complete the form.
- **STEP 9:** Request assistance at home if you would like to apply but are unable to leave home.



Medicare and Social Security (Full Retirement) Eligibility

The age to get **full** Social Security retirement benefits has changed. The eligibility age to get full Social Security retirement benefits depends on the year you were born. If you were born in 1937 or earlier, you aren't affected by the change.

The eligibility age to get Medicare has not changed. If you or your spouse worked and paid Medicare taxes for at least ten years, you are eligible for Medicare premium-free Part A and Part B at age 65. There is a monthly premium for Medicare Part B.

Social Security

To find out how the full retirement age affects your Social Security retirement benefits, look at www.socialsecurity.gov on the web. You can also call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.

Medicare

Even if you aren't eligible for full Social Security retirement benefits at age 65, you can sign up for

- premium-free Medicare Part A as early as three months before the month you turn 65, and
- Medicare Part B during your Initial Enrollment Period (see below).

Enrolling in Medicare Part A and Part B

If you are already getting Social Security benefits, you will automatically get Medicare Part A and Part B. You will receive an Initial Enrollment Period package three months before your 65th birthday. If you don't get Social Security benefits, you should contact the Social Security Administration to sign up for Medicare. If you sign up for Medicare Part A after you turn 65, your Medicare Part A start date can be made retroactive for up to six months. If you are close to age 65 and aren't yet getting Social Security benefits, you can sign up for Medicare Part A and B during your Initial Enrollment Period.

Initial Enrollment Period for Medicare

The Initial Enrollment Period begins three months before the month you turn 65. It lasts until three months after you turn 65. If you want Medicare Part B coverage to begin the month you turn 65, you must sign up for it during the first three months of your Initial Enrollment Period. If you wait until you are 65, or sign up during the last three months of your Initial Enrollment Period, your Medicare Part B start date will be delayed. If you don't sign up for Medicare Part B during your Initial Enrollment Period, you can only sign up during the General Enrollment Period. You may have to pay extra for your Medicare Part B premium. The General Enrollment Period runs from January 1 through March 31 of each year. Your Medicare Part B coverage will begin on July 1.



Has Medicare eligibility based on age changed?

No, Medicare eligibility based on age has **not** changed. You are still eligible for Medicare starting at age 65.

Where do I go to apply for Medicare benefits?

If you aren't getting Social Security benefits, you must contact the Social Security Administration. If you are already getting Social Security benefits, you won't have to do anything. The Social Security Administration will enroll you in Medicare (premium-free Part A and premium-based Part B) automatically.

If I want Medicare at age 65, when should I contact Social Security?

If you want your Medicare coverage to begin when you turn age 65, you should contact the Social Security Administration during the three months before your 65th birthday. If you wait until your 65th birthday, or later, your Medicare Part B coverage will be delayed.

I am age 65, still working, and covered by a group health plan. How do I enroll in Medicare?

If you aren't getting Social Security benefits, you must go to the Social Security Administration to enroll in Medicare Part A and Part B. However, if you are covered by a group health plan based on your own or your spouse's current employment, you may want to enroll in Medicare premium-free Part A, but might not need Medicare Part B yet. To find out the best time for you to enroll in Medicare Part B, call the Social Security Administration or your benefits administrator.

How does the full retirement age affect how I pay my Medicare Part B premium?

For most people with Medicare, the Medicare Part B premium is taken out of their monthly Social Security payment. If you don't get Social Security benefits yet, Medicare will send you a bill for your Medicare Part B premium every three months. If you don't get your bill by the 10th of the month, call the Social Security Administration.

How do I get more information?

- Look at www.socialsecurity.gov on the web.
- Call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.
- Look at www.medicare.gov on the web.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.



Where to Get Your Medicare Questions Answered

Call the Medicare Helpline

1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) (English and Spanish)
TTY 1-877-486-2048

- Get general Medicare information.
- Get answers to questions about what Medicare Part A and Part B covers.
- Ask for information about your Medicare health coverage choices including cost, benefits, quality, and more.
- Get information and ask questions about Medicare prescription drug plans.
- Get information about your Medicare appeal and patients' rights.
- Get information about nursing homes in your area.
- Ask for Medicare booklets including the "Medicare & You" handbook. May also be available in audiotape (English and Spanish), Braille, Spanish, and large print (English and Spanish).
- Get information about Medicare events and activities in your area.
- Find the most up-to-date phone numbers (including TTY) for information on Medicare bills and services, fraud and abuse, buying Medigap or long-term care insurance, appeals and complaints, and programs to help pay medical bills for people with low income.

Hours to call:

- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to use the speech-automated system so you can easily get the information you need in English or Spanish. This system will ask you questions that you answer with your voice to direct your call automatically. You can also speak to an English or Spanish speaking operator.

Look on the web:

- Visit www.medicare.gov to get more information on Medicare, find programs that may help with your prescription drug and other health plan costs, download booklets, and compare health plans, prescription drug plans, Medigap policies, nursing homes, and more!

How to Organize Medical Records

Patients or caregivers are often responsible for getting copies of medical records to specialists and consultants. Maintaining an organized copy of your own records--especially if you're ill or have a chronic condition--can literally mean the difference between life and death.

Instructions

- **STEP 1:** Use a large three-ring binder with dividers to organize the information.
- **STEP 2:** Collect all contact information, including doctors' names, telephone numbers, fax numbers and addresses, in one section.
- **STEP 3:** Keep a calendar in another section to record all appointments.
- **STEP 4:** Maintain a log book for medical phone calls, indicating the person you talked with and when, what was said and what decisions about the course of treatment were made.
- **STEP 5:** Keep a separate log of phone calls with your insurance company. Again, log the person you talked with, when, what was said and what follow-up is required.
- **STEP 6:** Create a section to record prescriptions: what the medications are, when they were prescribed, who prescribed them, what they are for, and which pharmacy fills the prescriptions.
- **STEP 7:** Make a separate section for receipts and financial paperwork, including insurance explanations of benefits (EOBs for short). Keep everything sorted by the date of service.
- **STEP 8:** Visit the medical records office of your doctor or hospital on a regular basis to get copies of reports, transcripts and other doctors' records. You will need to show identification, sign a release form (including separate releases for HIV/AIDS and **mental health** records), and pay a copying fee. File these in reverse chronological order, so the newest record is on top.
- **STEP 9:** Visit your medical center's film library if you have imaging studies (such as **CT scans**, MRIs or X-rays). Get duplicates of films, but realize there will probably be a charge for these. It's often easiest and cheapest to have a radiologist make copies of imaging studies when the images are first made. Be sure to ask.
- **STEP 10:** Make extra photocopies occasionally of the most important records and store them with a trusted person.
- **STEP 11:** Keep records portable by devoting a briefcase or small rolling suitcase to them. This way you'll be able to take them to all

Source: eHow: How to do everything website. <http://www.ehow.com/>

Resources for People Leaving Prison

The Internet is the best source for information on resources available to help people leaving prison. Although most people inside prison do not have access to the Internet, it is important to know that there are sites that you can search when you return to the community. Below are some sites found by searching “resources for ex-offenders” using the Google search engine on 3/8/07.

GENERAL

CVTips. Ex-Offenders Job Search in the USA

http://www.cvtips.com/job_search_ex_offender.html

Open, Inc. provides information and resources to people leaving prison, including names of support organizations for family members. <http://www.openinc.org/consulting.html>

Pride Enterprises (prison rehabilitation industries) provides general transition resources and information. http://www.pride-enterprises.org/trans_resources_exoffenders.aspx

Prison Activist Resource Center <http://prisonactivist.org/>

Legal Aid of Western Michigan’s Re-Entry Law Project (RLP) and the Michigan Poverty Law Project have launched a website to help formerly incarcerated individuals. The "Michigan Re-Entry Law Wiki" provides visitors with answers to frequently asked questions, current case law, statutes, trends regarding prisoner reentry, and forms for obtaining a state identification card and expunging criminal records. The website also contains information to help lawyers, judges, social service providers, and others involved in the reentry process.

http://reentry.mplp.org/reentry/index.php/Main_Page

National HIRE Network provides information on state-specific governmental agencies and community-based organizations to assist people with criminal records, practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. <http://www.hirenetwork.org>

STATE SPECIFIC

EX-OFFENDER'S RESOURCES IN FLORIDA

<http://www.angelfire.com/fl4/fci/exresourceflorida.html>

ExOffender.org is a service directory designed to help men and women ready to re-enter society make the transition as worry-free and simple as possible. **Florida**-based.

<http://www.exoffender.org>

TOPPSTEP - The Offender Probationer Parolee State Employment Training Program (TOPPSTEP) is a collaborative venture between the **Georgia** Department of Corrections, the Board of Pardons and Paroles, and the Department of Labor to assist offenders in assimilating back into the workforce. Through TOPPSTEP, the Probation Division hopes to accomplish the goal of having every capable probationer gainfully employed and self-sufficient. <http://www.mgwis.com/exo.html>

Coming Home is a Directory of Resources for ex-offenders coming out of prison and returning to Greater **Boston** communities. It contains over 350 listings of agencies, organizations, places of worship, and groups who can provide assistance and information to ex-offenders. Coming Home (© 2005) is produced by the Prisoners Re-entry Working Group. We are a group of volunteers who are associated with academic, faith-based and/or secular community efforts related to prisoners and the criminal justice system. Our mission is to provide ex-offenders with useful information, in a useable format, so that they may know where to go for help in overcoming whatever barriers to employment, education, housing, and other services may be in their way. (<http://www.exoffenderresources.org>)

Maryland Correctional Education Library

<http://ce.msde.state.md.us/library/reentry.htm>

Baltimore City's Ex-Offender Initiative has brought together many different resources into one comprehensive document. The Ex-Offenders Resource Guide brings together community services focusing on education, legal assistance, health-care, and many other useful topics. Job fairs and other related programs are listed on their Web site. <http://www.oedworks.com/exoffender.htm>

Transitional Employment Services for Ex-Offenders. Lifetrack Resources provides job search services to offenders seeking to become productive members of the workforce. Services are provided at both our **Minneapolis and St. Paul Job Search Centers**. Lifetrack has contracts with the Hennepin County Adult Correctional Facility and the Red Wing Juvenile Facility.

<http://www.lifetrackresources.org/Employment/Ex-Offenders.htm>

Offender/Ex-Offender Resources in Washington State <http://www.wa.gov/esd/oes/>

******Your Ideas to Improve the Manual******

Please Send the Completed Form to:
Center for Mental Health Services & Criminal Justice Research
30 College Avenue
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
THANK YOU!