

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

Navigating Your Next Chapter

**PRISON WALLS TO OPEN ROADS:
YOUR GUIDE TO SUCCESS
(COLOR EDITION)**

With deep appreciation for those who courageously shared their experiences of life after prison, we dedicate this workbook as a source of practical tools, encouragement, and inspiration for those preparing for their journey home.

**By Shawn Rowland, LCSW, in collaboration
with Vandrick Towns, CADC II,
and Our Road Prison Project**

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Your Guide to Success***



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Hit the Ground Running

Hit the Ground Running is more than just a workbook—it's your guide to starting fresh and creating a life of opportunity and purpose. Designed for people returning to their communities after many years—often decades—of incarceration, it offers practical advice and inspiring stories from others who have successfully made the journey from prison walls to open roads.

This workbook provides essential tools to help you navigate your next chapter. You'll learn how to obtain your ID, use technology, and find a job. It also offers guidance on building healthy relationships, preventing relapse, managing stress through meditation and breathing exercises, and accessing resources for food and financial stability.

This resource reflects Our Road Prison Project's mission: Building a Bridge from Prison to the Community for people serving Life with the Possibility of Parole. We are committed to supporting the successful transition from prison to the community through advocacy, education, and service delivery.

With stories of resilience and hope, Hit the Ground Running empowers you to take charge of your future and build a fulfilling life. Your journey starts here!

Acknowledgments

We deeply thank those who shared their stories and wisdom about transitioning from prison to the community. Your courage lights the way for others, offering hope and practical guidance to those preparing for this life-changing journey.

We also thank the donors and supporters who made this workbook possible. Your generosity helps create resources that make a difference. Together, we are building new opportunities and possibilities.

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Disclaimer:

This workbook is for learning purposes only. It's not legal advice. If you need legal help, please reach out to a lawyer or legal aid.

Foreword

***Vandrick Towns, Program Manager,
Our Road Prison Project***



As someone with lived experience, I saw firsthand the unforeseen challenges that someone faces returning after a lengthy period of incarceration.

I paroled from Solano State prison on the Fourth of July 2013 after serving more than 25 years in the California state penal system. Upon my release, I quickly realized how much things had changed and how imperative it was that I found a way to obtain my Social Security card, Birth Certificate, and Driver's License. Each one of these tasks came with its own challenges that required that I ask for assistance and have patience. Over the past 10-plus years, I have worked with nearly a thousand of our returning citizens and found that the struggle to be reacclimated into society is still very real.

We at Our Road Prison Project noticed when dealing with the return of our formerly incarcerated individuals, there was a dire need to have a resource available for them to navigate their way through this constantly changing society.

We have designed this workbook to empower you, the reader, to navigate unforeseen challenges that may arise during your reintegration. Whether these challenges are personal or related to our sometimes complex social service system, this resource is here to guide you.

Our Road Prison Project's Mission is to Build a Bridge from Prison to the Community for people serving Life with the Possibility of Parole. In the thousands of people I have supported over the years, I have heard a few stories hundreds of times. For example: I had no idea how much technology has taken over society. Cashless stores and theme parks, online job applications and interviews, etc. With limited technology skills at best, I'm anxious, intimidated, frustrated, or feel handicapped by my incarceration time that didn't prepare me for this. I have also heard and seen the challenges of returning back into society and family members still treating me like I'm still the same age as when I left. I'm struggling with setting a healthy boundary with them. Another common issue is being married or in a serious relationship and coming home to a spouse or a significant other who feels as though they need to hold my hand through everything in a controlling manner, or have issues with the way I communicate with them now that I'm in the space with them on a regular basis. The relationship dynamics have definitely changed since I came home.

Our workbook is designed to prepare people for coming home so there won't be hundreds or thousands more people coming home not knowing how to x, y, and z.

Our Road has made supporting people in getting their California IDs a priority, as coming home without an ID can prevent them from starting a job, getting services, and accessing financial institutions.

In the creation of this workbook, we collaborated closely with individuals who were formerly incarcerated. Their insights and experiences were invaluable in ensuring that this resource is a current and accurate reflection of their transition back into society.

A Note from the Author

This workbook is written by me, Shawn Rowland, LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) and founder of Our Road Prison Project. I've spent many years supporting people coming home after long prison sentences. I've worked in both prison and jail settings and have provided reentry services in the community.

This project is also shaped by the deep experience and insight of our Program Director, Vandrlick Towns, who served a life sentence and came home over a decade ago. He brings his lived experience to the table and wrote the powerful foreword at the beginning of this workbook.

From this point on, the voice guiding you through the workbook is mine—Shawn's. Throughout the chapters, you'll also hear real stories and quotes from people who've come home after many years. Their words are here to remind you that there is hope—and you're not alone.

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CHAPTER 1

Getting Started

A. Introduction

Welcome to Our Road Prison Project's *Hit the Ground Running Workbook*.

We are so excited that you have decided to join us on our partnership journey. We hope you see this workbook as part of a partnership between Our Road and you to support your successful transition home. We are deeply committed to playing a small but meaningful role in improving the transition between prison and the community for those transitioning home after serving sentences of “life with the possibility of parole.”

Our Road Prison Project has 3 current projects:

- ▶ We are advocating for people with long sentences to get their CAL-IDs while in prison to start their lives ready to work, open bank accounts, and get housing.
- ▶ We are starting a small pilot program to roll out the workbook and provide support in taking steps toward getting an ID in prison, which will include the first step of getting a birth certificate.
- ▶ We will work to maximize access to the workbook by reaching out to people serving long sentences, organizations that support individuals who are incarcerated, and organizations that assist their family members. Our workbook will be available on Amazon for anyone to purchase and free to download from our website.



B. Board of Parole Hearings – Parole Plans

This workbook is not meant to help you prepare for the Board of Parole hearing or write your parole plans, as that is not our area of expertise. We understand that each person prepares for their parole hearing in their own way and includes what they think is most important in their plan. We know that some people include resumes, coping strategies, and/or relapse prevention plans in their parole plans. You might find these sections or other parts of the book useful, since they are designed to help you prepare for going home and successfully transition back into the community.

C. Purpose of This Workbook

The goal of this workbook is to prepare you for a successful transition back home. Of course, you will face much more than what we have put in this workbook, but we have chosen what we believe are the key areas you will need to know about in order to feel prepared and more confident in managing what you will face when you are home. You will likely find some sections of the workbook useful right now, while others may not seem relevant until you are closer to returning to the community or even after you are already home.

We believe our goal is best met by sharing the wisdom of those who have successfully paroled. We have included quotes and stories that let you hear real-life experiences, from public transit to being in the wrong line at the grocery store. We truly believe in the “each one teach one” model.

We found that getting a job was one of the most important goals for people when they came home. Our Getting a Job chapter is meant to prepare you to “Hit the Ground Running” when you get home, from knowing what documents are required to get a CAL-ID to understanding how to apply for a job in the modern world of technology.

We have a chapter on Getting Your California ID in Prison to help explain the current CAL-ID program and the new program that will allow you to get an ID while you are still inside. Currently, it is difficult to get an ID if you have served a long sentence, so you may wonder why we have this chapter. Hopefully, it will make sense once you have read it.

We include a chapter on Getting Your California ID in the Community, because an ID is necessary to get a job. We found that people did not understand the steps, which led to delays. This chapter can help you start the process inside.

Navigating the Community is a chapter that focuses on areas where we heard the most stories. We wanted you to benefit from what others experienced. We include going to restaurants, using public transportation, and so much more. We hope you will have an “Aha!” moment once you are home, thinking, “I understand why that was in the workbook.” You will probably wonder why newer plumbing is in the workbook, but we heard so many people share that they couldn't turn on the water when they went to wash their hands in public restrooms. They



PAROLE PLANNING

This workbook isn't focused on parole planning, but there are areas that may help you as you prepare to return home. While parole planning often involves things like creating a resume, developing coping strategies, and relapse prevention plans, this workbook is centered on supporting your overall re-entry. Each chapter will guide you in preparing for life after prison, and the section on Relationships may be particularly useful as you get ready for your meeting with the Parole Board.

went to turn the handles, and there were no handles. They didn't know the water would go on automatically if you put your hands under the faucet.

We support you in building a healthy life in our Healthy Living, Coping Strategies, and Relapse Prevention Plans chapter. This chapter covers topics that you may want to use in your parole plan, from coping strategies to addressing challenges at home, to relapse prevention plans for substance dependence, depression, or anger management.

Supportive relationships are a big part of a healthy life. Whether it's talking to someone you trust in prison or staying connected with supportive family at home, our Building Relationships chapter will help you strengthen those connections. It will also give you tips for building new relationships in the community to support your transition.

Lastly, our Appendix provides detailed information about the required documents you will need to get your California ID and Social Security Card, and to be hired for a job in California.

R.H. SUGGESTS:

Save your money for when you get out. You are going to need every penny!

D. How to Use This Workbook

We would like you to use the workbook in the best way for you. There is no right or wrong way to use the workbook. We expect some people will look for all the stories and quotes to see if they know the people. We imagine others will use one chapter and not be interested in the others. This workbook is for you. We hope you find it helpful. We encourage you to use it while you are inside and take it home, as some areas might be more meaningful for you once you are home.



“While I was in prison, I knew there would be many obstacles and challenges ahead of me. It had been so long since I had dealt with the DMV that the whole process was shocking. An ID is like a lifeline; without it, you’re sunk, and most doors are closed to you.”

Marlin Jeffreys, From a Voice of Experience



We believe the workbook's most powerful aspect is the wisdom of those who have successfully transitioned. I am deeply grateful to those who were willing to take the time to share their experiences with us to support your success.



“Be very mindful that the thinking you are using to create your reintegration plan has not been tested in the real world, as the world is today. It is easy to get caught up in our own ideas and assumptions, especially when planning something so life-changing. Be open to the dynamics of change and mindful of the gap between what we think we know and what is the reality, this is crucial. And, please have the courage to ask for help to learn how to adjust to those changes that must occur.”

J.L., Reflections on Resilience

E. About Our Road Prison Project

Our Road Prison Project is a small non-profit organization whose goal is to build a bridge from prison to the community for people serving “life with the possibility of parole.”

We are committed to supporting the successful transition from prison to the community through advocacy, education, and service delivery.



Vision: We believe in the power of a new start. Everyone deserves the opportunity to build a successful life after returning to the community, to find satisfying work and a home, to learn and develop new skills, and to become active members in the community.

Values:

- 1) We believe that those who have paroled after serving “life with the possibility of parole” merit specialized services to meet their unique needs, from learning to use a smartphone or taking public transportation to shopping at a grocery store.
- 2) We advocate for full inclusion in the community for individuals who have been convicted of crimes in the past. This includes housing, job search support, and advocacy in the wider community.
- 3) We believe in empowering people to become involved in issues that concern them and to voice their opinions in shaping community policies.

Our current priority is to take steps so that people serving long sentences can get their California IDs before they leave prison. This is a long-term goal with small steps along the way. We will use advocacy, education, and service delivery to attain this goal.

We want you to have a CAL-ID when you leave prison, but it will take time for that process to be put into place.

Historically, we have provided prison re-entry services in Alameda County, having the opportunity to support the transition home after long sentences.

In our program, we provided:

- ▶ Support to get a California ID
- ▶ Job search support
- ▶ Support in getting General Assistance and EBT/CalFresh
- ▶ Emotional support
- ▶ Therapy from licensed or license-eligible clinicians
- ▶ Staff with lived experience
- ▶ Trauma-informed care
- ▶ Computer classes
- ▶ Introduction to banking
- ▶ Support in getting healthcare
- ▶ Learning to use a cell phone
- ▶ And more, depending on the individual

We have provided public education, allowing our program participants to educate the community alongside other local leaders. Some of the topics were:

- ▶ **Fair Chance Employment:** Beyond Hiring Practices
- ▶ **Fair Chance Employment:** Opening up New Opportunities
- ▶ **New Laws:** New Opportunities
- ▶ **Housing:** Prison to Community

And others

We have advocated independently and with partners to support the successful transition of people who have served decades in prison. Our work has included meetings with local legislative offices, traveling to Sacramento to lobby, and advocacy with CDCR. We have found great support for people to get their CAL-IDs in prison, but we have more work to translate that support into action.

Our Road is currently focused on the slow but important work it will take to make sure that people serving long sentences get their CAL-IDs in prison. It will likely take time, additional legislation, and funding to see a fully implemented program that will lead to those serving “life with the possibility of parole” going home with a CAL-ID.

Our next project is a small pilot program that works with individuals who will be having parole hearings within the next 2-4 years and are interested in taking steps toward getting their CAL-ID. We will work with individuals on getting birth certificates as a first step and whatever other steps are possible. We will provide people with all of the forms and support them in navigating the process of getting a notary to sign their birth certificate application. Getting a birth certificate in prison can allow you to start working 1 to 3 months faster, as many people are waiting for their birth certificate so they can then get their California ID. Seeing the sadness, frustration, and disappointment when people had to wait to start their new lives in the community motivates us to do whatever we can to get people working and to that first paycheck. We saw people light up when they shared their first paycheck with everyone. It was a joyous moment.

This workbook will also help you plan for your return home to the community. The workbook is designed to help prepare you for many aspects of your transition home. Having provided re-entry services for several years, we learned about many challenging areas, which would have been easier with just a little information ahead of time.

Our Road Prison Project leadership

Shawn Rowland

*LCSW, Founder/Director,
Our Road Prison Project*



Shawn is dedicated to helping individuals transition back to the community after serving decades in prison. She supports their success in building meaningful careers, securing housing, and forming loving relationships with family and friends. Shawn is especially inspired by their desire to give back to the community.

With over 25 years of experience in social work, program management, and community organizing, Shawn has worked closely with those involved in the criminal justice system, both in prison and after release. She is committed to empowering people from diverse backgrounds, offering support in areas such as public speaking, goal-setting, relapse prevention plans, and re-entry planning. Her work helps clients understand the impact of trauma and take steps toward healing.

Shawn has also held leadership roles, using her passion for social justice and expertise in program management to create impactful programs and policies. Her experience spans criminal justice, mental health, affordable housing, and community services.

Her professional background includes roles at Santa Rita Jail, California Medical Facility, Contra Costa County Juvenile Hall, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and East Bay Housing Organizations.

Vandrick Towns

BSW, ICADC, CADAC-11, NCAC-1

*Certified Denial Management Specialist
and Relapse Prevention Specialist*

*Director of Programs at Options
Recovery Services*

Program Manager, Our Road Prison Project



Vandrick is an advocate for reform in social and specifically prison systems. He serves on the board of directors for organizations that address systems' impacts on people struggling with homelessness, addiction, violence, and mental health symptoms. His lived experience and personal witnessing have given him the opportunity to advocate for the formerly incarcerated population on a state and national level. Vandrick's career in social justice and community advocacy has spanned more than twenty years. His work has included roles in leadership directing substance use disorder and mental health treatment programs. Vandrick has been instrumental in establishing and developing victim impact programs, gang prevention and intervention programs, along with holding roles as a proximate leader in criminal justice, workforce development, and inclusive impact strategy. He is an experienced trainer, community organizer, committed client-centered advocate, and clinician. Vandrick is dedicated to empowering underserved youth, families, and adults of diverse backgrounds. Vandrick has a strong commitment to social justice and extensive experience working with diverse stakeholders to effect positive change.





CHAPTER 2

Getting a Job

A. Introduction

Getting a job may be your top priority when you come home. Building a foundation for yourself in the community will support your future success and allow you to reach your goals.



YOUR FIRST PAYCHECK: A BIG STEP

One of the biggest and most exciting moments for many people after being released from prison is getting their first paycheck. It doesn't matter how much it is or what the job is—what matters is that it's a real job in the community, earning legal money. For many, this is the first time they've earned a paycheck because they were either too young to work or involved in illegal activities in the past. Getting that first paycheck is a huge step toward building a new, honest life outside of prison. It's a day to be proud of, to celebrate with others, and to remember that you are making a fresh start. Look forward to that day—it's coming!



We found that people start with a wide range of first jobs, but some of the more common ones include:

- ▶ Welder
- ▶ Janitor
- ▶ Substance abuse counselor
- ▶ Warehouse worker
- ▶ Doggy daycare worker
- ▶ Furniture manufacturing
- ▶ Car manufacturing
- ▶ Optician
- ▶ Prison re-entry services
- ▶ Delivery driver

B. Job Readiness Checklist

We encourage you to use the following Job Readiness Checklist to get ready for your first job search. It will help you find your first job!

- Know your rights – Fair Chance Act.
- Get your required documents.
- Complete the Hard Skills exercise.
- Complete the Soft Skills exercise.
- Review job search methods.
- Learn about workforce centers.
- Learn about networking.
- Take steps to use your network and complete the network exercise.
- Learn about store windows, temporary agencies, Job Boards (websites), and Company Websites.

- Understand how to address questions about your criminal background on job applications and interviews.
- Fill out a mock job application.
- Learn about cover letters.
- Learn about resumes.
- Create a resume using a template.



“After receiving a suitable ruling in a hearing, patience and time management will be new skills that will contribute greatly to one’s success. Freedom is like looking at life through a brand-new set of eyes without forgetting the past.

Returning to the community will have difficulties and challenges and this is where we put to use all those tools that we have learned in groups. The most important lesson I learned was not to conform to the standards of others. It’s ok to be uncertain of your path and to try a few different things before actually committing to something.

Understanding that things happen at their own pace, will keep you grounded and focused. Finding and staying connected to resources will serve you greatly. Life is a learning experience with things always changing. Be ready to continue your education, formally and informally. Opportunities will arise if you are willing to take a chance, and people will be willing to take a chance on you.”

Stay grounded, stay focused, and stay ready.

Marlin Jeffreys, A Voice of Transformation

Know Your Rights – Fair Chance Act.

Looking for a job can be stressful, especially if your record has made it harder in the past. But there’s a California law that’s working to change that. It’s called the **Fair Chance Act**, and it was created to give people with conviction histories a real opportunity to move forward.

The law states that employers should focus on your skills and experience first, rather than your past. If they run a background check after offering you the job, they have to consider the full picture, including how long ago the conviction happened and what you’ve done since. If they decide not to move forward, they must tell you and give you a chance to respond.

The Fair Chance Act is a California law that helps people with criminal records get a fair shot at a job. It’s also called a “Ban the Box” law. This means employers can’t ask about your conviction history right away. The law took effect on January 1, 2018, and applies to most employers in California with five or more employees. This is a summary and not legal advice. For full details, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov/fair-chance-act.

What Employers Can’t Do Before Offering You a Job:

- ▶ They can’t ask about your conviction history on the job application.
- ▶ They can’t ask you about or consider your criminal history.
- ▶ They can’t look at arrests that didn’t lead to a conviction.
- ▶ They can’t consider convictions that were sealed, dismissed, expunged, or erased by law.
- ▶ They can’t say in the job posting that people with records won’t be hired.

What Happens After You're Offered a Job:

Employers are allowed to check your criminal history after they give you a conditional job offer. But even then, they have to follow steps to treat you fairly.

1. Fair treatment is an individualized review, which means they must think about:

- ▶ What the conviction(s) was/were
- ▶ How serious it/they was/were
- ▶ How long ago it/they happened
- ▶ Whether it/they are related to the job

2. If they're going to take the offer back, they HAVE to:

- ▶ Tell you in writing why they don't want to hire you.
- ▶ Give you a copy of what they looked at and tell you which conviction they're concerned about.
- ▶ They can't just tell you they won't hire anyone who is convicted of a particular crime.
- ▶ They must tell you that you get at least 5 business days to respond — and they have to give you that time.

3. Some types of things you can prove to convince the employer that taking the job back would be a mistake

- ▶ Proof that the part of the record that is the basis of the decision is inaccurate

- ▶ An explanation of your role in the crime or what was going on in your life at the time
- ▶ Proof you've changed
- ▶ Your job history
- ▶ Letters from others or documents showing you're rehabilitated

4. Final Notice of their decision not to hire you, only after they have considered everything you provided and said. They must:

- ▶ Tell you in writing
- ▶ Explain why they decided to withdraw the job offer
- ▶ Let you know you can file a complaint with the California Civil Rights Department (CRD)

You have the right to file a complaint with the CRD. You don't need a lawyer to do this, but you must do it within 3 years

- ▶ Online: [\[calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess\]](https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess)
[\[https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess\]](https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/complaintprocess)
- ▶ Phone: 800-884-1684
- ▶ TTY: 800-700-2320

Source: This summary is based on publicly available information from the *California Civil Rights Department*. For full and official details, visit calcivilrights.ca.gov/fair-chance-act or call 1-800-884-1684.

D. Know Your Rights Exercise

Share your thoughts about the Fair Chance Act:

- 1. Have you already heard about the Fair Chance Act (or Ban the Box, as it is more commonly referred to)?**

- 2. Does the Fair Chance Act give you hope?**

E. Important Documents You Need

Employers require the following when hiring to verify your identity and document your eligibility to work in the United States. They are necessary when completing a W-4 (Federal Income Tax Withholding Form) and I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification Form). See the I-9 form in the Appendix.

If you were not born in the United States but are legally authorized to work here, you will need different documents to prove your eligibility.

You may need	When needed	How and where to get it	Issued by	More information
Social Security Card	Before you get hired	Apply at your local Social Security office	U.S. Social Security Administration	Getting your ID in the Community, Chapter 5 and the Appendix
Birth Certificate	Before you get hired, it is one document you can use to meet the I-9 requirements	Contact the Clerk-Recorder office in the County or Health Department or Vital Records in the State where you were born	Clerk-Recorder office in the County or Health Department or Vital Records in the State where you were born	Getting your ID in the Community, Chapter 5 and the Appendix
California ID or Driver's License (option 1)	Before you get hired, it is used for identification purposes	Department of Motor Vehicles Some people can get their California ID while still in a California State prison	Department of Motor Vehicles	Getting your ID in the Community, Chapter 5 and the Appendix
California ID (option 2)	Before you get hired, for identification purposes	CDCR/DMV CAL-ID program You may be eligible to get your ID while still in custody	Department of Motor Vehicles	Getting your ID in Prison, Chapter 5 and the Appendix

F. Job Skills – Education and Certifications

You may have attended school or gained certifications while serving time. Skills, training, and/or education can open up opportunities for new jobs and careers and higher-earning positions.

Training and college courses are available to some people inside and to everyone once they return to the community. The requirement to enter a community college is to be 18 years old. There are specific programs that support those who have been incarcerated at Community Colleges and Universities. They are often referred to as equity programs that you can ask about if you are interested in attending college. Some programs are specially designed for those who have been involved in the criminal justice system.

1. Education

Jamala Taylor shared his experience with Project Rebound at Cal State Fullerton, which is one of many programs supporting people returning home. His story begins with getting his documents and continues with finishing his Bachelor's degree and planning to get his Master's degree.





“I want to talk about the first few months after I was out. I got out, and after all that time, I had no idea how to work anything from the stove to the refrigerator. I certainly couldn't get onto a computer and access the internet in any way. I couldn't operate the cell phone my sister had given me. I was like an infant in many ways... the world had absolutely changed. One of the things I absolutely knew I needed was a job. I didn't know how to go about it in this new world. When I left, you wanted a job, you went into a company and you told them “I'm looking for a job” and they handed you an application. You filled it out and turned it in. In the new world, all of that stuff is online, so of course I didn't understand any of that. While I was in a transitional home, a guy came back one day and he had been to a temporary service and they were looking for workers for a warehouse. I thought that was the greatest thing since peanut butter, so of course I got on the phone and told them I didn't have most of my IDs. At the time, my mom had been able to get me my birth certificate before I came home, so that's pretty much all I had. I didn't want to go all the way down to this place only for them to tell me, you know, “we need this and we need that, and you don't have it,” so I just called him and I was, like, “Look, I don't have this and I don't have this because I just got out of prison, so if that's a problem just tell me now.” They were, like, “No, it's not a problem.” I found out later that this is very difficult work. They're desperate for people to do it, so they will pretty much accept you as you come. They're just, like, “As you get it, bring it to us.” So they hired me. I started that very next week. It was back breaking work. I absolutely hated it, so now I find myself getting up every single day to go to a job that I absolutely hate, but it was necessary, and the two good things that came out of it were that it allowed me to kind of develop my financial infrastructure. When I went to prison 31 years prior, they didn't have direct deposit. I was an 18-year-old.”



I didn't have a bank account. I never had checking or any of those things, so I got to educate myself to that reality in real time, which really paid benefits later on. So I worked there for about six months. When my transitional time was up I transitioned to my family's home, about an hour and a half away, so obviously I couldn't keep that job, and that's when I got on with Insight Garden Program (IGP) for five hours a week, and you know, I already had a basic understanding of how the financial system works, and I mean really basic, but I did. I had been able to save like \$10,000. I mean, I worked a lot so I left transition with savings and not doing anything – limiting myself to fast food once a week and I got on with IGP and those lessons that I learned from a financial standpoint really helped me, but I think the most powerful thing it did was I learned that I didn't want to be a warehouse worker. I didn't want to work labor. I couldn't do that for the rest of my life, and that got me to think in other terms, like getting an education. So IGP connected me with the Project Rebound at Cal State Fullerton, and almost every campus in California has an equity program that you can connect with, and they actually helped me fill out the FAFSA application, which is the government aid and the acceptance application and all of that, and I was accepted into the college. And now, three years later, I'm finishing up my bachelor's and on my way to a master's program, and I say this and this is really, really important, because I could have toiled my life away doing something I hated doing, which is like cancer to the rest of your life. If you have to get up every single morning, going to do something you hate, something that chose you, you didn't choose it; or instead, I can maybe stand still for a minute, or even take a small step back and go into college, make that short-term sacrifice and get me a degree and kind of increase the trajectory of my life and increase the trajectory of the family I hope to one day have, right? I have choices now and that's something I didn't have, or I didn't think I had when I got out of prison, so what I want to tell you is you do have choices.”

Jamala Taylor, Words That Inspire Change

Project Rebound at Cal State Fullerton is an excellent example of the kind of support programs that are available to you.

Project Rebound



“Project Rebound is a program that supports the higher education and successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals wishing to enroll and succeed at the California State University. By connecting students with critical resources, Project Rebound constructs an alternative to the revolving door policy of mass incarceration and increases community strength and safety.”

California State University, Project Rebound Website, 2024

2. Certifications

There are several certifications you can earn while in prison that can help you get a job when you get out. There are too many certifications to list here. Gaining certifications while inside can open the door to more job opportunities and better pay once you're home. Some of the certifications you can receive inside include:

- ▶ Offender Mentor Certification Program – Alcohol and Drug Counselor
- ▶ Optician
- ▶ Construction
- ▶ Iron working
- ▶ Culinary Arts Management
- ▶ And many more, depending on which institution you are in



G. Job Skills – Training and Experience

Taking an inventory of your skills will help you in several ways:

- ▶ Knowing which jobs you are qualified for.
 - ▷ Job listings will list the skills they are looking for.
- ▶ Filling out your applications.
 - ▷ Job applications will ask which skills you used in prior jobs.
- ▶ Writing your cover letter and resume.
 - ▷ When writing a cover letter, you will want to highlight your skills. There is a “skills” section on some resumes where you can list your skills. Also, for each job you describe on your resume, you will show which skills you used, focusing on the skills that match the job you are applying for.

1. Building Strong Skills (Hard skills)

Hard skills are things that you know how to do well. They are learned or developed through training or experience. They are recognized by employers and valued in the workforce.



Review the hard skills listed below and CIRCLE THE HARD SKILLS YOU HAVE:

Selling products	Writing
Typing	Decorating
Keeping records	Painting
Compiling information	Bookkeeping
Taking inventory	Mowing grass
Scheduling appointments	Assembling parts
Woodworking	Handling cash
Landscaping	Stocking supplies
Doing house repairs	Changing tires
Installing a carpet	Working with children
Fixing cars	Preparing food
Answering phones	Facilitating groups
Feeding animals	Carpentry
Roof repair	Masonry
Operating cleaning equipment	Plumbing
Safe use of chemicals	Floor refurbishing
Sanitation and disinfection	Electrical repair
Data entry	Fixing equipment and tools
Quality control	Drywall installation
Inspection procedures	Groundskeeping
Training people	Trash disposal and recycling
Crisis intervention	Order picking and packing
Counseling	Washing, waxing, and polishing floors
Intake assessments	Printing and copying documents
Understanding 2D and 3D diagrams	Project management
Calculating exact dimensions	Filing maintenance orders
Welding	Managing supply inventory
Working with hand tools	Tracking labor hours
Filing documents and paperwork	Reading blueprints
	Ability to cut with precision

2. Hard Skills Exercises

What other hard skills do you have?

What are your top 5 hard skills?

1

2

3

4

5



“The welding experience/training I was able to acquire inside became very useful for getting me the position I hold today as a Maintenance Technician/Welder Fabricator. So whatever training/experience you can get inside will come in handy when you are released.

No matter what you plan to do when you get out, it may not be the “first thing” you are able to do, so you need to have options. So, the more experience/training you have, the more successful you will be. My welding experience opened doors for me to so many other work experiences. I have learned so many other skills because I have welding experience. The skill I have learned led me to other skills and so I have been able to build one upon the other. It’s a process that comes in time. Getting up every day, putting one foot in front of the other, and building your career.

I also had to build my confidence in my abilities and learn how to trust my knowledge. After being inside for years and now being outside for years, there was much to grasp outside and much to let go of from inside.”

R. H., From a Voice of Experience



We find that people are more skilled than they think they are. Many people don’t have experience using technology, including computers and high-tech machinery, so it is important to pay attention to that when you read job listings. Don’t let that make you lose hope, though. Many people have been able to get support and continue working in jobs that require technology. They were able to learn the technology on the job, which also added to their skills.

We have found that employers value dependable, hard-working employees who appreciate employment opportunities. You may be surprised at how much your employer values your efforts.



“For any job, a strong foundation in transferable skills can be critical. These include communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Depending on the specific role you go after, you might also need technical or industry specific knowledge. Researching the job description can help you identify the most relevant skills to highlight when structuring your resume. Lucky for all of us that were pushed to excel, formal education can provide a strong base structure that will in turn open doors to numerous professions. Some jobs require specific degrees; however, don’t be discouraged because others give preference to individuals with basic know-how.

I worked at Tesla, Clutter, and HD Supply without the slightest idea of how to build a home, let alone an automobile.

Even if not mandatory, certificates can demonstrate your commitment to continuous learning, and that in itself can be a game changer.”

W.J., Wisdom from Re-entry Success



3. Working with People (Soft skills)

Soft skills are special features of a person's character.

Review the soft skills listed below and CIRCLE THE SOFT SKILLS YOU HAVE:

Arrive on time every day	Good communicator	Mature
Self-motivated	Meet work deadlines	Helpful
Take initiative	Enthusiastic	Ambitious
Results-oriented	Conscientious	Follow instructions
Take responsibility	Loyal	Get things done
Fast learner	Take pride in work	Get along with others
Assertive	Eager	Honest
Self-starter	Responsible	Ask questions
Organized	Sincere	Can motivate others
Have a sense of humor	Creative	Careful
Flexible	Team player	Friendly
Computer literate	Detail-oriented	Willing to learn
Good decision maker	Dependable	Manage time effectively
Run effective meetings	Accountability	Set goals
Solve difficult problems	Patient	Leadership
Work on a committee	Mentor	Trustworthy
		Hardworking
		Conflict resolution
		Optimistic/Good attitude

4. Soft Skills Exercises

What other soft skills or personality traits do you have that would be valuable in the workforce?

1

2

3

4

5

What are your top 5 soft skills?

1

2

3

4

5

5. Bringing it all Together: A Winning Combination (Hard and Soft skills)

Employers want to hire people with the skills necessary to succeed in their work environment. The hard skills we explored above are only one part of the story. Hard skills are like welding, counseling, and certifications. You gain them with training and experience. Soft skills are also important and sometimes more highly valued than hard skills, as hard skills can be taught (see the above table). Soft skills are like personality traits but can also be developed over time. Soft skills include leadership, problem-solving, and attention to detail (see the above table for more). We found that many people who come home are highly valued employees, as they are highly motivated, responsible, good problem solvers, and take pride in their work. When filling out applications and writing cover letters and resumes, you can use these soft skills when describing yourself. They can also be helpful during job interviews.

H. Understanding the Job Search: Review Job Search Methods

When you start looking for a job, it's good to take one step at a time. Each step you take gets you closer to your goal. Many people find jobs by talking to friends and family. This is a common way to get hired when you first come back to the community.

After people have been home for a while, they usually start to try different job-hunting ideas. The more you learn about job searching and try new things, the more chances you will have to find a job that works for you. You can use online job sites, go to networking events, and talk to temp agencies. Each new idea you try can help you get closer to finding a job you like. Use a combination of job search methods to increase your chances of getting a job.

I. Workforce Centers

E.S. shares his perspective from life after prison:



“When I was released in 2017, I was very fortunate to receive employment assistance through CEO (Center for Employment Opportunities, located in Oakland, CA). After two unsatisfying jobs, I became employed at Every Dog Has Its Day Care, much through the additional help provided by Our Road Prison Project. I can’t overstate the value of building and taking advantage of a supportive network, so much of which can be found through the parole system.”



E.S., Reflection from Someone Rebuilding Their Life

E.S. had a few jobs after getting released before he started working at Every Dog Has Its Day Care. “Having a great love for dogs, this became a dream job and an important lesson in finding not just any job, but one you have a passion for.”

Center for Employment Opportunities is a Workforce program with locations across California and the US.

Workforce Centers provide a variety of employment and educational programs, including employment opportunities, job search assistance, job readiness training, educational and training programs in high-demand careers, mentoring opportunities, and internships.

There are County Workforce Centers and non-profits that provide these opportunities. Your parole agent, friends, or family members may be able to give you leads. Also, each county has a Workforce Development Board. Google “workforce development board” to find a resource list in your area.



“Upon my release, having a strong desire to work, I enrolled into a couple of workforce programs. Workforce programs that work in collaboration with employers, business owners and, on some occasions, a city/county to place men and women in jobs in a matter of days. In one instance, I was scheduled for an interview immediately after the orientation process and was offered a job at the interview. I believe there were two things that worked in my favor: one, having a desire to work no matter the job; and two, being willing to learn no matter my skill level or experience.”

Rayvon Williamson, Perspective from the Journey Home

J. Networking

Networking – Word of mouth is sometimes the best way to get job leads. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job. Start with your family and friends. Have them spread the word that you are looking for a job. Keep in touch with them and let them know how your job search is going. You can start this process when you are still in prison to be ahead of the game when you get out. You may find job leads from people who went home ahead of you, supervisors in custody, and/or friends and family members in the community.





“As far as employment, Networking was very useful. I had a friend who had gotten out several years prior to my release who gave me a referral to a company where he once worked. I was hired with full disclosure as the employer hired my friend knowing he was an ex-con. So Networking is one of the best ways to get your first job... friends and family are willing to help despite your past.”

R.H., Lessons from a Life Rebuilt

This story gives useful tips on connecting with others to get hired:



“Networking is who you know, but what you know is also very important. Everybody always says it’s not what you know it’s who you know, but it’s what you know -- you still got to have skills. You got to know something but it’s also about who you know, so going through all the different things like getting out and making different transitions, I worked with the Center for Employment Opportunities (which is CEO), and they pretty much did the “world work,” helped us out and taught us how to interview, hooked us up with some things as far as people that were coming to the office that would be looking for employees, and even though I didn’t use them to get any of my jobs, having that experience, having that exposure, knowing people in the office that let me know the importance of, you know, knowing people, because they would have people come in the office looking for employees and they would interview you right on the spot, so I ended up through the transitional house somebody had given me some information about Advantage Resourcing and they were doing a temp placement at Tesla, so I did the temp to permanent placement at Tesla, went through Advantage Resourcing, worked at Tesla and attempted to hire permanent. Almost made it to 90 days – they happened to be doing a six-month or 16-month downsizing project and was laying off a lot of people (top-down politics engineers and so on and so forth), all the way down to line supervisors, forklift drivers,

production control, and so I experienced the layoff with them. However, a woman had approached me in one of the break rooms and said that she was leaving to go to SAS Automotive to do her own little project and so I was like, do you know how much they paying? She's, like, oh, we can't pay what Tesla's paying so I'm, like, no, I ain't gonna be able to do it. I'll stay but I may know some people that may need some jobs where I'm living at. I'll let you know since you want to build your work crew up. So she was, like, "okay." We exchanged information and one of the guys I was cool with ended up getting fired from Tesla, so I referred him over and he was there, you know, and he was, like, oh man, this cool laid back, you know, you might want to come over, so once Tesla did the layoff and the downsizing I actually went over and got a job there, became a supervisor there, and the woman that had pulled me over asking me at Tesla did I want to come over ended up becoming my wife! So, you know, it was a success story coming out of that. I worked there under her and then I had a cousin that was a foreman at the drywall company I'm at now, and he was, like, hey man, we got an opening – do you want it? I'm, like, cool, so I actually left work the 12-hour shift the night before, went the next day early in the morning to interview. I slept out in the parking lot to get a couple hours of sleep and it was admirable to them. They're, like, oh man, you just worked a 12-hour shift and came right over, you know, slept in the parking lot till it was interview time, and in the interview they hired me on the spot, and it wasn't because of who I knew, which they knew. What my cousin said was that was partially it, but it was the drive, it was the determination to work a 12-hour shift, and to come right over in morning traffic from Fremont all the way to Richmond and then sleep in the car for an hour until it was interview time. They really appreciated the determination and the drive. If you got the determination, know a couple people, have some skills underneath your belt, you can be a success story. Never let up, just keep on pushing, so it's about networking, you know, reach out, ask for help, don't be afraid to ask for help. Closed mouth don't get fed."

M.B., Story of Perseverance

1. Networking Exercise

What contacts do you have in custody that could be helpful for networking?

How and when will you contact them?

What contacts do you have in the community that could be helpful for networking?

How and when will you contact them?

K. Store Windows

You can apply to a “Help Wanted” sign in a business window. For example, if you are interested in working in retail, you may walk around the local mall and look for any “Help Wanted” signs. You will primarily find these signs in retail stores and restaurants. It is good to plan before you walk in. Ideally, you will have your sample application with you so you can copy it onto their application if they ask you to fill one out. You can also provide them with your resume. A nice resume will show that you are prepared and professional. You know they say you only have one chance to make a first impression, so if you find a place you are interested in, wait until you are prepared before going in and introducing yourself. You may get a job offer on the spot. Just around my office alone, a burger place and a pizza parlor are looking for staff with a sign in their window. Also, you want to be clean, neat, and put together when you enter as if you might get an interview. For places that require staff, they may make their decision based on your presentation, including your outfit.

L. Temporary Agencies

You will find a range of temporary agencies in your area. They tend to specialize in certain types of jobs, including warehouse, administrative, social services, and manufacturing, and some have a wider focus. You can Google “temporary agencies” and see their listings for positions online. Some employers use temporary agencies to fill positions regularly. They can give you a foot in the door and create a buffer between you and the employer. They will be the ones checking your background, not the employer who you work for every day. Many people get hired full-time from their temporary jobs.

M. Job Boards (websites) and Company Websites

There are many job search websites (job boards) out there. Find the ones that provide you with the best and most up-to-date information and search them regularly. Some of the places on the internet to find jobs include:

- 🌐 [Craigslist.com](https://www.craigslist.com)
- 🌐 [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)
- 🌐 [CareerBuilder.com](https://www.careerbuilder.com)



On Indeed, you can use several filters to narrow your search, such as “city” or “full-time job.” Indeed also has a filter under “encouraged to apply” that you can click on called “fair chance,” which will show you employers who want to help people to have a fair chance or second chance after involvement in the criminal justice system. Only a few employers use the “fair chance” filter on Indeed. Many more employers want to give people a second chance, and San Francisco, as a city, supports fair chance hiring. Getting comfortable with job websites takes time, so play around with it and get support from those with experience.

You can also visit websites with lists of fair chance or second chance companies. If you see a company that interests you, you can go to the company’s website to see if there are listings for positions that interest you. You can also Google job listings using the company name, or even try to call the company. Some of those websites are:

- 🌐 <https://www.honestjobs.com/>
- 🌐 <https://jailstojobs.org/second-chance-employers-network/>
- 🌐 <https://hr.lacounty.gov/fairchanceemployer/>

You can also visit a company's website. Look for a section called "Jobs" or "Careers." That's where they list open positions. Some companies don't post jobs in other places, so this is a good way to find out what's available. You might already know some companies that sound good to you—this is a great way to check if they're hiring.

N. Answering Criminal Background Questions

People have many different opinions on how to handle this issue. AB 1008, the Fair Chance Act, does not allow the question about one's criminal background to be on a job application. Unfortunately, you might still find that question on a job application. You will have to decide what to do if this happens. Everyone makes different decisions at this point, but people are encouraged to be honest on job applications. Hopefully, you will not face this situation.

"What is the California Fair Chance Act? The Fair Chance Act, also known as "Ban the Box," is a new California law meant to ensure that workers with conviction records are more fairly considered for jobs. Starting January 1, 2018, most California employers are not allowed to ask you about your conviction history on a job application or run a conviction background check on you until they offer you the job."

National Employment Law Project

A common question on an application **NOT** complying with the Fair Chance Act is, "Have you ever been convicted of a felony? If yes, please explain."



You have some choices if this happens. Some of your options are:

- ▶ Leave the question blank.
- ▶ Answer yes to the felony question, and for the “please explain” section, write “will discuss at interview.”
- ▶ Answer yes to the felony question and provide some information, but not more information than necessary, such as, “In 1982, I was convicted of a felony.” The reason for giving this answer is primarily not to leave the section blank.

We encourage you to write yes and discuss it in the interview vs. providing details of your crime in the application. Unfortunately, leaving it blank will suggest that you missed the question or have a felony conviction. This is a personal choice, and we do hope that the employers you are interested in are following the Fair Chance Act.

1. Handling Incarceration in Your Interview

Another challenge can be general interview questions such as, “Where have you worked for the last 5, 10, 15 years?” They do not intend to ask you about prison, but there you are, faced with a challenge. You will have to decide how you want to handle these challenges. The Fair

Chance Act has provided many opportunities, but explaining where you have been is still challenging for those who have been in prison for decades. The most important thing is to take time to think through how you

Yes, there are obstacles. But we found that once people had their documents they were hired within weeks. The motivation and drive to get a job led to overcoming every obstacle.

want to handle these situations, so you are aware and ready for that question if it comes up. This is a good topic to discuss with those who have been released before you to see what choices people have made and how it worked out. Also, we encourage you to role-play your answers to interview questions where you might have to directly or indirectly address your incarceration in questions such as, “Tell me about your most recent job.”

However you decide to handle the situation, the message is that you committed a crime many years ago. You want to emphasize the changes you have made since then and your goals for the future, including the value you would provide to the employer. What you say about the crime itself should be as brief as possible.

Some people have managed to talk about their background, and others dodged it completely. One story I heard over and over was that the person interviewing them had spent time in prison, or a family member had, so they were more accepting than expected. Some people value the opportunity to give someone a second chance.

From Challenge to Change, M.B. shares his story:

“I spent the last years, from 2011 until I was released in 2018, as an optician, so I’ve been through auto body and paint before a couple of different other trades and stuff like that, but then I got into PIA, the Prison Industry Authority, and was an optician, so I did that for seven years. I got certified in it, had all the credentials for the customer service specialist, and the certification, so that was what I was planning on doing when I came home and then actually tried to pursue it and it didn’t work out. I applied at a place called Warby Parker, a young, chic type of place. They made their own lenses. They made their own frames. Everything was cost efficient for the public, a really nice company to work for. When I checked into them they

did company outings, softball, volleyball, different things like that, picnics. So I'm, like, okay, yeah, this would be a nice, cool company to work for. You know, young and hip, okay, yeah, a start-up. The interview went well until I brought the prison thing up based on a question that I was asked, probably prematurely, and this was in, like, the downtown San Francisco area, real ritzy part of downtown. And so, you know, I can see her mood change after I mentioned the prison with my training and where I was at the last seven years working, and she was, like, real cordial, but I can see the demeanor change, and so never received a call back, so I knew what was up. I tried to interview at another Warby Parker but they said since I had an application on file, the previous one, there's nothing they could do about it until months after and so, for me it was, like, a real blow mentally, emotionally, because I was, like, yeah, I'm going to get this job. I was really into what I knew that I was, my credentials was gonna have me in the door and just the whole prison thing, and I was, like, okay, so this is what I'm going to experience. This is, that segment, where you're, like, an outcast, but it was about picking myself up, not letting it get me down. And I did, and I've had several other jobs since then, and I've worked my way up, to the good paying job that I have now, part of the safety action committee at the job where I am now. I'm actually the chairperson of the incident investigations committee, so I've pretty much worked my way up through the ranks in a short time where I'm really respected at the job I am now, but it's just a thing of, if your mind is set on doing a certain thing because this is what you have your credentials in, pursue it for sure and if it doesn't work out, don't be afraid to move on to something else or continue to try that different field using different avenues. Try to reach out to the community's different resources that are available, because there are a bunch of resources available and that's how I actually worked my way through three or four jobs to get where I'm at now, actually making drywall at a really good company with locations throughout the country, and I can do lateral transfers to any of those states or cities throughout the country."

Filling Out Job Applications

The employer's first impression of you and your skills comes from your job application. A well-written application can help decide if the employer calls you for an interview. It's really important to fill out the application completely and correctly, because it's your chance to show your skills, abilities, and work experience. You will need to fill out online applications for jobs you find on job boards, company websites, or even after meeting someone at

a job fair or workplace. If you find a job in person, you might be asked to fill out the application there. Some jobs require a resume first, but will also ask you to fill out an application later, either in person or online.

Some job applications, like the one we provided as an example, ask how much you made at your last job. This can be tricky because they're not asking if you were in prison, but if you list what you were paid for a prison job, it might confuse the employer. Many people decide to be upfront and honest with employers, and they still find success in getting jobs.

Be prepared – When filling out a job application, come ready. Bring a completed sample application, your resume, a list of references, your Social Security card, and your California ID or Driver's License (or other documents from the I-9 form, which you can find in the Appendix).

1. Sample Application

Please use the application form below to complete a sample application. Collecting this information while you are still incarcerated will make the process much smoother.

Standard Application for Employment

It is our policy to comply with all applicable state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination in employment based on race, age, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability or other protected classifications.

Please carefully read and answer all questions. You will not be considered for employment if you fail to completely answer all the questions on this application. You may attach a résumé, but all questions must be answered.

“Employer”	Position applying for
------------	-----------------------

PERSONAL DATA

Name (last, first, middle)			
Street Address and/or Mailing Address	City	State	Zip
Home Telephone Number	Business Telephone Number	Cellular Telephone Number	
Date you can start work	Salary Desired	Do you have a High School Diploma or GED? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

POSITION INFORMATION Check all that you are willing to work

Hours: Full Time <input type="checkbox"/> Part Time <input type="checkbox"/>	Days <input type="checkbox"/> Evenings <input type="checkbox"/>	Swing <input type="checkbox"/> Graveyard <input type="checkbox"/> Weekends <input type="checkbox"/>	Status: Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary <input type="checkbox"/>
Are you authorized to work in the U.S. on an unrestricted basis?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Have you been told the essential functions of the job or have you been viewed a copy of the job description listing the essential functions of the job? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Can you perform these essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

QUALIFICATIONS Please list any education or training you feel relates to the position applied for that would help you perform the work, such as schools, colleges, degrees, vocational or technical programs, and military training.

	School Name	Degree	Address/City/State
School			
School			
Other			

SPECIAL SKILLS List any special skills or experience that you feel would help you in the position that you are applying for (leadership, organizations/teams, etc.)

--

REFERENCES Please list three professional references not related to you, with full name, address, phone number, and relationship. If you don't have three professional references, then list personal, unrelated references.

Name	Address/City/State	Phone	Relationship

WORK HISTORY Start with your present or most recent employment and work back. Use separate sheet if necessary. (INCLUDE PAID AND UNPAID POSITIONS)		
Job Title #1	Start Date (mo/day/yr)	End Date (mo/day/yr)
Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Phone Number
City	State	Zip
Duties:		
Reason for Leaving	Starting Salary	Ending Salary

May we contact your present employer? Yes No N/A

Job Title #2	Start Date (mo/day/yr)	End Date (mo/day/yr)
Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Phone Number
City	State	Zip
Duties:		
Reason for Leaving	Starting Salary	Ending Salary

Job Title #3	Start Date (mo/day/yr)	End Date (mo/day/yr)
Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Phone Number
City	State	Zip
Duties:		
Reason for Leaving	Starting Salary	Ending Salary

Job Title #4	Start Date (mo/day/yr)	End Date (mo/day/yr)
Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Phone Number
City	State	Zip
Duties:		
Reason for Leaving	Starting Salary	Ending Salary

I certify that the facts set forth in this Application for Employment are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that if I am employed, false statements, omissions or misrepresentations may result in my dismissal. I authorize the Employer to make an investigation of any of the facts set forth in this application and release the Employer from any liability. The employer may contact any listed references on this application.

I acknowledge and understand that the company is an "at will" employer. Therefore, any employee (regular, temporary, or other type of category employee) may resign at any time, just as the employer may terminate the employment relationship with any employee at any time, with or without cause, with or without notice to the other party.

Applicant Signature

Date

P. Writing a Cover Letter

When you apply for a job, some employers will ask for something called a **cover letter**. A cover letter is a short letter that you send with your job application or résumé. It's your chance to introduce yourself, explain why you're a good fit for the job, and show a little more about who you are.

Even if a cover letter is **not requested or required for a particular job**, it's a good idea to write one. A strong cover letter can help you **stand out** from other people applying for the same job. It shows the employer that you're serious, professional, and ready to work. It also gives you a chance to share a little more about your skills, experience, and motivation — especially things that may not be obvious from your résumé alone.

In the next section, we'll walk you through how to write a simple, strong cover letter step-by-step.

The following are tips for writing an effective cover letter:

- ▶ Personalize the letter whenever possible: Address your letter to the individual responsible for filling the position. Use their full name if you know it (e.g., “Dear Alex Smith” or “Dear Jordan Johnson”). If you don't know their name, write “Dear Human Resources Manager” or “Dear Hiring Manager.”
- ▶ Have someone you trust (partner, staff, relative, friend, employment counselor) proofread your cover letter. It would be great if you could have someone correct any typos (grammatical or spelling errors). If you can access a computer and feel comfortable using it, a free program called Grammarly will check your spelling and grammar. It isn't 100% perfect, but it can be a big help.



- ▶ Write the letter in your own words so that it sounds natural.
 - ▶ Follow the rules of layout and format of a standard business letter (See below).
 - ▶ Describe your skills and abilities as they relate to the specific job. Give some good examples that describe what you can offer the company. You can use the hard and soft skills you have identified in this chapter.
 - ▶ Keep your letter brief and to the point.
 - ▶ Close with an invitation for an interview or appointment.
-
- ▶ **Remember to tell the employer how and when they can reach you. Make sure to use a professional email. Gmail is the most common option for creating one yourself. Your email should be your name, adding numbers if needed so employers can easily recognize you. Many people like using fun or silly names for personal emails, but creating a new, professional email for job searching is a good idea. Once you get a job, you'll usually have an email connected to your employer. Besides Gmail, other email options like Outlook.com, Yahoo Mail, or iCloud Mail exist for Apple users. Be sure to remember your password and have ways to recover your account, like a phone number or backup email.**

Setting Up a Password You Can Remember

We found that many people forget the password for their Gmail or other email accounts. To help avoid this, we suggest creating a password that is easy for you to remember but hard for someone else to guess.

*Use a favorite word, place, or food — like **freight**, **beach**, or **frenchfries** — and combine it with a year that is important to you, such as the birth year of someone special (but not your own, since that would be easy for others to guess).*

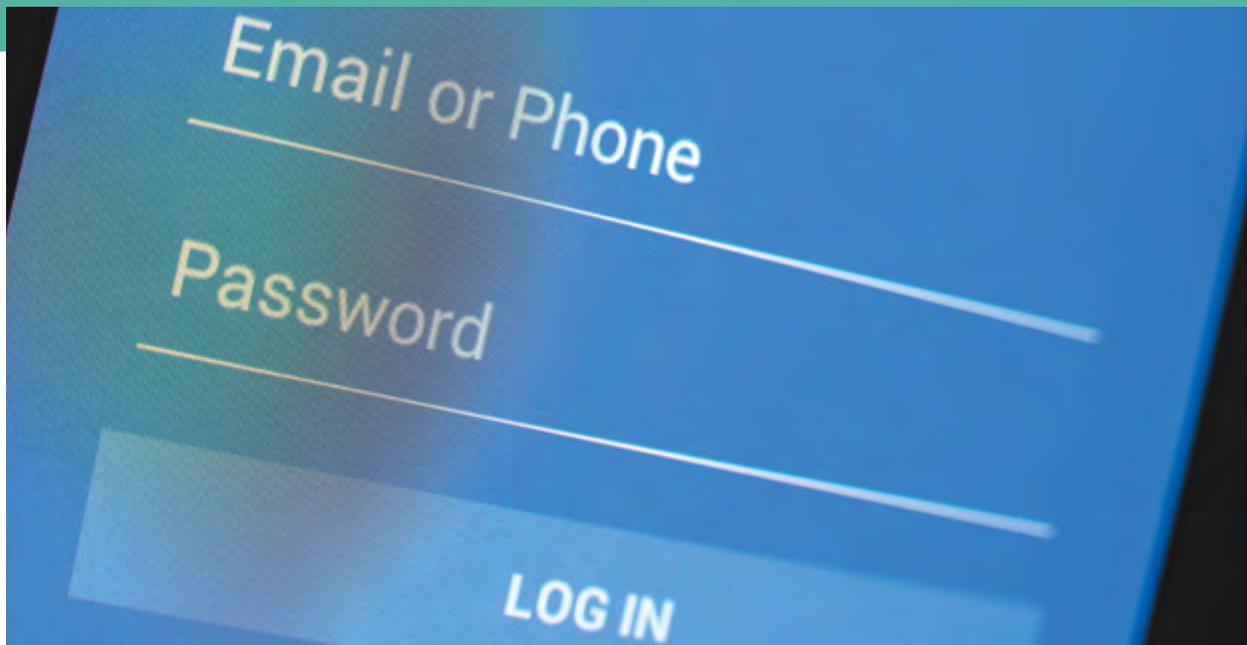
*You'll also be asked to include a special character like **?**, **!**, or **@**. It's a good idea to pick a favorite special character and use it every time.*

Make sure the word you choose is not too short — passwords usually need a minimum number of characters.

*For example: **Tiger2025!***

*Gmail also requires you to use both **capital** and **small** letters. An easy way to do this is to start your password with a capital letter.*

*Finally, when you set up your account, **add your phone number**. That way, if you ever forget your password, you'll be able to reset it easily.*



1. Cover Letter Template

Your Name
Your Address
City, State, ZIP Code
Your Phone number
Your Email address

Date

Hiring Person's Name
Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, ZIP Code

Dear [Hiring Person's Name or Human Resources Manager],

Opening Paragraph:

I am writing to apply for the [Position Name] job I saw [where you found it—job board, newspaper, referral, etc.]. I am very interested in joining [Company Name] because of [a specific reason, such as the company's values, mission, or services]. I have included my [application and/or resume] for your review.

Body Paragraph(s):

I believe I am a strong fit for this job because [share one or two of your skills or qualities that match the job description]. For example, I have [specific training, work experience, or volunteer experience], which has taught me [a skill or value that aligns with the job].

In my past work, I [describe a key accomplishment or example of how you succeeded or helped]. I am proud of my ability to [specific strength], and I am confident I can bring that same effort to your team.

Closing Paragraph:

Thank you for taking the time to review my resume [or application]. I would love the chance to meet with you and talk more about this job. You can reach me at [your phone number] or [your email address]. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,
[Your Signature (if submitting a printed copy)]
Your Name

2. Sample Cover Letter for a Janitorial Job

Darnell Johnson
768 Lively Lane
Antioch, CA 94509
Phone: 123-123-1234
Email: Darnelljohnson27@email.com

March 18, 2025

Aisha Thompson, Hiring Manager
Great Company
123 Pavers Street
Livermore, CA 94551

Dear Ms. Thompson,

I am excited to apply for the janitorial position at your company. I have nearly nine years of experience in cleaning and maintenance, working in environments that require high standards of safety, organization, and cleanliness. I am committed to keeping spaces clean and welcoming for everyone who uses them.

In my previous work, I gained extensive experience maintaining large facilities, including tasks such as floor care, waste removal, and using cleaning equipment efficiently. I developed a strong attention to detail, a reliable work ethic, and the ability to complete tasks quickly and thoroughly.

I would love the chance to bring my skills and experience to your team. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to speaking with you about how I can contribute to your company. Please feel free to contact me at the above phone number or email address.

Sincerely,

Darnell Johnson

3. Sample Cover Letter for a Drug and Alcohol Counselor Job

Juan Martinez
768 Lively Lane
Antioch, CA 94509
123-123-1234
Jmartinez353@email.com

December 18, 2024

LaShawn Jones, Hiring Manager
Hope Counseling Services
123 Pavers Street
Livermore, CA 94551

Dear Ms. Jones,

I am excited to apply for the Drug and Alcohol Counselor position at Hope Counseling Services. I have been working as an Addiction Specialist for the past 8 years and have the skills and experience to help clients on their recovery journey. I have enjoyed working with people from different backgrounds and ages, providing both one-on-one and group counseling. I also have experience in relapse prevention, crisis intervention, and creating aftercare plans.

I understand how addiction affects both the mind and body, and I care deeply about helping people overcome these challenges. I focus on building trust with my clients and use proven methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Motivational Interviewing to guide them toward success.

I am a certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor and have completed extra training in addiction counseling. I am confident that my skills and dedication to helping others make me a strong candidate for this role.

I would love to talk with you more about the position and how I can help your team. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Juan Martinez

4. Cover Letter Exercise

Think of a job you might be interested in and write a cover letter for that job. Writing a letter for a job you have already held inside or in the community may be easiest.

Share your cover letter with people you trust and review it together until you're confident it's well written and highlights your skills and abilities (both hard and soft skills). Friends and family can help check for spelling and grammar mistakes and make sure your message is clear. Once your cover letter is strong, you can update it at home to match each job you apply for.

Q. Writing a Resume



*"I created a resume. While applying for jobs or even talking to someone about potential employment, the question of, do I have a resume always came up. I quickly understood that a resume would be required in most job opportunities that were available to me. The process of creating a resume was very stressful for me. Prior to incarceration, I never held a job, and your resume is expected to cover anywhere from your last 3-10 years, with the name of your employer, an address, years employed, contact information, etc. For myself, the insecurity of being incarcerated for over 25 years and lack of real-world experience only added to the stress, so **I began to seek help on how to build a resume and provide all that was necessary while not leaving gaps. I would recommend starting in prison.** The reason is I would want to have a timeline of the jobs I've held, skills required and skills learned, and the ability to describe my daily routine/functions as they relate to the job I am applying for. Just to have those things accessible and fresh in my mind."*



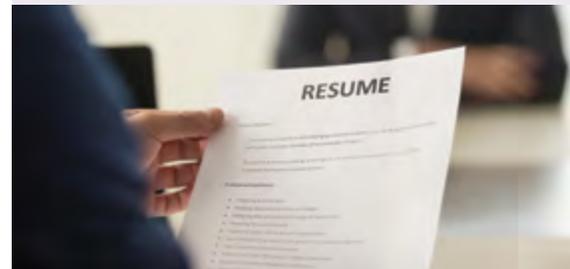
Rayvon Williamson, Building a New Legacy

Turning in a resume with an application sets you apart from others trying to get the same job. You portray yourself as prepared and professional. Plus, sometimes, you don't have to fill out an application because you can hand in a resume instead.

An attractive, well-written resume that stands out above all the others may be your best shot at getting noticed by an employer. Create a strong resume by deciding what kind of resume best shows your strengths and using action verbs at the beginning of each sentence to describe your experiences. A quality resume is clean, clear, and neat, typically one color and limited to two fonts at the most. You will find many examples of "fun" looking resumes that are colorful with many fonts (typefaces). You want the employer to focus on your experience, not fun colors.

See action verb examples later in this chapter. A few examples are:

- ▶ Cleaned
- ▶ Organized
- ▶ Repaired
- ▶ Encouraged
- ▶ Built
- ▶ Cut



- ▶ A resume should ideally be limited to one page and never longer than two.
- ▶ Type resumes or print them on a computer printer. Use 8 ½" x 11" white paper.
- ▶ Use a font that is easy to read, such as Times New Roman or Arial.
- ▶ Use bold type on all headings, such as Employment History, Skills, Education, Volunteer Experience, Activities and Awards, etc.

A font is the type of lettering you use. One good font for resumes is Arial. This sentence is written in Arial.

Another font that is good for a resume is:

Times New Roman – this sentence is written in Times New Roman.

Some fonts do not look professional, such as:

Mystical Woods -this sentence is written in Mystical woods.

Or:

Rockwell Nova - this sentence is written in Rockwell Nova.

When entering your employment history, only include jobs you have had for over a month.

- ▶ When entering your education, use your most recent school and include the dates you attended or the expected graduation date. You can include just the years that you attended the school, if that is easier than including the specific months.
- ▶ Be positive by identifying your accomplishments. Use action verbs to start sentences that describe your accomplishments and responsibilities.
- ▶ Use sentences or phrases that are short and to-the-point.
- ▶ Proofread your resume carefully and correct any errors in grammar or spelling.
- ▶ Have someone else proofread your resume before you give it to employers.
- ▶ If you have a limited employment history or no employment history, you may want to include a section titled “Activities and Awards,” which can include any sports, clubs, skills, or special awards. Prison jobs are jobs, so you will likely have an excellent work history.



- ▶ Prepare a separate sheet with the names, titles, and addresses of three or four professional references. A professional reference is someone, such as a former supervisor, who can verify your past employment and provide a positive recommendation about your work. This sheet can be taken to an interview or mailed if requested. Only provide references if requested.
- ▶ Only include section headings where you have something to include. Otherwise, remove those headings.

Things that should **not** be included on a resume:

- ▶ Photographs.
- ▶ Criminal history and other negative information.
- ▶ Any information about a disability or health-related issue.
- ▶ The reason for leaving past jobs.
- ▶ Salary history or requirements.
- ▶ The heading RESUME.
- ▶ Personal information (height, weight, health, social security number, marital status, date of birth, ethnicity/race, religion, sexual orientation, number of children, etc.).
- ▶ Pronouns – Do not use “I” or “my” in your statements.

1. Action Verbs for Resume

Accelerate	Accomplish	Achieve	Acquire
Activate	Adapt	Administer	Advise
Analyze	Approve	Arrange	Assess
Attain	Build	Budget	Calculate
Capture	Centralize	Challenge	Change
Collaborate	Collect	Combine	Communicate
Chart	Clarify	Close	Coauthor
Compile	Compute	Conduct	Consolidate
Counsel	Create	Construct	Coordinate
Decrease	Demonstrate	Design	Develop
Direct	Distribute	Document	Edit
Encourage	Enhance	Establish	Evaluate
Examine	Exceed	Expand	Explain
Facilitate	Find	Form	Formulate
Train	Write	Frame	Fulfill
Gain	Gather	Guide	Handle
Implement	Inspire	Instruct	Install
Interview	Launch	Locate	Maintain
Manage	Monitor	Motivate	Nurture
Obtain	Offer	Operate	Organize
Orient	Perceive	Present	Prevent
Process	Procure	Produce	Program
Provide	Record	Reduce	Relate
Replace	Report	Resolve	Restore
Retrieve	Review	Schedule	Serve
Supply	Support	Teach	Test

2. Janitorial Worker Resume Example

Mark Devos

100 Broadway Lane, New Parkland, CA 91010

Home: 000-000-0000 | Cell: (555) 987-1234

Email: email@example.com

Skills Summary

- *Over 20 years of experience in janitorial services and facility maintenance.*
- *Expert in operating and maintaining cleaning equipment and tools for large-scale facilities.*
- *Knowledgeable about safe handling and proper use of cleaning chemicals and materials.*
- *Skilled at managing inventory and ensuring well-stocked, functional supplies.*
- *Proven ability to lead teams, solve problems, and maintain high standards of cleanliness and safety.*
- *Detail-oriented, organized, and highly dependable in all aspects of work.*

Work Experience

Janitorial Supervisor

California State Office Complex – Sacramento, CA

June 2011 – Present

- *Supervised a janitorial team to maintain cleanliness and order across a 600,000 square foot California State Office Complex.*
- *Scheduled and assigned daily tasks, ensuring efficiency and high-quality results.*
- *Trained and mentored new staff, emphasizing safety, proper equipment use, and attention to detail.*
- *Maintained restrooms, offices, and public areas to meet rigorous health and safety standards.*
- *Oversaw the safe use and storage of cleaning chemicals and materials.*

Facility Maintenance Specialist

Golden Gate University – San Francisco, CA

June 2000 – May 2011

- *Maintained cleanliness in high-traffic areas, including classrooms, offices, and common spaces.*
- *Operated industrial cleaning machines such as floor scrubbers and carpet extractors to enhance efficiency.*
- *Managed inventory and restocked supplies, ensuring smooth daily operations.*
- *Performed light maintenance and repairs, such as repairing fixtures, minor plumbing, and electrical issues.*
- *Identified and resolved potential hazards to ensure a safe environment for staff and visitors.*

Education

High School Diploma – 2007

Golden West High School – Visalia, CA



3. Welder Resume Example

Malik Rabb

Los Angeles, CA | (213) 123-1234

mrabb@email.com

Skills Summary

Over 15 years of experience utilizing MIG, TIG, FCAW, and SMAW welding techniques to fabricate and repair steel, cast iron, and aluminum structures.

Proven ability to read blueprints and align materials for precise welding and assembly.

Certified in MIG, TIG, FCAW, and SMAW welding, with expertise in selecting the appropriate method for each project.

Efficient in fast-paced construction environments while maintaining exceptional attention to detail and safety standards.

Education

LONGFORD TECH, Los Angeles, CA

Associate of Applied Science in Welding Technology, 2002

Experience

Senior Welder

TRADELOT, Los Angeles, CA

Jul 2019 – Current

Expertly operate MIG and TIG welders to weld steel structures, selecting the appropriate technique based on project requirements and desired finishes.

Read and interpret blueprints to precisely arrange and align materials, securing them with clamps or bolts to ensure accurate welding.

Lead quality assurance by conducting tolerance tests, repairing improperly welded pieces, and filling holes using a stick welder, showcasing attention to detail and problem-solving skills.

Welder

CRANE & JENKINS, Los Angeles, CA

Aug 2005 – Jul 2019

Applied MIG welding techniques to fabricate high-strength steel frames, demonstrating precision and craftsmanship.

Conducted comprehensive strength and tolerance tests on finished products to ensure they met strict quality standards.

Repaired damaged iron and steel structures using a stick (SMAW) welder, demonstrating proficiency in welding repair and structural maintenance.

4. Resume Writing Exercise

Creating a resume now is a great way to understand the kind of information you'll need when applying for a job. Use one of the two templates below to start building your own resume.

The "Skills" section is important because it shows how your abilities match the job you want. You can list your skills in short sentences, the way we did in our examples, or use one to three words for each skill. These can come from your hard skills (specific tasks or tools you're good at) or soft skills (personality traits and how you work with others).

Below are some examples of what you might include under "Skills" or "Skills Summary" at the top of your resume.

Take your time to think about your work experience and skills as you complete your resume. Use the templates and examples provided to guide you!

We have provided more examples of how to use soft skills and hard skills below. Choose the best skills (soft and/or hard) that match the job listing you are responding to.

Here are examples of how to describe your **soft skills** in the **Skills Summary** section of your resume:

- ▶ Able to work independently and get the job done well.
- ▶ Always follow safety rules to keep the workplace safe.
- ▶ Excellent problem-solver to keep projects on track.
- ▶ Trustworthy and responsible with all tasks.
- ▶ Work well with a team of people.
- ▶ Able to listen carefully and communicate clearly.
- ▶ Neat and organized.
- ▶ Quick learner of new skills.
- ▶ Hard-working and focused on finishing tasks.
- ▶ Excellent attention to details to avoid mistakes.
- ▶ Enjoy encouraging and supporting people in reaching their goals.
- ▶ Able to follow detailed instructions and complete work on time.
- ▶ Solid time management skills.
- ▶ Known for handling challenges and staying calm under pressure.

Here are examples of how to state your **hard skills** in the **Skills Summary** section of your resume.

- ▶ Follow safety rules to keep the workplace safe.
- ▶ Good at cleaning and sanitizing to keep areas germ-free.
- ▶ Know how to use cleaning machines like vacuums and floor buffers.

- ▶ Can build custom furniture with careful measuring and cutting.
- ▶ Good at measuring and cutting materials the right way.
- ▶ Skilled in welding to put metal pieces together.
- ▶ Able to cut metal using different tools.
- ▶ Can read blueprints to understand how things are built.
- ▶ Good at organizing papers and files to keep records neat.
- ▶ Know how to answer phones politely and help people.
- ▶ Can type and organize information.
- ▶ Able to lead group talks and help people work together.
- ▶ Know how to give people support to help them grow and improve.
- ▶ Cooking and preparing food for big groups.
- ▶ Basic woodworking and repairs for buildings.
- ▶ Able to fix and take care of machines to keep them working.
- ▶ Good at working in a warehouse and keeping track of supplies.
- ▶ Sewing and working with fabrics to make things.

Here are examples of how to describe your key job duties for the **Work Experience** section of your resume:

Welder

- ▶ Cut, shaped, and welded metal pieces to build and repair structures.
- ▶ Read blueprints and followed instructions to create strong and accurate welds.
- ▶ Used safety gear and followed safety rules to prevent injuries.

Alcohol or Other Drug Counselor

- ▶ Led group discussions and one-on-one sessions to support individuals in recovery.
- ▶ Taught coping skills and relapse prevention strategies to help clients with long-term sobriety.
- ▶ Provided a judgment-free space and guidance to help clients stay on track.

Furniture Maker

- ▶ Measured, cut, and joined wood to create custom furniture pieces.
- ▶ Used hand and power tools to sand, stain, and finish furniture for a polished look.
- ▶ Followed blueprints and customer requests to build high-quality products.

Cook

- ▶ Prepared and cooked large meals while following food safety and sanitation guidelines.
- ▶ Managed kitchen supplies, kept work areas clean, and stored food properly.
- ▶ Worked in a fast-paced environment to serve meals quickly and efficiently.

Dog Trainer

- ▶ Trained dogs using positive techniques to teach good behavior.

- ▶ Helped owners understand their dogs and learn commands for better communication.
- ▶ Worked with different breeds and behaviors to improve obedience and social skills.

Laundry Worker

- ▶ Washed, dried, folded, and sorted clothes and linens for large-scale use.
- ▶ Operated industrial washing machines and dryers while following safety procedures.
- ▶ Maintained cleanliness and organization in the laundry facility.

Groundskeeper

- ▶ Mowed lawns, trimmed plants, and maintained outdoor spaces to keep the grounds clean.
- ▶ Used landscaping tools to remove weeds, rake leaves, and plant flowers or grass.
- ▶ Followed safety guidelines when operating lawnmowers and other equipment.



Clerk

- ▶ Organized and maintained records, logs, and reports for assigned departments.
- ▶ Entered data accurately and assisted in sorting and filing important documents.
- ▶ Answered questions and provided basic office support to team members.

CALPIA Worker (California Prison Industry Authority Job)

- ▶ Worked in an assigned trade, such as manufacturing, food service, or textiles, to develop job skills.
- ▶ Followed production schedules, met deadlines and quality standards.
- ▶ Operated machinery, handled materials, and completed assigned tasks carefully and efficiently.

Optical Technician

- ▶ Helped make eyeglasses by cutting, shaping, and polishing lenses.
- ▶ Used specialized tools to assemble frames and ensure proper lens fitting.
- ▶ Inspected finished eyewear for accuracy and quality before distribution.

5. Resume Template #1 Work Experience Focus

NAME

Address • City, State Zip • Phone • email@email.com

(people sometimes give their full address and other times just city and state)

SKILLS SUMMARY

- Skill #1 – List a hard skill or a soft skill that you have that would be useful for the job you want.
- Skill #2 – List another hard skill or a soft skill.
- Skill #3 – List another hard skill or a soft skill.
- Skill #4 – If you like, list one more hard skill or soft skill.

**see examples on previous pages*

WORK EXPERIENCE

Title of your job

COMPANY NAME, City, State

20xx-present

- Write 1-5 sentences that include your most important job duties.
- Start each sentence with an active verb (you can find many on the Action Verb chart).
- In each sentence, you can list the skills you have used to do the job well.

Title of your job

COMPANY NAME, City, State

20xx-20xx

- Write 1-5 sentences that include your most important job duties.
- Start each sentence with an active verb (you can find many on the Action Verb chart).
- In each sentence, you can list the skills you have used to do the job well.

**see examples on previous pages*

EDUCATION / TRAINING

Here is where you will list your education, training, and skills you have learned. If you graduated from college, list that first:

B.A., major, University, City, State, year you graduated

If you have taken college or university classes, you can list them:

Coursework toward B.A. includes: **List names of classes you have taken that are related to your job goal.**

If you are a high school graduate, list that:

Graduate, Name of High School, City, State, year you graduated

If you have received training or certifications in different skills, list them. They can include things like:

Computer skills (such as MS Word, Google, etc.)

Hard skills (Welding, Carpentry, etc.)

6. Resume Template #2 Education/Training Focus

NAME

Address

City, State Zip

phone

email@email.com

SKILLS

- Skill #1 – List a hard skill or a soft skill that you have that would be useful for the job you want.
- Skill #2 – List another hard skill or a soft skill.
- Skill #3 – List another hard skill or a soft skill.
- Skill #4 – If you like, list one more hard skill or soft skill.

**see examples on previous pages*

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Here is where you will list your education, training, and skills you have learned. If you graduated from college, list that first:

A.A. or B.A., major, College or University, City, State, year you graduated

If you have taken college or university classes, you can list them:

Coursework toward B.A. includes: **List names of classes you have taken that are related to your job goal.**

If you are a high school graduate, list that:

Graduate, Name of High School, City, State, year you graduated

If you have received training or certifications in different skills, list them. They can include things like:

Computer skills (such as MS Word, Google, etc.)

Hard skills (Welding, Carpentry, etc.)

EXPERIENCE

Company Name, City, State

Month, year – present

Job Title

- Write 1-5 sentences that include your most important job duties.
- Start each sentence with an active verb (you can find many on the Action Verb chart).
- In each sentence, you can list the skills you have used to do the job well.

Company Name, City, State

Month, year – year

Job Title

- Write 1-5 sentences that include your most important job duties.
- Start each sentence with an active verb (you can find many on the Action Verb chart).
- In each sentence, you can list the skills you have used to do the job well.

**see examples on previous pages*

Now that you have completed this chapter, you will have a list of your hard and soft skills, an application, a cover letter, and a resume. These are key tools to help you when you begin your job search, which might even start before you return home.

Some people have found jobs by working with employers while inside, through friends who have already gone home, or with the help of friends and family who have job connections. You are now ready to show them what you bring to the table.

Remember, you have valuable skills and experience to offer employers in your community. Be confident in your abilities, and don't hesitate to share your strengths. You are well on your way to success!



CHAPTER 3

Navigating the Community

A. Introduction

Navigating the community successfully takes practice. Getting comfortable with a fast-paced world full of unfamiliar things takes time. Be patient with yourself. Take time to be quiet and allow your mind to rest up from the busyness. This section aims to address the challenges we have seen so that they won't be as challenging for you. You will be more prepared, confident, and familiar with what you find in the free world.

Rayvon Williamson shares his views:

“Like most things, transitioning has its own stages and processes. Embrace the process. Remain flexible and willing to learn.”



This section will focus on three key areas: Travel, Shopping, and Going to Restaurants. You may or may not have thought much about riding a bus, shopping for groceries, or visiting a restaurant. We encourage you to prepare as much as you can before you go home so that you can tackle the free world with fewer surprises. You will still have plenty, but we hope we can help you have fewer.

People often use the terms EBT, CalFresh, and SNAP—but they're not exactly the same. Here's how they're connected:

- ▶ **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program):** This is the **NATIONAL** food assistance program run by the federal government. It helps low-income individuals and families buy groceries. Every state runs its own version of SNAP, but the funding comes from the federal government.
- ▶ **CalFresh:** This is California's name for the SNAP program. If you live in **CALIFORNIA** and qualify for food assistance, you receive SNAP benefits through CalFresh. It's the same program, just with a different name in this state.
- ▶ **EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer):** This is the **CARD** you use to access your CalFresh or SNAP benefits. It works like a debit card and can be used at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other places that accept EBT.

B. Getting Your Money and Benefits Started

In your first week or two after release, it's important to go to your closest **Social Services Office** and apply for **General Assistance**, **CalFresh**, and **Medi-Cal**.

The good news is you can apply for all three programs in the same place, which makes it easier and faster.

- ▶ **General Assistance** gives you a small amount of cash each month if you have little or no income.
- ▶ **CalFresh** (also called food stamps or EBT) helps you pay for groceries.
- ▶ **Medi-Cal** provides free or low-cost health insurance so you can get medical care and prescriptions.
- ▶ Having some income, help with food, and health coverage right away will make your transition a lot smoother and less stressful.

C. How to Get Around

Learning to travel will be key to accomplishing your goals. People often have a big "to-do list" that requires a lot of travel, but they are unfamiliar with how to get from place to place. Some people are lucky enough to have someone give them rides at first, but they will likely have to take public transit at some point. Public transit includes BART in the San Francisco Bay Area and the LA Metro in Los Angeles. In most places in California, you will find a public transit system.

Having a phone is key to public transit, as all the information you need is at your fingertips. If you don't have a phone, ask someone to help you plan your trip before you leave and write everything down. Traveling on public transit might be unfamiliar at first, but you will learn to get around and be able to accomplish your goals. Some people have only a little discomfort around travel, and others are uncomfortable with both driving and public transit a year after coming home. The goal is to enjoy your freedom fully.

Getting a Cell Phone

*A smartphone helps you stay in touch with family and friends and makes getting around easier. You may qualify for a free or discounted phone through California Lifeline. Call **1-866-272-0349** or visit **www.californialifeline.com** for more information and help. Some local places also provide free phones—ask around. Eligibility is based on income and can include being on Medi-Cal, GA, or CalFresh. Get a phone as soon as possible, and don't hesitate to ask for help learning to use it!*



“Get up, Get out, and GO! ASK FOR HELP!

One thing I can share is the feeling of paranoia and feeling self-conscious about not having the knowledge to do something new, more than anything asking for help, we have things to do! places to go! and goals to obtain!

Let's not forget the times we wished for this experience. Well, all right.

Don't be afraid to ask parole, case managers or social workers for the resources you need. They have them!”

Deyanira Cuiriz, Shared Wisdom



1. Getting Around Exercise

What memories do you have of traveling before you were incarcerated?

Share a memory of taking public transit if you have one.

What type of travel are you looking forward to when you get home?

If you find travel challenging, what coping strategies* will you use?

**You will find coping strategies in the chapter on Healthy Living, Coping Strategies, and Relapse Prevention Plans.*

2. Using Google Maps

Google Maps will help guide you as you travel around the community. The Google Maps app is available on your phone, tablet, or computer. It can help you plan your trip if you are walking, biking driving, taking public transit, or a combination of ways. It will also give you information on travel times for Lyft and Uber, which are rideshare companies. Rideshare is a service that helps



people get rides from drivers using a phone app. You can request a ride, and a nearby driver will pick you up and take you to your destination, kind of like a taxi. If you are using a computer and printer, you can print out your travel plans to use them as a handy guide. Public libraries also provide free access to computers and printers.

What is an App?

An app (short for “application”) is a program you use on a smartphone, tablet, or computer. Apps help you do things like send messages, check the weather, look for jobs, or watch videos.

You can download apps on your phone through something called an app store. This is not a physical store—it’s a program already on your phone.

Common app stores include:

- *Google Play Store (for Android phones)*
- *Apple App Store (for iPhones and iPads)*

Many apps are free and only take a few minutes to install.

Using Google Maps with Voice Activation:

Activate Voice Command:

Open the Google Maps app on your smartphone.

Use your phone's voice assistant (say "Hey Google" on Android or activate Siri on iPhone and say "Open Google Maps").

Tap the microphone icon in the Google Maps search bar if you prefer manual activation. 

Speak Your Destination:

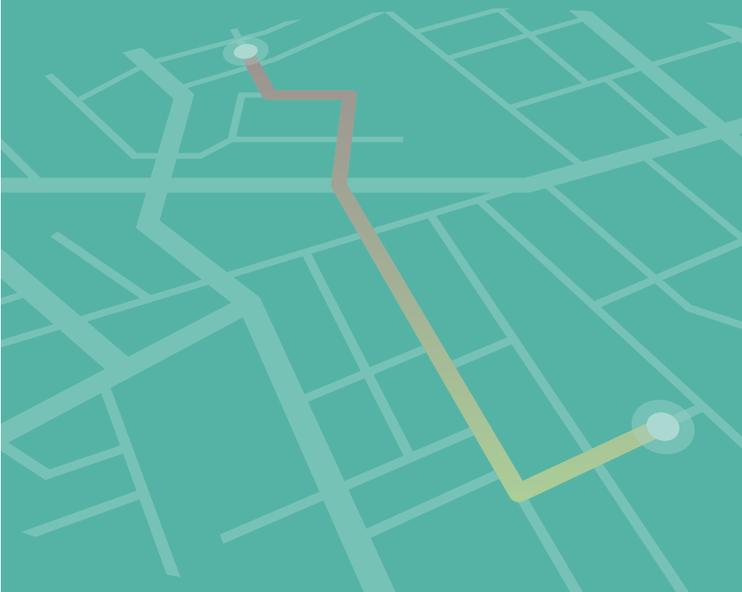
For the DMV, you could say: "Navigate to DMV at 501 85th Street, Oakland."

For a grocery store, you could say: "Take me to the nearest Safeway."

Start Navigation:

Google Maps will find the best route and provide turn-by-turn voice instructions.

Tap "Start" if navigation doesn't automatically begin.



Step 1 – Access the Google Maps app on your phone, computer, or tablet.

- ▶ On your Android phone, go to the Google Play Store and download the free app on your Android phone.
- ▶ On your iPhone, download the free app from the App Store.
- ▶ Search for "Google Maps" on your computer or tablet and open it on your screen.

Step 2 – Click on a logo for the type of transportation. There may be a combination, such as public transit and walking. Clicking on public transit will include how much walking you need to do to get to the station or bus stop. It is good to click on the details to see each step.

- ▶ The car symbol is for driving directions.
- ▶ The train is for public transit.
- ▶ The person is for walking.
- ▶ The bike is for biking.
- ▶ The plane is for flying.
- ▶ The person with their hand out and a suitcase is Lyft, Uber, or another company, and looks like this:

Step 3 – Starting location. You can enter an address or the name of the location. Where will you begin your trip?

Step 4 – Destination. You can enter an address or the name of the location. Where do you want to go?

Transportation options will be different depending on where you parole. Learning how to get around will build your confidence, open up options, and allow you to engage in the community more fully.

3. Driving

Driving may be the most familiar activity for you, but you will want to learn your way around as things have changed. Becoming familiar with bridge tolls and understanding the rules related to carpool lanes will be important. Once you come home, getting a copy of the DMV study guide might be useful to familiarize yourself with the rules of the road. There are also phone apps that have DMV study guides on them.

4. Public Transportation

Public transportation includes a wide range of options. San Francisco Bay Area transit agencies encourage riders to purchase Clipper Cards. The card costs \$3, and you add money and use it to pay for transportation. You can buy the cards and add money at BART stations, Walgreens, Whole Foods, and other locations. Once you have a card, you can add money online or on the phone. If you add money online or on the phone, you will need to use a debit or credit card, and there will be a delay in seeing the funds on your card. Having a friend or family member put money on your card online is a great way for someone to help support your transition home. Public transportation includes the following:

- ▶ San Francisco Bay Area – BART, Muni, AC Transit
- ▶ Los Angeles – LA Metro
- ▶ Passenger trains (Amtrak, Caltrain, Metrolink)
- ▶ Many other options are available based on where you live!

Deyanira Cuiriz shares tips on using the touchscreen of your smartphone:



“The first thing for those of us who have no experience with these magical touchscreen devices is to learn how to use Google on our cellular devices. This usually will appear in the search area on your screen (type in any & all information needed), such as location name and address, and if you do not know what to look for, search:



How to get a Clipper card

BART/ bus stations and schedules near me

Transportation near me

There will be a multitude of things that come up. Carefully scroll and click on the link that has the information you are looking for.

DO NOT BE OVERWHELMED. Stay focused until you find what you are looking for.”

Deyanira Cuiriz, A Journey Toward Freedom

5. Ride-Sharing

Rideshare companies offer an experience like a taxicab but with a modern flair. The most common are Lyft and Uber. To use Lyft or Uber, you need to set up an account on your phone with a debit (money from your bank account) or credit card. These services are excellent for emergencies or if you get lost, so it is a great idea if you can set it up with your card or someone else's credit or debit card. You can also buy a prepaid debit (purchased at a store) or credit card to use for this purpose.

When you open up the app, it will know where you are, so you only need to enter where you want to go (likely home), and they will come to pick

you up and take you home. You can also have them take you to the closest transit station if you know where that is. Practice using the app before you have an emergency. You can set everything up and not do the final step to order the ride to avoid spending any money unnecessarily. Ideally, someone can help you learn how to use the app. Also, a friend or family member can support your travel with their app. For example, someone can have Lyft pick you up from your transitional house and take you to the DMV. It can be expensive, so it is not something that you or anyone else would use regularly, but it is an option.

6. Travel Exercise

<p>How are you feeling about travel when you go home?</p>	<p>What skills will you use to navigate public transit?</p>
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<p>What challenges might you face?</p>	<p>What coping strategies* might help you be successful?</p>
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**You will find coping strategies in the chapter on Healthy Living, Coping Strategies, and Relapse Prevention Plans.*



“Don’t be afraid to travel.”

George Smith, who paroled in 2021, shares his experience of traveling when he returned to the community.



“Next thing up that may seem corny but necessary: DON’T BE AFRAID TO TRAVEL, dear friends. Public transportation has been complicated for many of us to navigate: BART, The Metrolink, buses, and even some LYFT and UBER rides.

- ▶ *Fear of getting lost*
- ▶ *Fear of paying to get on the bus as if it wasn’t my first time riding the bus*
- ▶ *Fear of having to ask for help*
- ▶ *Fear of all the people who seem to know I was just released*
- ▶ *Fear of COVID*
- ▶ *Fear of people and their behaviors*
- ▶ *Fear of being around so many new people*

A lot of fear must be overcome because we have somewhere to start from and because we have somewhere to be!!! We did not come home just to be home. I had somewhere to be, and this bus or that bike I rode for months was my means of getting things done, despite the discomfort. Depending on where you are paroling to, I encourage you to Google (an online search engine that will provide information in seconds) several types of transportation offered near you.

I remind myself that it is ok that I do not understand all this information immediately. I afford myself kindness and grace. I keep looking over the schedule as I continue to give myself positive affirmations and stick to



my positive self-talk. I ask myself a short series of questions, where am I leaving from, at what time, where am I going, and what time would I like to be there? I had set no important meetings today; today would be just my first time riding the bus to learn how to get to and from without missing any appointments because I may have taken the wrong bus or got off at the wrong stop. All these things can happen when you are learning how to navigate traveling for the first time after a period of incarceration. It's okay to ask for help; always remember that.

Several other components come with public transportation.

- ▶ *Ask your parole officer for immediate transportation expenses; this can be provided. Do not be discouraged from asking, ask.*
- ▶ *If you have cash, use Google to see how much the exact fare is. I found it better to have the exact amount to ride the bus; other times, I struggled with how to pay, so I have given \$5 bills for a \$2.25 ride and hurried to sit despite the driver trying to give me, what I now know is an all-day ride ticket that costs \$5.50; my anxiety was already high, and the fear of looking as if I did not know how to do something like riding the bus caused me to panic and be prideful as if money was nothing to me.*

There are also other traveling opportunities I have discovered, again using Google; try searching "Ride Share near me." When you do this, there will be another opportunity to travel with experienced drivers in their personal vehicles...and get this, they do know how to get to your destination, and you pay them to pick you up on time and drop you off on time.

Uber

Lyft

These two are the biggest and seemingly most reliable, but depending on where you parole to you will have the opportunity to look into others around you. With Uber and Lyft, you will have to download their app, which means touching their app on your screen that will ask you to install their app and follow the instructions provided for you. The good thing is that they, too, make this a relatively simple process. You will need to have a debit or credit card to set up these services, and you want to set them up in advance, not try to use them when you are ready to go."

George Smith, Voice of an Overcomer

D. Shopping

Shopping can be both exciting and overwhelming. It is wonderful to have the opportunity to choose your own food, clothing, toiletries, phones, and other items that interest you. You will be shopping for yourself soon after you come home. You will need soap, a toothbrush, other personal hygiene items, clothing, and food. Everyone comes with different levels of shopping experience. Some people shopped for their own households before they went to prison, so budgeting and shopping are quite familiar. But others may have been incarcerated since their teens and have little experience shopping for groceries, home products, and toiletries for themselves.

George Smith shares his thoughts about shopping:

“Talk about sensory overload. Here we just want to share a couple ways and possible solutions to make what should not be overwhelming less overwhelming. Shopping has been a common point and place for many people who have come home and find themselves at these large stores with an ability to purchase what they want. There are a few things that have been expressed and experienced with the store, and we would like to provide a portion of insight, if we may.

The grocery store, or stores where people shop, can be crowded, which can be a lot for some of us.

Having so many sorts and types of foods and things to choose from can cause so much anxiety.”

George Smith, Words from the Journey Forward



Some people love the opportunity to choose items beyond what is available in prison. For example, there are many more choices of bread and fresh fruits and vegetables. Others may look at the bread aisle and think, “How can there be so many bread choices? There weren’t so many choices the last time I was at a grocery store.” Some people have found so many choices challenging and had trouble making decisions. We will explore ways to approach grocery shopping to support your shopping success. We encourage you to try a few different strategies to plan for going shopping.

If you are receiving General Assistance and CalFresh, ideally all of your food will be purchased with your CalFresh dollars, leaving your General Assistance income for everything else. If you are not receiving CalFresh, there are food pantries that provide free food as well. Google “food pantries” in your city to see what is available. Many food pantries are open to

anyone who needs food. But some may ask you to sign a form saying you make under a certain amount of money, or to show proof that you are low income, like your EBT or Medi-Cal card. If you're just getting out of prison and don't have a job yet, you will definitely qualify.

1. Choosing the Right Store

Choosing the right store is key to your success. You will likely be on a tight budget, so getting a good deal on items will be important.

First, ask others for recommendations. The people who come home before you are the experts on the best places to shop in your area.

Second, Dollar stores and .99 cent stores, now becoming \$1.25, are great options for basic hygiene products, food, and other items. They are a great first step. Be careful about stores close to you; sometimes the closest store is the most expensive, such as a 7-Eleven or a corner store.

Third, find clothing stores that you can afford. Everyone has a different budget, so this will be person by person, and some people depend on free clothing from peers, friends, and family as they have no funds for clothing. Thrift stores like Goodwill, Salvation Army, and others can be great options. Target has a good variety, and it isn't outrageous if you have the budget for it. There are also online options if you are set up for that.

Fourth, you can use apps to search for items that you want. Google and Yelp will provide suggestions for stores for the specific items you are looking for. You can search for inexpensive clothing or hygiene products. You may have something special you need or want, such as art supplies, shoes, grocery items, or something you have been thinking about while inside.



Using Voice-Activated Searching on Your Phone

One way to look up things on your phone is by typing in what you're looking for. For example, you can type "grocery store near me," "clothing store near me," or "bus stop near me." Your phone knows where you are, so it will show nearby places. This can be very helpful!

But did you know you can also search without typing? You can use your voice instead! By turning on voice command, you can say things like "grocery store near me," and your phone will show you the same results.

Voice commands can do more than just search the web. You can use them to call someone in your phone contacts. For example, you can say, "Call Yanira," and your phone will start the call.

At first, your phone might not understand you perfectly, but don't worry. The more you practice, the easier it will get. Many people find voice commands super helpful when they're getting used to smartphones!



2. Picking the Best Products

First, ask others for recommendations so that you know what you will purchase when you arrive at the store, including the items, brands, and sizes.

Second, look at the store online to make decisions in a relaxed environment. Online stores often have more options, so give yourself a few options for each item.

Third, create a shopping list before you go.

Fourth, consider going with someone who has experience shopping to help you.

Fifth, allow yourself to choose any item, as it will probably be fine. You will manage with most toothbrushes, most kinds of toothpaste, etc. You may consider choosing by price.

Sixth, go to the store when it might be less crowded. Avoid going when people are getting off work from 5pm to 7pm.

Lastly, the more prepared you are, the more confident you will be at the store.



3. Shopping Exercise

What might be on your first shopping list?

What stores do you remember shopping in?

4. Steps to Using New Technology in Bathrooms

When you are out and about, you will use public restrooms and the bathrooms of friends and family. Like many things, plumbing has undergone many changes and upgrades over the past years.

When you think about moving back home, you might not think about plumbing. If you've been away for a long time, you might forget how different home plumbing is. In prison, the plumbing is built to be very strong and handle anything. So you don't have to worry about things getting stuck or causing problems.

The porcelain toilets and sinks in homes and stores throughout the community are much more fragile. Toilets can't handle a lot of toilet paper

without getting plugged up and overflowing when you flush. We encourage you to use multiple flushes if you use a lot of toilet paper. Although it is best not to create a plumbing problem, the sound of a flushed toilet is a signal to others who are waiting that you are going to wash your hands and come out of the bathroom, so be mindful that you may be creating a bit of confusion. Be patient with yourself and those around you.

In addition, the handle or “mechanism” that makes toilets flush may be different from what you are used to. In public restrooms, some toilets automatically flush so that you might be caught off guard. For others, you may have to look around for the button or lever that you use to flush.



“My name is Yanira Armster, and I did 25 years. I think that my biggest challenge coming home was plumbing. I tried to take a bath, and I didn’t know that you had to press the little button going up and I had an anxiety attack the first day that I was out in the hotel room with my sister because I didn’t even know how to use the bathtub or to use the shower



transfer from the bath to the shower. The second was washing my hands -- everything’s sensory, and I was, like, how do I wash my hands? There were no knobs to turn, it was that I literally had to put my hand under the faucet and the soap dispenser, as well, and that was a big trigger for me and challenge after being gone for so long, as well as just getting a soda from the machine. There were so many options that I had to do and I did not know what to do and it was so hard for me.”



Also, sinks may have a range of different handles or be handle-free. If you don't see a handle, the water will probably turn on if you put your hands under the faucet. Sinks, soap, and paper towel dispensers might use motion sensors. This means you need to wave your hand under them to make the water, soap, or paper towel come out.

We want to help you get ready for your transition so there are fewer surprises when you're back in the community. This way, when you face new situations, you can tell yourself, "I can handle this" or "I've got this."

George Smith shares his experience managing bathrooms with his 7-year-old niece.

"I quickly had to be reminded when my 7-year-old niece asked me as I was coming out of the bathroom for my allotted time as a free man to poo without interruption, so I sat there a little longer than perhaps the rest of the household may or may not have, who knows, I was chillin'—

"Uncle..., " she says to me, startling me first of all. "Why do you flush the toilet so many times?



I had to go to the bathroom so bad and each time you would flush the toilet uncle I thought you were coming out of the bathroom. I would stand up to use the bathroom.”

She said it so innocently, and all I could say to my 7-year-old niece whom I had never met, was “Drop and flush.”

She gave me this look of, “Did my uncle just come from Mars and no one told me?!”

She proceeds to go to the bathroom and mumbles under her breath. This 7-year-old princess.

“Waste of water makes bill paying harder!”

It was some sort of rhyme her mother had taught her to remind her to be considerate of water usage.

So, I want to use this to encourage you, to use toilet paper sparingly. You will be the one buying it now. You no longer have to drop and flush. You no longer have to create fragrant concoctions to change the smell, the store has everything we need.”

George Smith, Lessons gathered on the journey

E. Paying for Purchases

1. Paying with Cash

The easiest way to pay is to use cash, making sure you have enough to cover your purchases.

You can use a phone calculator or pen and paper to add up your groceries. If you don't have enough cash, you can always return some items, though this can be awkward. Remember to include taxes when adding up your

total. There are no taxes on most groceries, but in some places soda and candy are taxed. Also, cleaning supplies and hygiene products are taxed.

But, not all places accept cash. Some businesses stopped taking cash to avoid problems or because of COVID-19. To be ready for these situations, you can get a prepaid Visa or debit card from stores like Walgreens, Target, or Office Depot. I've run into this issue at a bakery and a parking lot near my office.

2. Using Debit, Credit, and EBT Cards

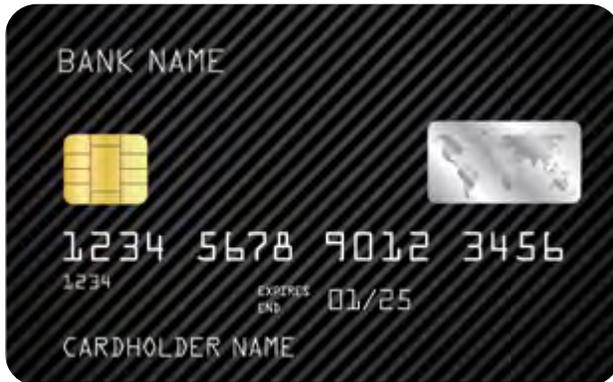
Paying with a card will be different at different stores. At some stores, you put your card in at the beginning when you are at the cashier; at others, you must wait. It is good practice to ask.

PIN stands for Personal Identification Number. PIN numbers will be important in the free world. Debit cards and EBT cards will have a 4-number PIN. Usually, you can choose your own PIN, so choose a number that you can remember. Choosing a number that is meaningful to you but not easy for someone else to guess is ideal.



Also, how you put your card into the machine can vary from store to store, so feel free to ask about that. Those of us who have spent our entire lives in the free world ask all the time, so you won't stand out if you do. Do I put my card in now or wait? If it is a card where you have a PIN, wait for the

machine to ask for the PIN. At some places, you can have a membership number and be asked for that number. When they ask for your membership number, you can say no, I don't have one. It is completely optional.



The newest technology is cards with a contactless chip or NFC (Near Field Communication) chip. To use a card with an NFC chip, tap the card on the payment machine where you see the contactless symbol. You don't need to swipe or insert it. Wait for the beep or checkmark to know your payment went through.

You might find the contactless symbol at checkout counters in stores, vending machines, and public transportation ticket machines. Look for a symbol that looks like a series of curved lines or a wave-like icon. It shows where you can tap your card to pay without swiping or inserting it.

You can still use these cards like the others and just put them into the machines. Take your time to learn about newer technology. We are all learning all the time.

3. Debit Cards



“Funny story of how I lost my first debit card:

There was a machine that you could buy bottled water from. I was thirsty and had no cash, just my debit card. I see that the machine takes cards as payment. I’m searching for the slot that you insert the debit card into to buy the bottled water. The slot that I see has lights lighting up, indicating that I insert my card into that slot. So, I do! It did not go in easy, but it went in, and I began to press the number for the water I wanted. NOTHING!!! I had put my debit card in where the cash was supposed to go and stopped the whole machine up. My card would not come back out and a line was forming. I was anxiety driven and overwhelmed. All the money I had was on that card. I canceled the card and called the number on the machine to report it.

The moral of this is we will make mistakes, and it’s totally okay. Be kind and patient with yourself. And manage any impulsivities. I knew I did not know how to use the debit card very well just yet, and also, I was impulsive, which kept me from investigating the machine further, that clearly instructed card users to swipe the card and not insert.”

George Smith, From Challenge to Change



To use a debit card, you need to put your card into the machine and then enter your PIN (Personal Identification Number). Your PIN is a 4-digit number given to you when you get the card. Different machines work in different ways—some need you to put in your card at the start, while others tell you when to do it. You might make a mistake, but that’s okay. Just

follow the instructions on the machine if it gives you any. Asking the clerk is your best bet, and we all do that even though we have been using these cards for years.

A debit card takes money directly from your bank account unless it's a prepaid debit card. To know how much money is on your card, you should keep track of it. You can call the number on the back of the card to check your balance, but be aware that pending transactions (recent purchases) might not show up right away. Also, when you deposit a check, the money won't be available until the check clears, which takes some time.

Debit cards require you to put your card in the correct slot (all machines are slightly different) and then enter your PIN (Personal Identification Number).

4. Credit Cards



Credit cards are also inserted into a slot at the cash register, either at the beginning of the transaction or when the clerk tells you. Knowing if you have enough money on the card to cover the cost is essential. Keeping track of your spending is important. You can call the number on the back, but you may have pending purchases that haven't shown up yet in your account.

5. EBT Cards

An EBT card, or Electronic Benefit Transfer card, is a special card that can help you buy food when you qualify for the government program CalFresh, often called food stamps. It works like a debit card, and money is added to it each month. You can use the card at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other places that accept EBT to buy food and groceries you need.

If you're getting out of prison, you are likely eligible for CalFresh because most people in this situation have little or no income. Here's how you can get one:

First, you'll need to apply for **CalFresh**. This can be done online, over the phone, or in person at your local **Social Services** office. It's typically easiest to go to the Social Services office when you first come home and apply for **CalFresh**, **General Assistance**, and **Medi-Cal** at the same time.

Bring anything you have that shows your name, which may be limited since you just came home. You may have documents like your **parole conditions** or a **parole ID**.

Once you apply, you'll likely have a short interview with a case worker. They will go over your information to make sure everything is correct. If you qualify, you'll get an EBT card by mail or at the office. You'll also get instructions on activating your card and setting a PIN so only you can use it.

There are also limits to what you can buy with your EBT card. CalFresh funds can be used to purchase any food produced for human consumption. Still, you cannot buy hot foods or lunch counter items prepared or heated in the store, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, vitamins, medicines, pet food, or non-food items. You can buy seeds and plants to produce food in home gardens.

If you are using a debit card, EBT card (Electronic Benefits Card/CalFresh/food stamps), credit card, or prepaid card, it is important to know how much money you have on the card. If you are using an EBT card, knowing

Hot Food Options with EBT

In some counties, you can now use your EBT card to buy hot foods — even at some fast food places!

Talk to your county case manager, check the Social Services website, or ask people you trust to find out what's available near you.

what you can pay with EBT and what is excluded is important. In the past, CalFresh (EBT) didn't cover any hot food, like deli meals or fast food. But that has changed in some places. Some counties now let you use EBT for certain hot foods, but it depends on where you live. One Popeyes in your area might take EBT, while another one doesn't. Some counties don't offer a hot food program at all. To find out what's available near you, ask around, check online, or visit your local Social Services office for a current list.

Deyanira Cuiriz shares her wisdom on managing your money:

"Quick note: Do not waste unnecessarily, save your money, don't follow the hype!

Stay humble and get only the necessary:

- ▶ *Food*
- ▶ *Hygiene*
- ▶ *Toiletries and*
- ▶ *Basic clothing.*



This will go a long way, trust me. Looking fly is the least of your priorities. (I hope you remember that people have been home the entire time. Don't try to catch up and rush into things that aren't aligned with your goals.)

Make Your Money Count

- ▶ *Look at prices; don't just give your money away.*
- ▶ *There is a calculator on your phone. USE IT.*
- ▶ *Get the government phone; it's FREE, so save your money.*

- ▶ Learn how to use Clipper cards for public transit in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Eat Well for Free

There are food banks and pantries all over; don't be above it, it's free food and guess what... it's not chow hall/canteen food. SNAP BENEFITS! (food stamps). Have someone help you fill out the application online or on your phone, (getcalfresh.org) when you get home.

Create account: E-mail and password and there will be a double authentication process, this means you will be using both your phone number and email address to prove it is really you and to log into your account.

You will need:

- ▶ Proof of identification
- ▶ Mailing address
- ▶ Your Social Security number



This is free money on a card that you can use to purchase groceries.

Grocery outlets and Dollar Tree Stores also offer better deals and are more affordable.

- ▶ Find Goodwill or Ross stores near you that are more affordable.

Please be patient with yourself when going into public grocery stores and shopping centers, "I had to leave the grocery store after someone reached over my head and grabbed an item, needed to take a minute to get some air and process, it's ok."



*There will be times where you need to set yourself apart and give yourself some grace when handling tasks. Make sure you have a to do list, write it out, use reminders on your calendar on your phone or agenda, whatever works for you. ASK a lot of questions (THE ONLY SILLY QUESTION IS THE ONE NOT ASKED). DO things one at a time and make sure whomever is helping you knows when it is getting overwhelming and you need a minute to regroup. This way you don't get frustrated and throw your hands up walking away from the task at hand. Stick with it." **Deyanira Cuiriz**, Wisdom from Someone Returning Home*

6. Navigating Checkout Lines

There are different types of checkout lines now, so you want to make sure that you are in the right line. There are express lines where you can only have a certain number of items and/or must be using a handbasket. There are self-checkout lines where you check items out independently without a cashier. A regular checkout line is easiest, where you can have as many items as you wish.



7. Shopping Practice Exercise

What are your thoughts about shopping when you come home?

What are you looking forward to?

What are you concerned about?

What coping strategies* will you use if you face emotional obstacles?

**You will find coping strategies in the chapter on Healthy Living, Coping Strategies, and Relapse Prevention Plans.*

F. Restaurants



1. Eating at Restaurants

One opportunity you will have in the community is going to a restaurant for a meal. Going to a restaurant can be a wonderful experience. You can eat foods you may have missed while in prison or try new foods you may never have eaten before. You may go to a restaurant when you first come home, or it might take a little while. We have found that sometimes friends or families want to take people out to celebrate coming home.

2. Different Types of Restaurants

What food might you want to have if you are going out? There are so many choices. Here are just a few:



Fast Food: What to Expect

Fast food might be the first restaurant you visit—places like In-N-Out, KFC, Taco Bell, McDonald’s, or Burger King. While much will feel the same, prices are now higher than they used to be. For example, if you order a Big Mac, they’ll ask if you want just the burger or the meal. A meal typically includes a beverage and fries, and you’ll be asked what size you prefer. Choices can come at you quickly, especially in the drive-thru. Meals can add up fast, so we encourage you to research menus ahead of time or go inside so you have more time to decide.



- ▶ Pizza places
- ▶ Chinese restaurants
- ▶ Soul food restaurants
- ▶ Taco trucks
- ▶ Mexican restaurants (e.g., Taquerias, Oaxacan cuisine)
- ▶ Latin American restaurants (e.g., Salvadoran Pupusas, Cuban Sandwiches, Peruvian Ceviche)
- ▶ Tex-Mex restaurants
- ▶ Brazilian BBQ places (Churrascarias)
- ▶ Argentinian steakhouses
- ▶ Puerto Rican places (e.g., Mofongo, Arroz con Gandules)
- ▶ Jamaican and Caribbean places (e.g., Jerk Chicken, Curry Goat)



- ▶ African restaurants (e.g., Ethiopian, Nigerian, Ghanaian)
- ▶ Southern comfort restaurants (e.g., Chicken and Waffles, Grits)
- ▶ Fried fish spots
- ▶ Italian restaurants
- ▶ Korean BBQ spots
- ▶ Vietnamese restaurants (e.g., Banh Mi, Pho)
- ▶ Japanese restaurants (e.g., Sushi, Ramen)
- ▶ Thai food spots
- ▶ Indian restaurants
- ▶ Middle Eastern spot (e.g., Falafel, Shawarma)
- ▶ Seafood restaurants
- ▶ Wing spots
- ▶ American diners
- ▶ Breakfast/Brunch places
- ▶ BBQ spots
- ▶ Burger joints
- ▶ Vegetarian restaurants
- ▶ Halal restaurants



We encourage you to use this section to plan your restaurant visits and get ready for the future. Some people quickly enjoy eating out and feel comfortable right away, while others may need more time to adjust to the experience.

Common challenges include not knowing what to order, feeling overwhelmed by the many questions from the wait staff, and understanding

how tipping works. Even those of us who have always lived in the free world sometimes struggle with these things.

One way to feel more confident is to look at the menu online before going to the restaurant. You might also order the same thing until you feel ready to try something new or ask the staff for a recommendation.

This section is here to guide you and help you feel more comfortable eating out. With a little preparation, you'll be ready to enjoy your restaurant experience!



“The menu came out. I was a ball of emotions staring at the list of so many options. I struggled with table etiquette. I struggled with the ordering; there was too much to choose from. Keep it safe; hamburger and fries it is.

Wait..... what's this? Seared chicken sauteed in a light white wine. Oh my gosh, I thought. Will that show up on a pee test? Sounds fancy, but I will stay away. I am on parole. Ate my burger. When I was finished, I wiped my knife off with a paper towel and almost put it back in my pocket.”

George Smith, Transformation in Progress



3. Tips for Going to Restaurants

First, you can look up restaurants online before you go. You can go to Google.com and enter the name of the restaurant. You can also go to Yelp.com and enter the name of the restaurant. If you want to get familiar with the types of restaurants, Yelp.com is also excellent. Enter the type of restaurant or food you want, and you will find it. You can even look up fast food restaurants online. Many fast food restaurants have specials that will cost less than other items, so if you are not particular about what you order, you can save money.

You can also use Yelp.com to look at neighborhoods and see what restaurants they have. Your friends and family may have good suggestions for you. Eating out can be quite expensive, but you may have something special that you have been looking forward to, or someone may take you out to eat.

Second, breakfast menus are often similar. Typically, breakfast includes eggs, bacon, sausage, omelets, huevos rancheros, nopales con huevos, pancakes, grits, chicken and waffles, and French toast. Think about what your favorite breakfast foods are.

Third, some people ask the wait staff for their recommendations. It allows you to relax and not worry about what is on the menu. This may be more comfortable if you are familiar with the type of food they have at the restaurant compared to something unfamiliar where you might end up with something you don't like.

When you visit a restaurant, the wait staff will likely ask you questions. They will start by asking you what you want to order. If you don't include a beverage with your order, they will likely ask you if you want one. For breakfast, they may ask you how you want your eggs cooked and if you want a side, such as bacon or sausage. They may also ask about a different side, such as salad, cole slaw, or potato salad for lunch or dinner. Usually, the list of choices is on the menu, so you can review the menu carefully and be prepared for the questions you will be asked. Always take a moment to breathe and think about your answers. When ordering fast food, they might ask if you want just the main item, like a burger, chicken breast, or burrito, or if you'd like a meal that includes sides and a drink. Meals often come in different sizes, so you can choose what works best for you. It's perfectly fine to tell the server that you need a few more minutes to decide. All of us in the free world take our time to decide, so you won't stand out if you do.

4. Restaurant Exercise

Share a story about eating at a restaurant.

What would you like to have as your first meal at a restaurant when you go home?

G. Navigating the Community Wrap-Up

1. Navigating the Community Summary

Navigating the community is a skill that will grow stronger every day, starting from the moment you step out of the prison gates. You will become more comfortable making your own decisions, shopping for what you need, and building a new life.

You'll notice that some things are still the same, like breakfast menus and Taco Bell, while other things have changed, such as newer plumbing and smartphones.

This workbook is designed to help you picture what life outside might look like and prepare you for the changes you'll encounter. Our hope is that when you see something new or different, you'll have an "aha!" moment and think, "I remember this from the workbook—now I'm ready for it!"







CHAPTER 4

Getting Your California ID in Prison

A. Introduction



The first step to getting your ID is getting your birth certificate.

When you come home, getting your birth certificate can take 1 to 3 months, so just getting your birth certificate in prison will get you closer to starting a job. It is worth the effort!

If you can secure your birth certificate and Social Security number, even better!

Your California ID will open doors to:

- ▶ Work
- ▶ Access to free food (EBT/CalFresh)*
- ▶ Immediate income (General Assistance)*
- ▶ Financial services (cashing checks, opening a bank account, etc.)

**You should be able to access EBT and General Assistance without a CAL-ID, but an ID will make it easier.*

Getting your California ID is a high priority! CDCR has a CAL-ID program allowing those who meet eligibility requirements to get their IDs before leaving prison. The program works well for those serving determinate or fixed sentences up to about 15 years in prison (there is no exact amount of time).



“Coming out of prison after 25 years and having no real-life adult experiences, I was in crisis mode when I was released. If I would have had my ID on day one, things would have been a lot smoother and less stressful. Prior to my release, I had already established contact with potential employment, but I could not move forward with the process after my release due to a lack of essential documents (i.e., ID and SS card). Obtaining my ID took longer than expected and the employment opportunity was lost.”

J.L., Voice of Experience

You may have wondered why some people seem to get IDs, and some don't.

One way to look at it is that those with shorter sentences get a copy of their old ID or a renewal.

On the other hand, those serving longer sentences or those who have never had a California Driver's License or ID need a brand new or original CAL-ID, which requires more documentation, including your Social Security number and birth certificate (the birth certificate is the most common document to prove your identity – the full list is in the Appendix).



California Senate Bill 629, Roth, 2021

Identification Cards

A bill was passed to help people with long sentences get California IDs, but it will take time for it to be in full effect.

SB 629 is a great first step to helping those serving long sentences get a California ID in prison or at least take steps in the right direction.

B. Steps to Getting Your California ID in Prison

- 1) Take all the steps you can to get an ID in prison to get as close as possible to getting one while inside or soon after you return to the community.
- 2) Order your birth certificate while you are in custody (follow directions in the Getting Your California ID in the Community chapter).
- 3) Find out your Social Security number. You only need the number, not the card, to get an ID. Review all documents you or anyone in the community might have, including legal, medical, school, or any formal records, to see if they include your Social Security number.



You will find more information in Chapter 5 – Getting Your California ID in the Community.

C. If You're Serving 10–15 Years or Less

If you will serve 10–15 years or less, have a set release date, and meet eligibility requirements, you have a good chance of getting your CAL-ID before leaving. To be eligible, you must:

- 1) Have a Social Security number.
- 2) Have been previously issued an identification card or Driver's License from the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).
- 3) Have an address, including a zip code (Institution/Parole/Probation office may be used in lieu of address of residence).

D. You're Serving a Longer Sentence

If you are serving a longer sentence, you don't meet the eligibility requirements if:

- ▶ You don't have your Social Security number.
- ▶ You were not previously issued an identification card or Driver's License.

You may also not be able to receive a California ID if:

- ▶ The DMV cannot access your records due to the length of time since you last had an ID or Driver's License. For example, if it has been 25 years, they may no longer have your records. (In this case, you may need to apply for a **new or original ID** instead of a renewal.)

E. Understanding the Current CDCR CAL-ID Program

The current CAL-ID program has been in place for many years and has become more and more effective over time. New programs take time to implement. The SB 629 program sets the groundwork for those serving long sentences to get their IDs while in prison. The process of putting this legislation into practice is a slow, step-by-step process, but it is moving forward.

See the CDCR website (cdcr.ca.gov) for information on the current CAL-ID program. It is updated regularly, so check the website for updated information.

A Warning About Identity Theft

To get your California ID, you'll need to give personal information like your Social Security number (SSN), birth certificate, and other documents. This is true both while you're in prison and after you're released.

But be careful—this information must be protected. *If someone gets your SSN, name, and birthdate, they could steal your identity and use it to open credit cards, get loans, or do other damage in your name.*

Inside prison, there is no truly safe place. *That's why it's so important to:*

- ▶ **Never leave papers with your Social Security number in your cell**—not even hidden.
- ▶ **Don't give your number to others** unless it's required and official (like CDCR staff helping with the Cal-ID program).
- ▶ *If someone outside is helping you, **make sure it's someone you trust completely** and ask them to keep your info safe.*

Tip: *If you're good at memorizing numbers, **learn your Social Security number by heart.** That way, you don't need to write it down or keep it on paper.*

The biggest risk is when your full name, birthdate, and Social Security number are together. *Try to avoid having all three written down in one place.*

Your identity is valuable. **Protect it.**

F. How SB 629 is Being Implemented

SB 629 went into effect in January 2022, so the program is still in its early stages. Four government agencies (CDCR, State of California, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Social Security Administration) must set up policies and procedures to make it work. This takes time.

What can you do?

- ▶ **Order your birth certificate as soon as you can so that you are one step closer to getting your ID in prison or when you get home.**
- ▶ **Ask family members and friends if they know your Social Security number. If you are able to get your Social Security number, carefully protect it as it cannot be used for fraudulent acts.**
- ▶ **Ask your counselor about the CAL-ID program.**

California Identification Card (CAL-ID) Program

The CAL-ID program helps some people in prison get a valid California ID before release. Having an ID makes it easier to get housing, health care, and a job once you are home.

Where it's offered:

Available at all CDCR prisons.

When you can get it:

Usually within the last 13 months before release.

Who may qualify:

No active felony holds, warrants, or detainers that could lead to more time in custody.

A Social Security Number (SSN).

Already had a California ID card or driver's license in the past.

This summary is adapted from publicly available information from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). For official details, visit the CDCR website <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/rehabilitation/calid/>





CHAPTER 5

Getting Your California ID in the Community

A. Introduction

We have learned that when people return home, they want to start working as soon as they can. To get a job, a California ID is usually needed. Knowing how to get an ID can help you get a job faster. But, some people have had to wait months to start working because they were waiting for their birth certificate, which is usually the first and perhaps the most important step in getting your California ID.



Getting your California ID will be one of your highest priorities at home. We will provide a step-by-step process for getting your California ID.

Current status of California Identification and Driver's License laws:

Currently, California IDs are only available to those who can provide proof of legal presence in the United States.

- ***But, AB 1766 (Stone), known as CAL-ID for All, was signed into law by the Governor and would allow people who are undocumented to get CAL-IDs for the first time.*** This bill would, among other things, require the department to, by ***no later than July 1, 2027***, issue a restricted identification card to an eligible applicant who is unable to submit satisfactory proof that their presence in the United States is authorized under federal law if they provide satisfactory proof of identity and California residency, as specified.
- ***AB 60 Driver's Licenses are currently available for individuals who cannot provide proof of legal presence in the United States (U.S.), but who meet California DMV requirements and can provide proof of identity and California residency.***

Your ID opens doors to many of your goals, including:

- ▶ getting a job
- ▶ access to money (cashing a check or opening a bank account)
- ▶ housing
- ▶ services you may want

B. California ID Checklist

- ▶ Fill out form.
- ▶ Provide birth certificate or legal presence document.
- ▶ Provide 2 proof of residency documents. (The law says one proof of residency document is enough, but since every DMV office is a little different, bringing two gives you the best chance of completing your appointment in one visit.)
- ▶ Provide your Social Security Number (SSN).
- ▶ Provide your true full name.



1. Different Types of IDs

There are different types of IDs, including:

- ▶ Standard IDs.
- ▶ Senior Citizen IDs (62 or older).
- ▶ Real IDs (you must present a federally compliant ID such as a passport, a military ID, or a Real ID to board a domestic flight or enter certain secure federal facilities such as military bases, federal courthouses, or other federal buildings after May 7, 2025).

Real IDs are harder to get, so this workbook will focus on the Standard and Senior IDs. Once you get settled in the community and have access to more types of documents, you can upgrade to a Real ID. We will be going through the process step by step. Since your ID is one of the things you will need to get a job, it would be good to prioritize this. If you can take any steps toward getting your ID while still inside, go for it!

The primary focus of this section is to walk you through getting all the documents and information necessary to get your California ID. It can be somewhat confusing, but we aim to make it as clear as possible.



We don't always realize how important having an ID is until we need it. F.J. shares his personal experience:

"I've learned that the importance of having an I.D. has to do with visiting my family member in the hospital. I had a brother in the hospital that's being treated for cancer. To visit him, I must have an I.D. My brother let me know that my visits, in addition to his medical treatment, have helped in improving his condition, and that means a lot to me. Without my I.D. this would not be possible."

F.J., Insight from the Journey Back

To get your California ID, you will have to go to the DMV. Going to the DMV can take hours. Making an appointment in advance may shorten the time you will spend there, so try to get an appointment within a week or two of the time you are ready to go.

Once you complete the process at the DMV, it usually takes 3-4 weeks to receive your California ID.



“I want to discuss the importance of the formerly incarcerated possessing an identification card before leaving prison. I had to learn this lesson the hard way. In 2019, after my release from prison, my sister mailed me a \$200 money order to be used for things I needed. I couldn’t cash that money order because I did not have an I.D. I had to wait 30 days after applying for my I.D. to possess one. To get my I.D., the DMV needed a notarized “Birth Certificate,” which cost me 45 dollars and an additional 15 dollars for a notary I didn’t have. Fortunately, I found someone to pay those fees for me and was able to get my I.D.”

F.J., Strength in the Struggle



C. Step-by-Step Process



Step 1 – Getting Your Birth Certificate (Proof of Identity)

The first step in getting your ID is to order your birth certificate, the most common document that serves as proof of identity for the DMV. You can see a list of other documents that will meet this requirement in Appendix B. Our focus will be on ordering your birth certificate. This can take 1 to 3 months, so if you can order it or have someone order it for you while you are still in custody, you will be on your way to getting your California ID.

If you were born in the U.S., you will need your birth certificate for your Social Security Card and California ID. It may also be needed for your employer as part of your hiring process.



“My mother and I had to collaborate to acquire my birth certificate. I had minimal family interaction and lacked the information needed to file for my birth certificate. No California ID, No Social Security Card. I only had an App called Vital Chek. I had to have two witnesses accompany me to get the Vital Chek (Birth Certificate Form) notarized. Two employees of the transitional house I lived in had to attest I was in fact who I said I was. It was initially rejected. Someone signed in the wrong spot. More money, let me hope that these two guys were available to take me again. I felt embarrassed. The clerk needed my only form of ID, my CDCR ID Card that had this number and my name, picture, and my reality on it: This man has just been released – watch him!”



George Smith, Lessons from Life After Prison

We suggest finding out if anyone at home has your original birth certificate so you don't have to order a new one.

Ordering a birth certificate

You can order it:

- ▶ Online
- ▶ By mail
- ▶ In person



Order online or by mail:

You can order your birth certificate from:

- ▶ The state in which you were born (for example, the State of California)
- ▶ The county in which you were born (for example, Alameda County or Los Angeles County)
- ▶ A private company (usually online only)

Whichever way you choose, **be sure to ask for a Certified copy.**

You or a family member can go in person to request your birth certificate:

- ▶ If you go in person, download the form in advance and fill it out.
- ▶ If a family member is going, download the form to see which family members can receive the certificate in your state or county. This information will be on the application form.

1. Birth Certificate Application Form

The list below shows the information you'll need to fill out most birth certificate application forms. It outlines what you'll find on the form. Some of this information, like your name, you'll need to provide, while other parts, like the fact that law enforcement can sometimes get your birth certificate, may not apply to you. Each form might vary a bit, but this will give you an idea of the most common questions and information you'll encounter on a birth certificate application.

A notary (or notary public) is a person approved by the state to watch people sign important papers and make sure the signatures are real. They check your ID and help stop fraud.

If you're coming home from prison, you might need a notary to:

- ▶ *Get a copy of your birth certificate.*
- ▶ *Fill out forms for housing or benefits.*
- ▶ *Sign legal papers, like power of attorney or support letters.*

You can often find notaries at banks, libraries or postal stores.

If you go to a notary in the community, you will most likely need to bring 2 people who have current IDs and are willing to swear that you are the person who is requesting the birth certificate.

You can use Google, Yelp, or a local UPS store to find a notary. Most UPS stores have notaries.

Also, most prisons have notaries.



Applying for Your Birth Certificate

Most people will be getting **their own birth certificate**, or having a family member or attorney help. Here's what you need to know:

Who can apply?

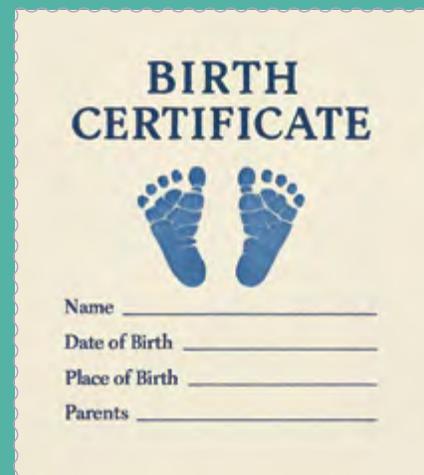
- ▶ **You** (the person named on the birth certificate)
- ▶ **Close family:** parent, legal guardian, child, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, spouse, or domestic partner
- ▶ **Your attorney** (a lawyer working on your behalf)

What information do you need?

- ▶ First, middle, and last name
- ▶ City and county of birth (must be in California for a California birth certificate)
- ▶ Date of birth (or approximate date if you don't know the exact day)
- ▶ Parents' first and last names at birth (both parents if listed)

What else do you send in?

- ▶ A check or money order (for the fee)
- ▶ A notarized sworn statement (most applications require this)
- ▶ The number of copies you want (usually 1–2 is enough)
- ▶ Request for a certified copy (this is the legal version you'll need for ID)



Sections That Probably Don't Apply to You

These parts are often listed on the form but usually are not relevant for someone just requesting their own birth certificate (or having family/attorney help). They are included here so you know what they mean in case you see them:

- ▶ *Adoption agencies or court orders – applies if adoption is involved or a judge has ordered access.*
- ▶ *Law enforcement or government agencies – applies if a government office or police need a record for official business.*
- ▶ *Power of attorney or estate executor – applies if someone else is legally acting for you or for your estate after death.*

You can ask a close family member to secure your birth certificate after you are paroled. A family member may be able to get it more quickly as they will have the information needed and an official identification such as a California Driver's License.

2. Websites for Birth Certificates

The following are examples of public agencies where you can order your birth certificate online or go to these websites to download the forms.

State of California

State of California Vital Records

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/birthdeathmar/Pages/Certified-CopiesofBirthDeathRecords.aspx>

Alameda County

<https://alamedaca.gov/city-clerk/birth-death-marriage-certificates>

San Francisco

<https://www.sfdph.org/dph/comupg/records/vitalRec/>

Contra Costa County

<https://www.contracostavote.gov/countyclerk/birth-certificate-ordering-page/birth-records-request/birth-online-request/>

Los Angeles County

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/dca/dcabirth.htm>



3. Who Can Help You Get Your Birth Certificate – Exercise

Does someone in the community have your birth certificate?

Can someone in prison help you apply for your birth certificate?

Once you are home, what will your first steps be to apply for your birth certificate?

Step 2 – Getting Your Social Security Card

To get your California ID, you only need your Social Security Number (not your card), so if there is any way to find that number, it will save you a lot of time and energy.

- ▶ Having your Social Security Card will be useful in getting a job, but getting the card will be easier if you have your California ID first.
- ▶ Usually, everyone is issued a Social Security Card at some point in their lives, so the process of getting your card now is referred to as “Ordering a Replacement Card.”



You might find all these lists confusing. They are!

If you had a Social Security Card:

To get a replacement for your Social Security Card, we suggest you get your birth certificate and a Medi-Cal card or a Certified copy of a medical record.

*Since a Medi-Cal card and certified medical record are documents they “may” accept, it is good to go in person to discuss other options. You can request a **certified** medical record from the records department at a health clinic, doctor’s office or hospital.*

If you have a California ID and a birth certificate, you will be set.

E.S. recounts his journey and insights:

“When I was released from prison in 2017 – having been incarcerated from age 17 to 50 – I had no idea of the trouble I would face regarding the matter of my Social Security number. The number my mother gave me turned out to belong to my nephew, and it appeared that either I never received one or I never was aware of it. Thus began a long and frustrating process of attempting to obtain a SS number. I am thankful for the assistance I received in eventually getting this number (without which I could not get a job), and I would strongly advise anyone coming up for release to do what you can now to make sure you have that number, and avoid this unexpected challenge I faced. On a positive note, because I initially could not get employment, parole required that I fill that time with volunteer work (I helped bag food for the needy at a food bank), an activity that helped to build my resume as well as proving to be personally rewarding.”

You can get the form to order a replacement card at <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>

You will need 3 types of documents to get your Social Security Card:

- ▶ Evidence of age
- ▶ Evidence of identity
- ▶ Evidence of citizenship



The information below is from Form SS-5 (1002021) UF of the application for a duplicate Social Security Card. You will find complete information in the Appendix.

The following are examples of the types of documents you must provide with your application and are not all inclusive. Call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 if you need help providing these docu-

ments. This is the main phone number for the Social Security Administration, so it's a good one to have for any questions or help you may need.



Social Security includes in their application that their list is not all inclusive, meaning that they are examples, but you can use other documents as well. You can call them and explain your situation. They can help you figure out how to get the right documents. You may also get good tips from people who have recently come home.

1. Providing Evidence of Age

In general, you must provide your birth certificate. In some situations, they may accept another document that shows your age. Some other documents they may accept are:

- ▶ U.S. hospital record of your birth (created at the time of your birth)
- ▶ Religious record made before age five that shows your date of birth
- ▶ U.S. passport/passport card

2. Providing Evidence of Identity

You must provide current, unexpired evidence of identity in your legal name. Your legal name will be shown on the Social Security Card. Generally, they prefer to see documents issued in the U.S. The documents you submit to establish identity must show your legal name AND provide bi-

ographical information (your date of birth, age, or parents' names) and/or physical information (photograph or physical description: height, eye and hair color, etc.). If you send a photo identity document and do not appear in person, the document must show your biographical information (e.g., your date of birth, age, or parents' names). Generally, documents without an expiration date should have been issued within the past two years for adults and within the past four years for children.

As you may have noticed, we have a chicken and egg situation. The DMV wants your Social Security number so you can get your California ID, and the Social Security Administration wants to see your CAL-ID to give you a duplicate Social Security card.



They are both trying to protect you, your privacy, and your identity, but it does create obstacles.

We suggest you collect as many documents as possible to prove who you are and see if they will accept them.

Some documents you may have access to but are not mentioned include your court papers, your prison ID, and Parole conditions, and you can request a Parole ID from your parole agent that has a photo and other key information.

As proof of identity, you must provide a:

- ▶ U.S. Driver's License; or
- ▶ U.S. State-issued non-driver identity (California ID) card; or
- ▶ U.S. passport

If you do not have these documents, they **may** also accept other documents that show your legal name and biographical information, such as:

- ▶ Employer identification card
- ▶ School identification card/record
- ▶ Health insurance card (not Medicare, but **Medi-Cal** is ok)
- ▶ U.S. military identification card
- ▶ Certificate of Naturalization
- ▶ Certified copy of a medical record (clinic, doctor, or hospital)

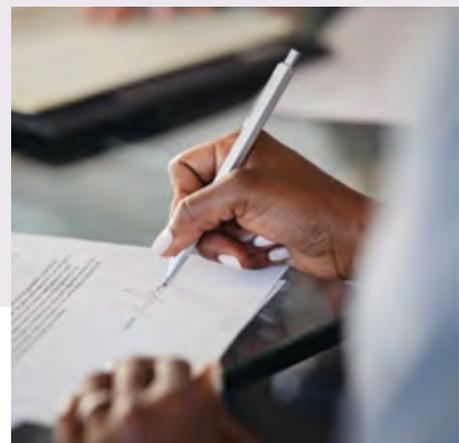
We encourage you to work on getting your Medi-Cal card and birth certificate right away!

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

3. Providing Evidence of Citizenship

The documents you may provide to prove that you are a U.S. citizen are:

- ▶ **U.S. birth certificate (this is the most common one)**
- ▶ U.S. passport/passport card
- ▶ U.S. Consular Report of Birth Abroad
- ▶ Certificate of Naturalization
- ▶ Certificate of Citizenship





“I will begin with what my experience was like and trying to obtain my identification. I guess the first hurdle or the first thing that I struggled with was really learning how necessary your identification was to access almost any type of service, be it from medical to employment or anything that would be a necessity to establish who I was in society and again gaining certain services, so what was helpful for me is actually going to the DMV and just learning about different articles of information that I would need in establishing my ID, be it a birth certificate, social security card, article of mail, even specifically, you know, a bank account or a medical record. Once I began to just learn information and become informed, that was very empowering for me, so I just began to look to other, you know, resources on how do I get things to kind of establish who I was, and then from there, the process pretty much took off once I was able to establish my identity and get my ID card. Then, getting my Social Security card was seamless while in that process, you know, because in taking care of the two, I had already filled out the information to get my birth certificate, so that was, you know, in the process of happening, so it was almost like a domino effect: once I was able to provide the information I needed for DMV to get my identification card, then going to Social Security to get my Social Security card itself with the actual number on it, and having my birth certificate. Then jobs, opportunity, Medical Services, everything else then just began to open up for me.”



Rayvon Williamson, Perspective from Life After Prison

Step 3 – Getting Residency Documents

Residency documents show that you are a California resident by showing a specific address in California. You have a few choices regarding how to get the two residency documents. The law says one document is enough, but since every DMV office is a little different, bringing two gives you the best chance of completing your appointment in one visit.

DMV requirements:

“Letter on letterhead from a homeless shelter, shelter for abused women, nonprofit entity, employer, faith-based organization, or government within the U.S. attesting that the applicant is a resident of California.”

If your parole agent provides you with a fee waiver for your CAL-ID, the DMV may accept it as proof of residency from a government agency. The fee waiver also allows you to get your ID for free. Talk to others who were released before you—they may know the best way to get a residency document in your area.

The two most common options are:

- 1) Parole Agent – Ask your parole agent for an official letter or document with **your first and last name and address.**
- 2) Transitional Housing – For your second document, it is likely that your transitional housing provider, if they are a nonprofit, can provide you with a letter. **It should include your first and last name and your address.**

Other options:

- 3) You can also get a letter from a faith-based organization if you are connected with one.
- 4) You may also be able to use a medical document if you have one.

You may have noticed that medical documents and a Medi-Cal card have been mentioned multiple times. Going to Social Services or a local clinic to sign up for Medi-Cal and getting your card sooner rather than later will help you in getting the documents you need to start work. Taking care of your medical needs is also extremely important.

The Appendix lists more options and tells you more about the residency document requirement. You may want to ask others in your transitional housing program what they have used, as each area might be slightly different.

Step 4 – Paying Fees or Getting a Waiver

Since putting your documents together will take time, you will have time to figure out how to pay for your ID if necessary. Many Parole Agents can provide you with a fee waiver form that you give to the DMV, allowing you to get your CAL-ID (but not your Driver's License) for free. Giving them plenty of time to get that to you is a good idea!

If you have to pay for your ID, you can use your General Assistance funds or ask a friend or family member to help.

Fees:

- ▶ Senior ID (62 or older with proof) = Free
- ▶ Regular ID = \$35
- ▶ Fee waiver from Parole Agent = Free

**Fees may increase, so check the DMV website or ask someone who went to the DMV recently what the fee is now. www.dmv.ca.gov*

The DMV takes a wide range of payment options:

- ▶ Credit card
- ▶ Debit card
- ▶ Cash
- ▶ Personal (preprinted) check
- ▶ Cashier's check
- ▶ Postal money order



Step 5 – Choosing a DMV

You have some choices as to how to find the closest DMV, including:

- ▶ Asking friends, family, and staff where you live.
- ▶ Calling 1-800-777-0133.
- ▶ Using Google to search for “DMV near me.”
- ▶ Go to the DMV website, www.dmv.ca.gov, where you will see locations on the top right side of the website. Click on “locations” and enter the city or zip code of where you are living to find the DMV closest to you.

Step 6 – Planning Your DMV Visit





“You have no birth certificate, no California I.D. history, no driver’s license history—yes, you can recite your social security number, but no social security card to acquire your Identification in the first place... ‘WHO ARE YOU SIR? – Oh, I see... and the prison didn’t send you with that yellow form? Come back when you get that yellow form,’ the DMV employee said to me. I left feeling alone and frustrated, what yellow form, and who would I contact for that nameless yellow form?”

George Smith, Stories of Perseverance

** The yellow form is a fee waiver that you can request from your parole agent that will allow you to get your CAL-ID for free at the DMV.*

Every DMV will be different; some will be more crowded than others, but it is good to be prepared for a busy DMV with long lines.

Typical DMVs have different counters for each part of the process. For example, one person may review your documents, another may take your money, and another will take your photo. For each step, you will be waiting in another line. This day is important in your journey, as it opens the doors to employment, but your patience is necessary.

We suggest you plan to be at the DMV for many hours. To make that easier, bring food, water, and a book or something entertaining that you can do on your phone that is quiet. Some people make an appointment, which may shorten the time, but you should still prepare to be at the DMV for hours.



CHAPTER 6

Healthy Living, Coping Strategies, and Relapse Prevention Plans

A. Introduction



“Shake it OFF! NO ONE KNOWS!!!

I used to look around and ask myself, “Do they know that I just came home?” You are entirely in your head. This will come up several times, this can hinder your progress.”

Deyanira Cuiriz, Transformation in Progress



This chapter focuses on three key areas: **Healthy Living, Coping Strategies,** and **Relapse Prevention Plans.**

Healthy Living

Healthy living strategies help us build our emotional strength, or “emotional muscles,” so we can live fuller lives. This includes finding more joy, achieving goals, and handling challenges more effectively. We call this a **daily practice** — a set of habits that can reduce stress, prevent feeling overwhelmed, and even avoid relapses or other negative outcomes. Whether you are starting new habits or adding to ones you already have, creating a daily practice is a powerful way to support your well-being.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are tools to use when facing something difficult. These are just as important as healthy living habits because they help us achieve better outcomes when life gets tough. For example:

- ▶ **Before a Job Interview:** Feeling nervous is normal, but using breathing techniques can help you calm down and perform better.

- ▶ **During a Conflict:** If you're having a disagreement, staying calm by using techniques like the **5 Senses Grounding Exercise** (explained in the next section) can help you respond more kindly and effectively.

By using coping strategies, you can navigate challenges with greater ease and control.

Relapse Prevention Plans

Relapse Prevention Plans are formal strategies designed to help you prepare for the challenges you might face after coming home. Planning ahead is essential because many people are surprised by the struggles they encounter when they return to the community.

- ▶ **Substance Use:** Even if you haven't used drugs or alcohol during incarceration, being back in the community might bring temptations. A plan to prevent relapse can be helpful, especially if you've had issues with substance use before.
- ▶ **Relationships:** Relationships can stir up emotions like anxiety, anger, or frustration. You might even feel awkward due to a lack of recent experience. Creating a plan to address these feelings can help you manage them more effectively when they come up.

We've provided three different plans to help you navigate potential challenges:

- 1) **Short Plan:** A quick, focused plan that can be used for any issue, such as anxiety, substances, or stress.
- 2) **Long Plan:** A more detailed plan for deeper preparation to tackle specific challenges.

3) Specialized Relationship Plan: A dedicated plan to help you prepare for the emotions and situations that may come up in relationships. This plan is described in more detail in the Building Relationships chapter.

By combining healthy living and coping strategies, you can create a strong foundation for your Relapse Prevention Plans and set yourself up for success. Planning ahead can make all the difference, helping you face life's challenges with confidence and resilience.



Use the beach photo for guided visualization, meditation, or to take your mind to a new place.



B. Healthy Living Tips

1. Introduction

There are many ways to develop a healthy lifestyle. We will present some of them. We are aware that some of these are difficult in custody. Incorporating these healthy living activities into your daily routine allows you to build emotional muscles that give you the emotional strength to take on challenging situations. We suggest you find the activities that work for you and develop a daily plan. You may want to include this in your parole plan.

2. Self-Care

A key to healthy living is taking care of yourself. There are many ways to do this. Here are just a few:

- ▶ **Breathing exercises:** Spend a few minutes practicing deep, slow breaths to relax your mind and body.
- ▶ **Meditation:** Sit quietly and focus on your breathing or use a guided meditation to calm your thoughts.
- ▶ **Guided visualization:** Imagine a peaceful scene or visualize yourself achieving your goals to inspire and motivate you.
- ▶ **Prayer or spiritual reflection:** Spend time connecting with your faith or reflecting on your values.
- ▶ **Yoga:** Practice simple yoga poses or stretches to help your body feel stronger and more flexible.
- ▶ **Connecting with someone who makes you feel supported:** Call, write to, or spend time with someone who lifts your spirits and understands you.

- ▶ **Reading a book that brings your life meaning:** Choose a book that inspires you, such as a spiritual or motivational book.
- ▶ **Reading the AA Big Book or a self-help book:** Explore resources that provide tools and encouragement for personal growth.
- ▶ **Journaling:** Write down your thoughts, emotions, or goals to reflect and process your day.
- ▶ **Stretching:** Do simple stretches to release tension and keep your body feeling good.
- ▶ **Walking:** Take a short walk to clear your mind, enjoy fresh air, and get some light exercise.
- ▶ **Listening to uplifting or calming music:** Play music that helps you feel relaxed or energized.
- ▶ **Practicing gratitude:** Reflect on things you're thankful for to boost your mood and outlook.
- ▶ **Drawing or coloring:** Use art to express yourself, relax, or simply have fun.
- ▶ **Learning something new:** Read about a new topic or practice a skill that interests you.
- ▶ **Acts of kindness:** Do something nice for someone else, like writing a kind note or helping out.
- ▶ **Setting daily goals:** Choose a small, achievable goal to focus on for the day.
- ▶ **Physical exercise:** Do simple exercises like push-ups, sit-ups, or stretching to stay active.
- ▶ **Affirmations:** Speak or write positive statements about yourself and your future to build confidence.

- ▶ **Mindfulness practices:** Focus on the present moment by observing your surroundings or your senses.
- ▶ **Nature connection:** Spend time outdoors or look at photos of nature to feel calm and refreshed.
- ▶ **Planning your day:** Create a simple schedule to organize your time and feel more focused.
- ▶ **Getting a therapist in prison or when you get home:** Talking to a professional who has the skills to help you gain a deeper understanding of yourself and work through challenges you may experience.
- ▶ **Sleep:** Getting 7-8 hours of sleep per night has been proven to help you move forward in your daily life with greater energy, focus, and success.
- ▶ **Diet:** Focus on eating fresh, unprocessed foods, staying hydrated with plenty of water, and avoiding caffeine. While options may be limited in prison, you'll have more opportunities to make healthy choices once you're home.

3. Healthy Living Strategies Exercise

What are 2 healthy living strategies that you are already using regularly?

1.

2.

4. Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises are healthy for most people. However, if you have any health issues, check with your doctor first. For everyone, start slowly with 20 seconds and slowly build up. If you don't feel right, stop.

Breathing exercises are a key self-care strategy. There are many types of breathing exercises. We hope you can find one you like and add it to your daily routine.

During periods of anxiety, the body triggers a set of symptoms called the **stress response**. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid, heart rate increases, and muscles become tense. In opposition to the stress response is the **relaxation response**. Breathing becomes deeper and slower, and the symptoms of anxiety fade away. Deep breathing triggers the relaxation response.

i. 4-7-8 Breathing Method

The 4-7-8 breathing technique is based on pranayama breathing exercises. Pranayama is the ancient yogic practice of controlling your breath. These types of mindful breathing exercises have been shown to have many benefits for stress reduction and relaxation. Dr. Andrew Weil developed the 4-7-8 breathing technique. He calls it a "natural tranquilizer for the nervous system."

You can practice 4-7-8 breathing anywhere and at any time. When first learning, try to practice at least twice a day, but you can do it as often as you want. Only do it for four cycles in a row in the beginning. After you get used to it, you can work up to eight cycles. You may feel lightheaded at first. If this happens, stop and slowly try again later. This might not be the right technique for you.

- a) Find a comfortable place to sit with your back straight.

- b)** Place your tongue against the back of your top teeth and keep it there.
- c)** Exhale completely through your mouth around your tongue, making a whoosh sound. Purse your lips if it helps.
- d)** Close your lips and inhale through your nose for a count of four.
- e)** Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- f)** Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whooshing sound for a count of eight.
- g)** This completes one cycle. Repeat for three more cycles.

Do 4-7-8 breathing anytime you feel stressed. It will become more powerful as you use it. Practice doing it before responding to an upsetting situation and when you're having trouble sleeping.

ii. Simple Breathing Exercise

Breathing exercises can help you calm down when faced with an upsetting situation. Some upsetting situations we hear about are: getting lost, not knowing how to answer your phone, and going to the DMV. Breathing exercises can also be used daily to stay grounded, allowing you to face hard situations better. As we mentioned in the previous section on healthy living, breathing exercises are healthy for most people. However, if you have any health issues, check with your doctor. For everyone, start slowly with 20 seconds and slowly build up. If you don't feel right, stop.

Simple Breathing Exercise

- 1) Sit Comfortably:** Sit in a chair or on the floor, with your back straight and your hands resting on your lap.

- 2) **Inhale Slowly:** Breathe in deeply through your nose for a count of 4.
- 3) **Hold Your Breath:** Gently hold your breath for a count of 4.
- 4) **Exhale Slowly:** Breathe out through your mouth for a count of 4.
- 5) **Repeat:** Do this 4-5 times, or until you feel more calm.

This simple exercise helps slow your heart rate, calm your mind, and reduce stress.

Breathing exercises are a key self-care strategy and a useful coping strategy. There are many types of breathing exercises. We hope you can find one you like and add it to your daily routine.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are tools you use to handle challenging situations. The key is to have these strategies ready ahead of time, so when a tough moment comes up, you'll know what to do.

It's like having a jack and a spare tire when you get a flat tire — if you're prepared, you can fix the problem and move forward. If you're not prepared, you might find yourself stuck.

You likely already have some coping strategies that work for you. We hope this section will also help you find a few new ones to add to your toolbox.

Coping strategies are different from self-care. Coping strategies are things you use in response to something stressful that is happening or has already happened.

Self-care, on the other hand, includes daily or weekly habits that help you feel better overall and make it easier to handle tough situations when they come up.

Some activities can be used for both self-care and coping. For example, the breathing techniques listed earlier in the self-care section are useful for both.

1. Coping Strategies Exercise

Take a moment now to reflect on the strategies you already use when times get tough:

What are 2 coping strategies you already use regularly?

1.

2.

Coping strategies can help you with a variety of goals, including:

- ▶ Calming down when you feel overwhelmed.
- ▶ Reducing stress and anxiety.
- ▶ Preventing an angry outburst.
- ▶ Staying in a situation, like finishing your grocery shopping, instead of leaving due to feeling overwhelmed.
- ▶ Facing new challenges, like using public transportation for the first time.

- ▶ Communicating effectively with someone who is upsetting or triggering you.
- ▶ Managing a situation where you feel disrespected, without creating a bad outcome.
- ▶ Avoiding relapse into drugs or alcohol.
- ▶ Not letting depression stop you from reaching your goals.
- ▶ Asking for help when you need it, even if you feel embarrassed or unsure.

Coping strategies can support you in many other situations and emotions. They're tools to help you handle life's challenges in the best way possible and move forward with confidence.

2. Problem-Based Coping and Emotion-Based Coping

Coping strategies fall into two main categories, and understanding the difference can help you choose the best approach for each situation:

▶ **Problem-Based Coping**

Problem-based coping focuses on changing the situation that is causing stress. This type of coping is useful when you have control over the problem and can take steps to address it directly.

- ▶ **Example:** If you are in an unhealthy relationship, ending the relationship instead of only calming your emotions may be the best way to reduce your anxiety and sadness.

▶ **Emotion-Based Coping**

Emotion-based coping focuses on managing your feelings when you can't or don't want to change the situation. This type of cop-

ing helps you handle emotions like frustration, sadness, or anger, so they don't overwhelm you.

- ▶ **Example:** If you don't like your job but can't get a new one immediately, learning to manage your emotions will help you feel more at ease.

Another way to cope is to change how you look at a situation. By changing your perspective, you can change how you feel and respond. Although this can be difficult, it is often very helpful. Here are some strategies to shift your thinking:

- ▶ **Lower your expectations:** Sometimes, expecting less can reduce stress and disappointment.
- ▶ **Ask for help:** Reaching out to others for assistance can ease your burden.
- ▶ **Take responsibility:** Owning your role in/how you affected a situation can help you feel more in control.
- ▶ **Solve problems:** Break the issue into smaller steps and work on fixing it step by step.
- ▶ **Maintain supportive relationships:** Lean on friends or family who lift you up emotionally.
- ▶ **Stay composed:** Express your emotions calmly, even when they're difficult.
- ▶ **Challenge unhelpful beliefs:** Question thoughts or ideas you've held onto that no longer serve you.
- ▶ **Change the source of stress:** Directly address what's causing the issue, if possible.

- ▶ **Create distance:** Put some space between yourself and the stressor, either physically or emotionally.

By combining problem-based and emotion-based coping strategies and learning to change your perspective, you can handle challenges in a way that leads to better outcomes and less stress.

3. Using Your Senses

Using all your senses is a way to ground yourself in any situation. This is a strategy we suggest everyone use because it is easy, quick, and can be used wherever you are. It can help you center yourself and return to what you are doing. When our thoughts upset us, getting back to our bodies will help settle us so we can take a “time out” and face the situation in a new way. Typically, what causes us stress is thinking about the past or the future, so focusing on the present will provide more peace, and we can move from the present to the next step that we need to take. Here is a 5-4-3-2-1 exercise that you can use to help you to feel more grounded and in the present moment:

Five – What are five things you see around you? Look at what is on the walls or what you see when you are outside.

Four – What four things do you hear? Can you hear a sound close to you, such as your heartbeat, or can you hear distant sounds, like cars, footsteps, or people talking? Sometimes, we must concentrate on hearing what is around us.

Three – What are three things you can feel? Can you feel your feet against the floor? Can you pick something up and feel if it is smooth or rough? Do you feel your clothing on you? Can you feel the bed or chair you are sitting on?

Two – What are two things you can smell? Sometimes, there are scents close to us; other times, we have to look around for something like toothpaste, food, or something else. If you are trying to use this technique in public or after getting home, you might want to carry mints or gum to use if necessary.

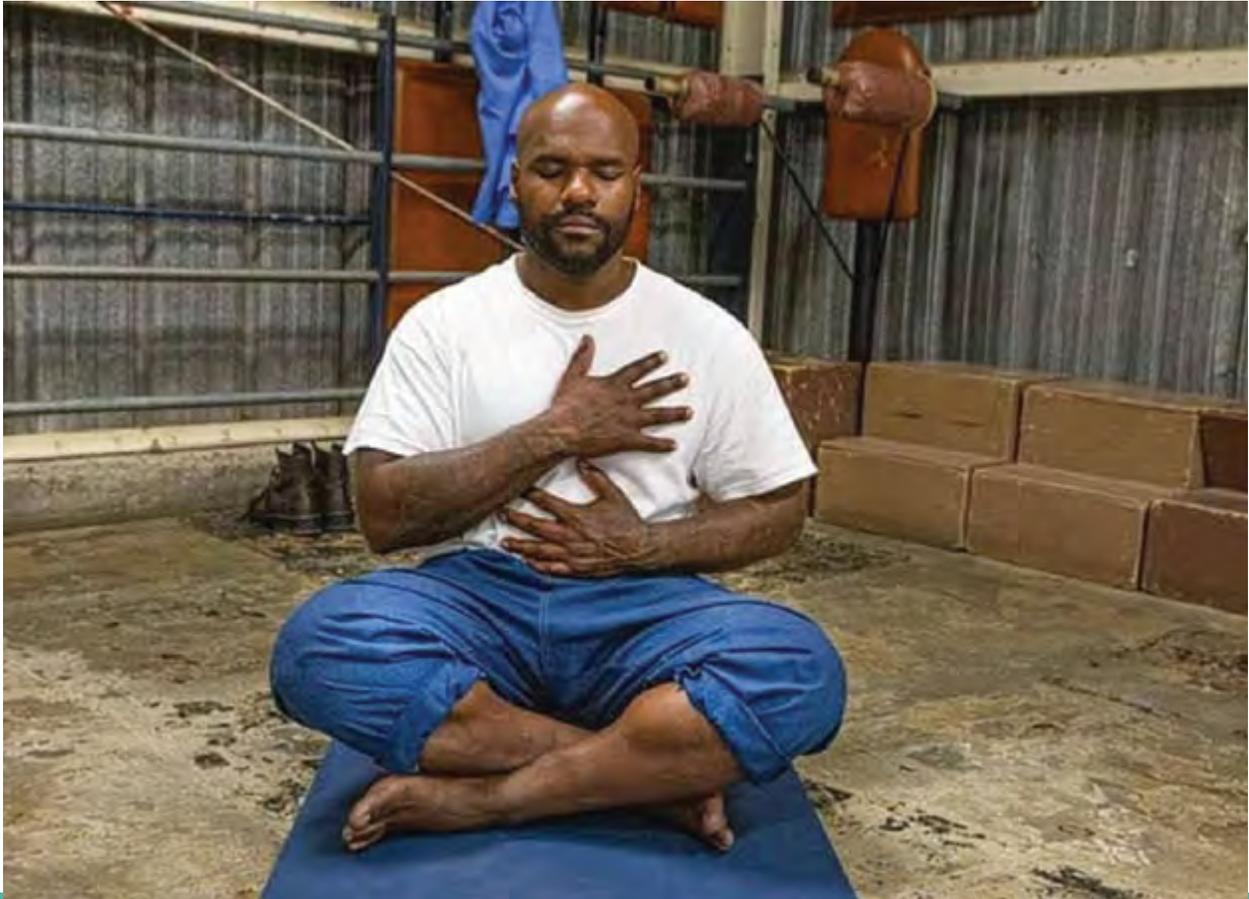
One – What is one thing you can taste? What do you have around you that you can taste? Sometimes, all we have is our own breath; other times, we have a snack, toothpaste, or a mint.



Use the photo for guided visualization, meditation, or to take your mind to a new place.



4. Meditation Techniques



“To learn to breathe and stop the noise conjured up by life’s stressors taught me that when everything around me appears chaotic, I could stop, sit with myself and breathe! Meditation reinforces my ability to self-regulate despite the noise around me!”

George Smith, A Thoughtful Moment in Transition

There are many types of meditation. You may already be doing meditation and have found it to be a grounding force in your life. Some of us struggle with the traditional types of meditation and find the more active methods more helpful. In addition to the familiar sitting meditation, there are walking and guided meditation techniques. We will share some examples with you.

5. Walking Meditation

Mindful walking or walking meditation can be done while you are going somewhere or as a meditative practice where the walking is only for the purpose of meditation. We encourage you to start using it as meditation practice, making it easier to use while walking to a specific location once you have become familiar with the technique.

To begin this practice, stand for a moment.

- ▶ Feel the breath moving in and out of your body.
- ▶ Notice your feet contacting the ground, the ground supporting your feet, and your legs supporting the rest of your body.
- ▶ When you're ready, lift one leg up and move it forward to begin walking. Walking a bit slower than your normal pace may help you attend to the many sensations involved in walking. With each new step, notice where your foot first touches the ground. What part of your foot first contacts the ground?
- ▶ Notice how more of your foot gradually contacts the ground over time. Be aware of how the weight shifts from one part of the foot to many areas of the foot. As your body moves forward, the weight shifts away from the back foot onto the front foot. What part of the back foot first leaves the ground?
- ▶ Pay attention to your foot leaving the ground. Notice how the weight shifts from one part of the foot to another, and then, as you step with the other foot, you start the process of taking your weight from one foot to another. You may feel sensations such as stretching, bending, tensing, and relaxing at different times.
- ▶ With each step, notice all the sensations in your feet as you walk. It is likely that your mind will wander, as well. You may start

thinking about things you see, smell, feel, or hear. You may have memories or thoughts about the future. As those come up, notice them and then, with kindness to yourself, bring your attention back to the physical sensations of walking.

- ▶ Next, focus on your legs. Notice how your knees bend with each step, and then gradually straighten the leg at the knee.
- ▶ Notice the muscles that work to pull and push your legs forward. Notice your leg lifting and being put down with each step. While you continue walking for the next minute or so, notice the changes in your legs as you take each step and notice any other physical sensations you have as you walk.
- ▶ Really feel what walking is like by keeping your attention on all the physical sensations. You may continue this practice while you're walking for as long as you like.

Mindful walking is a good way to practice mindfulness while taking care of daily tasks in any setting. Building your ability to stay in the present moment with this and other mindfulness exercises may reduce stress and improve your sense of well-being.

6. Mindful Meditation

A simple meditation technique is called "mindful observation." Here's how to do it:

- ▶ Find a quiet space and sit comfortably.
- ▶ Choose an object to focus on—like a book, a photo, a simple piece of artwork, or even a calm spot on the wall.

- ▶ Gently focus your attention on that object. Observe it closely without thinking or judging.
- ▶ Notice its colors, shapes, textures, and details. Stay fully present with the object.
- ▶ If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your focus back to the object without frustration.
- ▶ This helps you stay in the present moment, training your mind to focus and relax.



Use this photo for the forest guided visualization below if you prefer to keep your eyes open.



7. Forest Guided Visualization or Meditation

Find a place where you feel comfortable and take a few breaths. Close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so, and imagine a place in your mind's eye; if you prefer to keep your eyes open, look at a photo. Take a few deep breaths, allowing your mind to relax.

Picture yourself in a field or forest beneath a large, leafy tree with strong branches. Smell the rich soil and clean air. Listen to the wind rustling through the leaves and notice if you hear any birds or animals.

Visualize the tree's leaves and branches and trunk, then picture yourself reaching out to touch it. Feel the texture of the bark. Be aware of the shade the tree offers, the wood it provides, how it cleans the air, and its beauty.

Appreciate the tree as a living organism. Imagine it drinking up the water through its complex root system.

Visualize the lengthening, spreading branches and the leaves opening towards the sun.

The warm sun is beaming down, and as you soak up the light, you feel your whole body fill up with renewed energy and calm.

When you're ready, look up from the page and take this peaceful energy with you as you move through your day.



Use this photo for the beach guided visualization below if you prefer to keep your eyes open.



8. Beach Guided Visualization or Meditation

Start by taking a few deep breaths. Notice your breath coming in and going out. Allow your thoughts to float away. Scan your body for any tension in your muscles and allow your tension to be released with each breath.

Picture yourself walking down a long wooden staircase. You're barefoot, and you can feel the rough wood under your feet. With every step, you feel a little more calm, like your worries are slowly melting away.

As you keep walking down the steps, you see a wide, sandy beach stretching out in front of you. The ocean is a deep blue, and gentle waves are moving toward the shore. When you reach the bottom, your feet sink into the warm sand. It feels good—soft and comforting.

The sand under your feet helps you feel peaceful all over. You listen to the sound of the waves. They rise and fall, crashing gently and making your mind feel quiet and still.

You start walking slowly toward the water. The warm sun shines on your face and shoulders. You breathe in deeply. The salty air smells fresh and clean. As you slowly breathe out, you feel even more relaxed.

You watch the waves slide in and out. Some water touches your feet—it's cool, but feels nice. You stand there for a moment, looking out at the big ocean that stretches far away.

Now you begin to walk along the edge of the water. A soft breeze touches your back, and with every step, you feel lighter and more at peace.

As you walk, you start to notice everything around you—the way the sun shines, the sound of the waves, and the sand under your toes. Everything feels calm and just right.

A little further down the beach, you see a bright, colorful beach chair waiting for you. The sand around it is smooth and untouched. You walk over, sit down, and lean back. The chair is comfy. You take a deep breath in, and slowly breathe out. You feel peaceful, calm, and safe.

Stay here as long as you like, just relaxing. Feel your body, take another deep breath, and gently return to your day—feeling calm and refreshed.

9. The STOP Method

The STOP method is a technique for slowing down and tuning into yourself, your feelings, and your body. You can do it in as little as a minute. Each letter of STOP stands for a tool you can use to feel more calm and grounded. Here's how it works:

(S) Stand up and breathe.

(T) Tune into your body. See how it feels. Notice that it's connected to the Earth. Notice any physical sensations.

(O) Observe. What physical sensations do you have? Are they positive or negative?

(P) Possibility. Ask yourself what is possible at this moment. Can this be a positive **turning point for the rest of the day**?

10. Using Distractions

Distraction is a simple but effective coping strategy for managing addiction, strong emotions, or difficult situations. You want to find things that distract your attention away from whatever you are trying to avoid. We are providing a list, but you can create your own. We are including ideas that can be used in prison and some that you will not be able to use until you are home.



“When I get triggered, I just try to think of the here and now, try to focus on bringing myself back into “everything’s okay or you can remove yourself from the situation.” Other things that I like to do when I’m stressed out are – I love to garden, I love to grow new plants, I love to spend time with my baby and I like to go on walks. I meditate on things and I start processing things as I go, so that’s where my ideas come, like, okay, so I could turn this into “this” and I get different ideas of doing different projects and things, so that all these negative situations and all these negative things are going on around me that don’t affect me or if they’re affecting me, I could bring myself out of it.”



Sol Mercado, Message from a Life Transformed

Choose 3-5 that you think might work for you. Circle them.

- 1) Exercise.
- 2) Write (stories, journal, poetry).
- 3) Scribble/doodle on paper.
- 4) Be with other people.
- 5) Watch a favorite TV show.
- 6) Drink water.
- 7) Do a word search or crossword.
- 8) Do schoolwork.
- 9) Clean something.
- 10) Read a good book.



- 11)** Listen to music.
- 12)** Meditate.
- 13)** Paint or draw.
- 14)** Rip paper into itty-bitty pieces.
- 15)** Shoot hoops and/or kick a ball.
- 16)** Hyperfocus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
- 17)** Complete something you've been putting off.
- 18)** Pray.
- 19)** Make a list of blessings in your life.
- 20)** Engage with spiritual or inspirational texts—like the Bible, Qu-ran, Torah, Bhagavad Gita, or any writings that bring you peace and meaning.
- 21)** Talk to someone close to you.
- 22)** Memorize a song, poem, or play.
- 23)** Stretch.
- 24)** Play the “15-minute game.” (Avoid something for 15 minutes; when time is up, start again.)
- 25)** Try to make as many words out of the letters of your full name as possible.
- 26)** Call, email, or write a letter to a friend or family member.
- 27)** Write yourself an “I love you because...” letter.
- 28)** Look up new words and use them.
- 29)** Write a letter to someone that you may never send.
- 30)** Do Yoga.

11. New Coping Strategies Exercise

Choose the coping strategies you will use to improve your daily life in prison and continue to use in the community.

What are 4 new coping strategies you can start using in the next week?

1.

2.

3.

4.



“An important key factor is understanding the importance of having coping skills, or if you’re still struggling with addiction or anything like that, to have a relapse prevention plan, and the importance of including the coping skills in your relapse prevention plan. Let’s say that I’m still battling with anger. I need to know how to have a healthy outlet to let that anger go and not just explode at somebody, because sometimes my anger could be redirected to somebody



who doesn't even deserve it. What if I don't have the coping skills to deal with the chaotic situation? What if I put myself in an environment that I see somebody using or drinking? That can let me go back to drinking or using because I don't have the tools or the right people to call in my support system. So again, I think it's important to have coping skills, the mechanisms to deal with situations, and also to have important people that I could call who are not going to validate my addiction, right? That if I say I need a drink. They're like, Oh, yeah, go have one. No. Somebody's like, No, you don't need a drink. You need to talk about it. And I think it's important to have therapy also, to let go of a lot of things and to learn more coping skills and mechanisms that I may not know yet."

Yanira Armster, A Story of Resilience and Growth

D. Creating Relapse Prevention Plans

Relapse prevention plans can help with problems you may face in prison or in the community. These plans are usually used for recovering from substance dependence, but they can also help with anxiety, depression, anger, stress, sadness, relationships, or feeling overwhelmed. (The relationship plan is at the end of the Building Relationships chapter.) They let you plan for what you might face and how to deal with it successfully. Even more, they can help you to figure out how you can avoid that challenge in the first place! For example, a relapse prevention plan for alcoholism is meant to prevent a relapse into alcohol abuse. A relapse prevention plan for stress or depression is intended to help you see early signs and address them before experiencing their negative effects on your life.



If You're Going to the Board We have heard the board may prefer short relapse plans because they're quick to review. If that helps you, you can use the Short Version.



Some people include relapse prevention plans in their parole plans. Following a relapse prevention plan is something you do daily, not just when you feel like you need it. For example, going to 12-step meetings and getting a sponsor is often found in relapse prevention plans for those with a history of substance use. Going to a therapist and using regular self-care is common in a relapse prevention plan for trauma, depression, or anxiety.

We encourage you to consider seeking therapy in the community as part of your journey to building a successful life. Therapy can support you in establishing healthy relationships, finding and keeping a job, and learning how to navigate life outside. There are several ways to access therapy. If you were designated as CCCMS or EOP, your parole agent may already have referrals set up for you. If not, you would follow the same process as others: ask your parole agent for referrals, contact your health provider—likely through Medi-Cal or your employer—or use the County Behavioral Health system. Most counties have an access line you can call to connect with therapy services. It's helpful to share information about your prior services, including how long you received them, any medications you were taking, and any diagnoses you had.

1. Relapse Prevention Plan: Short

Coping strategies are things you can do to help manage tough emotions or urges in the moment. They can help you calm down, feel more in control, or take your mind off things when you're dealing with anxiety, depression, sadness, anger, stress, or urges to use.

In the space below, choose a challenge you're facing. Then write:

- ▶ **The issue** you're targeting
- ▶ **A coping strategy** you will try
- ▶ **How you hope it will help**

Some examples of coping strategies:

- ▶ Taking deep breaths.
- ▶ Going for a walk.
- ▶ Listening to music.
- ▶ Distracting yourself by reading, drawing, or watching something positive.

Note: Going to therapy or a substance use program is not a coping strategy on its own, but it's a smart way to learn new tools that can help.

What are you going to address in your Relapse Prevention Plan?

Mental Health/Emotions:

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Sadness
- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Stress
- ▶ Feeling overwhelmed



Substance Use:

- ▶ Substance use/addiction (drugs/alcohol)
- ▶ Other: _____

Target Issue	Coping Strategy	Benefit
1		
2		
3		

Activities: List 3 activities you enjoy that will take your mind off how you are feeling and make you feel better.

1
2
3

NOW – Social Support: Who are three people you can talk to if you are thinking about using or having a difficult day?

1
2
3

IN THE COMMUNITY – Social Support: Who are three people you can talk to if you are thinking about using or having a difficult day? If you don't know what your support system will look like in the community yet, you can list the types of people who may serve as supports for you, including:

- ▶ Peers at your transitional housing program
- ▶ 12-Step sponsor

- ▶ Spiritual or religious leader
- ▶ Co-worker or supervisor
- ▶ Other people you may meet in the community based on your interests

1

2

3

Consequences: How will your life change if you relapse or don't manage your emotions? How about if you stay sober or effectively manage your emotions?

Outcomes of Relapse/ Not Managing Emotions	Outcomes of Sobriety/ Managing Emotions

2. Relapse Prevention Plan: Long

What are you going to address in your Relapse Prevention Plan?

Mental Health/Emotions:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sadness
- Anger
- Stress
- Feeling overwhelmed



Substance Use:

- Substance use/addiction (drugs/alcohol)
- Other: _____

What is your drug(s) of choice or emotion you want to manage?

1

2

3

Write down 3 reasons you want to stop using or manage your emotions.

1

2

3

What feelings might trigger a relapse?

- Anger
- Grief
- Jealousy
- Fear
- Embarrassment
- Hopelessness
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Stress
- Depression



For each feeling you checked above, write down a healthy way to cope with the feeling. In addition to specific coping strategies, going to therapy to help support your transition home can be helpful.

Feeling	Coping strategy

List a trigger for substance use or managing emotions.

What might trigger you?	How will you cope with that trigger?

Drugs/alcohol – What are some thoughts that might lead to a relapse? For example, you might think you can use “just a little,” try a substance that isn’t your primary drug or have fun “just one more time.”

Emotions – What thoughts might lead to intense emotions?

Drugs/Alcohol: What are some behaviors that could lead to a relapse?

Examples include skipping meetings, not reaching out to your sponsor, spending time with people who are using, or neglecting self-care.

Emotions: What behaviors might trigger intense emotions? Examples include having conflict in a relationship, missing sleep or meals, facing challenges at work, learning something new, or needing help but not asking for it. Intense emotions might happen when you keep your feelings inside and don’t share them until you explode or get so overwhelmed that you don’t want to take on any new challenges. We have seen people have trouble with public transit because others bumped into them and didn’t say “excuse me” or apologize. We have seen people walk out of stores without buying things because they were overwhelmed with the choices.

People: Who are the people in your life who might influence you to use substances, make poor decisions, or put you in situations where you experience intense or difficult emotions? These could include friends who use, people who encourage risky behavior, or those with whom you have challenging or emotional relationships. Identifying these individuals can help you plan how to navigate these situations more effectively.

Write down 5 people you can contact if you are tempted to use in the community. Choose people who you know will support you. If you don't know what your support system will look like in the community yet, you can list the types of people who may serve as supports, including:

- ▶ Peers at your transitional housing program.
- ▶ 12-Step sponsor.
- ▶ Spiritual or religious leader.
- ▶ Co-worker or supervisor.
- ▶ Other people you may meet in the community based on your interests.

1

2

3

4

5

List five (5) consequences of relapse or not managing your emotions.
Examples: Failing a drug screen, calling in sick to work, missing an appointment, parole violation, relationship problems, etc.

1

2

3

4

5

List five (5) benefits of creating and using a relapse prevention plan to stay clean and sober and/or manage your emotions:

1

2

3

4

5

Write down five (5) short-term goals (1-12 months) that you can only achieve through sobriety and/or managing your emotions.

1

2

3

4

5

Write down five (5) long-term goals (1-3 years) that you can only achieve through sobriety and/or managing your emotions.

1

2

3

4

5

List a trigger for substance use or managing emotions.

What might trigger you?

How will you cope with that trigger?

The next two sections are for drugs and alcohol (not managing emotions).

3. Cravings

Cravings (drugs and/or alcohol)

Remember, cravings will pass.

There are different techniques you can use to manage intense cravings. You can talk with your sponsor or a friend in recovery for support. You can also distract yourself using some of the techniques we discussed earlier, along with these ideas:

- ▶ Journaling
- ▶ Talking to someone
- ▶ Listening to loud music
- ▶ Watching TV
- ▶ Doing a crossword puzzle
- ▶ Helping a friend
- ▶ Exercising
- ▶ Working on a project



What are 5 ways you can cope with cravings?

1

2

3

4

5

4. 12-Step Program

Sponsorship

Question	Answer
How will you get a sponsor?	
What qualities will you look for in a sponsor?	
How often will you meet with them?	

12-Step meeting schedule.

List your meetings below.

If you don't know your schedule yet, write down how many meetings you plan to go to. In big cities, there are lots of meetings every day. In smaller towns, you can usually find at least one meeting daily, but you might have to travel a bit. There are also online meetings, but we suggest you go to in-person meetings whenever you can.

Meeting Name	Location	Day/Time

We encourage you to revisit this chapter regularly. You may find something you like the first time you read it and then find more after reading it a few more times.



CHAPTER 7

Building Relationships

A. Introduction

Supportive relationships are key to a successful transition home. In this section, we will look at different types of relationships, how to build healthy ones, and ways to make them stronger before you return home. While entire books are written about healthy relationships, we will share a few ideas to help you

create positive ones. The more you work on them now, the more support you will have when you're home. Some people may return to friends and family, while others will build new relationships after returning. We encourage everyone to start building community connections now to strengthen their support system for later. We understand that relationships can be challenging—whether you're currently facing difficulties, have struggled in the past, or believe relationships played a role in your incarceration. That's why we've included a relapse prevention plan at the end of this chapter to support you in creating and maintaining healthy relationships.

When we say "relationship," we don't just mean a romantic one. We're talking about any important person in your life, like a co-worker, cellmate, or spouse. The word "relationship" means a connection or bond you have with someone else.

B. Different Types of Relationships

We have found that people can develop community-based relationships inside, including:

- ▶ 12-Step sponsors.
- ▶ Connections to spiritual or religious organizations.

- ▶ Companies you work for inside.
- ▶ Friends, family, and romantic partners.

Some people will start building relationships after they return home. This section is for everyone, but it mainly focuses on those with romantic relationships and regular contact with family and how to shift from prison-based to community-based connections. Once home, you may consider developing relationships with:

- ▶ People you live with in your transitional housing program.
- ▶ Co-workers, once you start working.
- ▶ People you meet through your spiritual or religious activities.
- ▶ People from your 12-Step program and your sponsor.
- ▶ Service providers.
- ▶ Therapists.
- ▶ New romantic partners.
- ▶ Others.

Even though relationships are important, they can still be one of the most challenging aspects of coming home. In some cases, they are some of the most unexpected challenges. Since emotional support is key to a successful transition, taking steps to build strong relationships is important. In almost all cases, everyone is so excited to see each other, spend more time together, and share experiences in the community. We have found that some relationships go quite smoothly, but often, there are bumps in the road. Given how many topics we cover in the workbook, we will only touch on relationships. Our goal is to show you some common challenges so you can be ready for them or avoid them by planning ahead. We will also provide you with some strategies that might help you. We will focus

on relationships generally and then focus specifically on boundaries, as this issue comes up a lot in relationships where one person wants something different from the other.

There are many different types of relationships that you will be in when you come home. You may be coming home as a:

- ▶ Parent
- ▶ Son or daughter
- ▶ Partner, wife or husband
- ▶ Friend
- ▶ Employee
- ▶ A person connected to any number of relatives



We have repeatedly found that those coming home have ideas about what coming home will be like and how the relationships will proceed, and the people waiting for them also have ideas, and often, those ideas don't match. On top of that, neither group knows about the expectations of parole and transitional housing. For example, curfews, limits on how far you can travel, and other rules. This is surprising for everyone and limits the flexibility of the amount of time that can be spent together. Often, people get jobs quite quickly, so between jobs, curfews, and needing quiet time to adjust to the hectic nature of community life, there is less time to socialize than people expect. We encourage people to discuss expectations of each other before coming home so that everything is out in the open. Also, it can be helpful to acknowledge that there will be an adjustment period transitioning from a prison-based relationship to a community-based relationship.



“What happens when you go to prison at age 16 and come home at age 42?”

My brain is still acting like a 16-year-old. I get in a relationship with someone who is mature. I am bringing the 16-year-old into the relationship because I haven't healed. I still haven't faced my trauma and what I went through in prison. And mentally, I haven't developed all the way. I still need to take time to heal, address my issues, and get to know who I am. I am no longer that 16-year-old. I grew up the majority of my youth in prison, which caused me a lot of trauma.



So, now coming home at 42 years old I have to learn who I am and what I like. And not just fully investing myself in a relationship. We tend to lose ourselves sometimes. It becomes all about the other person, and I forget about myself. My needs are not being met. How can I bring anything to the table or be healthy and not have a toxic relationship because I still have underlying issues that I have not dealt with?”

Yanira Armster, Words That Inspire Change

C. Common Challenges in Relationships

Coming home after many years in prison can be tough. Here are some common situations people face:

- ▶ Coming home is overwhelming, and I need quiet time alone, but my partner wants me to spend all my time with them.
- ▶ My family didn't visit or write to me in prison, but now they expect me to spend time with them. I'm busy with other things, like work or my partner, and I don't understand why they expect so much.

- ▶ My partner wants me to spend all my free time with them, but I also want to be with my children, grandchildren, or other family members.
- ▶ My partner tries to control what I do, but after years of being controlled in prison, I want to make my own choices now.
- ▶ I'm thankful for my partner's support while I was in prison, but now it feels like they expect something in return, and that makes me uncomfortable. I'm not sure how to handle it.
- ▶ I get anxious when people walk up behind me, and my partner does it a lot. I've asked them to stop, but they think it's no big deal and don't understand how hard adjusting is for me.
- ▶ I like to keep the house very clean, but my partner thinks it's already clean enough. I clean up after them, which hurts their feelings. Keeping things clean helped me cope in prison, but now it confuses my partner.
- ▶ I have goals to find a job and go to school, but my partner thinks I should spend more time with them. I wish they supported my goals, but we argue about it a lot.
- ▶ My partner expected me to live with them when I came home, but I had to stay in transitional housing instead, and now they're upset.
- ▶ My family wants to make decisions for me, but I want to make my own choices.
- ▶ Everything in the community moves so fast, and I'm having trouble adjusting. My family doesn't understand what I'm going through and expects me to adjust right away.
- ▶ My relationship with my family or partner was good while I was incarcerated, but now it's hard, and I didn't expect that. I don't know what to do.

- ▶ Before I came home, promises were made about housing, jobs, and money, but now those promises aren't being kept.
- ▶ I found out people made assumptions about how I would spend my time, who I would live with, and where I would work, but they didn't tell me until I got home.
- ▶ I also made assumptions about my relationships with family, friends, and my partner regarding money, time, housing, and jobs, but I didn't check if they agreed.

These are all common struggles, and it's important to talk about them and find ways to work through them.

D. Important Questions to Ask Yourself or Others

We encourage you to talk with people you know while in custody and in the community. Genuine discussions can be valuable in building a solid relationship. We also encourage you to use these questions with loved ones and role-play with those you are comfortable with. Having said or heard “no” in several role-plays will make it much easier when feelings are involved.

- ▶ What do you hope our relationship will be like when I return home?
- ▶ How much time do you imagine we will spend together?
- ▶ Do you know that for the first six months, I will probably be living in transitional housing that will likely have mandatory services, curfews, and possibly other requirements that limit my time with you?
- ▶ Do you know that we will have to make quite a few adjustments for our relationship to be successful as we transition from prison to home?

- ▶ My being in prison created clear boundaries between us, given visiting times and times I was available to make phone calls. But, when I come home, I will set those boundaries, saying that I may be too tired to visit, have to attend a meeting, or choose to do something other than see you. How will you feel about that?
- ▶ What do you think we need to do to support a healthy relationship?
- ▶ How do you imagine our relationship will be when I come home?

E. Relationship Building Exercise

What are 4 things you expect from people at home when you parole?

1

2

3

F. Strategies for Healthy Relationships

We know each person and relationship is unique, but we have some suggestions that might help you have healthier relationships that work for friends, family, and partners. Some of these suggestions are for any relationship, and others are more for couples.

- ▶ Love yourself. Being comfortable with who you are will allow you to be a better partner. We have all heard this before, and it is easier said than done, but taking time to care for your needs now and when you come home is important to strengthen your relationship.
- ▶ Talk to each other.
 - ▶ Talk about your feelings.
 - ▶ If you are upset, say so; don't make someone try to guess how you are feeling (thinking they should know how you are feeling leads to misunderstandings).
 - ▶ Talking through problems builds trust and makes your relationship stronger.
 - ▶ Let them know when they do something that makes you happy.
 - ▶ Share information about your life. Ask questions about their life to show interest in what they are saying and who they are.

- ▶ Accept and support change. It is natural to feel uneasy about change. Healthy relationships allow for change and growth. Coming home from prison after decades of incarceration is a huge change. There have to be allowances for this change process and an understanding that this change is hard for everyone. You will likely change as you engage in programming, so having people support that change is also important.
- ▶ Be dependable. If you make plans with someone, follow through. If you take on a responsibility, complete it. Healthy relationships are trustworthy. It is especially important for those supporting you to understand that depending on others is difficult for you, and you need them to follow through. On the other hand, you want to be careful about what you agree to. It can be hard to say “no,” but you will have a lot on your plate when you come home, so you will have to say “no” to people, and saying “no” now is better than canceling later. Dependability is something to work on while you are inside, as well. Are the people in your life following through on their agreements related to calls, visits, and money? Are you being dependable?
- ▶ Give each other some space. Couples time is excellent, but spending all of your free time together isn’t. It is healthy to have your own friends and interests. When you first come home, you may develop new friends and interests, so making room for that is important.
- ▶ Agree to disagree. You will not always see eye to eye, and that is OK. The important thing is to respect each other’s opinions. Try to be flexible when making decisions.
- ▶ Support each other. When your partner does something nice, tell them! Encourage your partner to do the same for you.
- ▶ Keep expectations realistic. No one can be everything we might want them to be. Healthy relationships mean accepting people as

they are and not trying to change them. Are there ways to increase acceptance in your relationships now? When coming home, this means that people need to accept that you are in a change process that is unique to you, and you need support as you go through it. But you need to understand that it is also hard for the people in your life. They may have expected you to be like you were when you left many years ago or expect you to “make up for lost time” or adjust overnight. The more you can share your expectations of each other before you come home, the smoother things will go.

- ▶ Fight fair. Relationships will have some conflict. If it only means that you disagree about something, it doesn't mean you don't like each other.
 - ▶ Cool down before talking. The conversation will be smoother and more successful if your emotions have cooled down a little so you don't say something you regret later.
 - ▶ Share your feelings and desires without assigning blame or motives. “When you don't call me, I feel you don't care about me.” vs. “You never call me.”
 - ▶ Keep your language clear and specific. Try to describe behavior that you are upset about factually and avoid criticism and judgment. Attack the problem, not the person.

G. Setting Boundaries

We are going to focus on boundaries. Establishing clear boundaries is key to a healthy relationship. Prison creates a boundary that disappears once you go home. Instead of visiting hours, you have to say “Yes” or “No” when deciding to spend time with people. Saying “No” may be uncomfortable, and people's feelings may be hurt, since they have waited a long time to

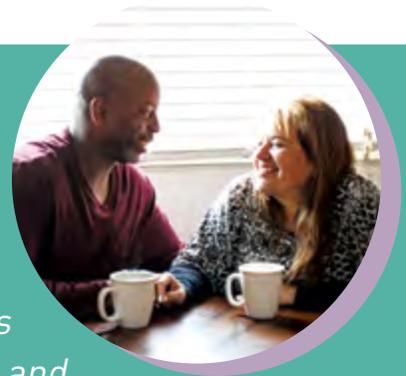
spend time with you. They might push back. But, you may need time for yourself and be trying to balance visiting different people, work, and other responsibilities.

Personal boundaries are the rules and limits you set within a relationship. They tell you what's okay and not okay in a relationship. A person with healthy boundaries can say "no" to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

People have different types of boundaries, and we want to work toward having healthy boundaries.



"Relationships are about being accountable to someone other than yourself and taking into account their feelings and emotional well-being. A healthy relationship has elements of compromise embedded in it while considering your partner's wants and needs. Lastly, boundaries are important and so is self-care. I find it important to recognize my value and bring to a relationship the same things I want to get out of that relationship."



Marlin Jeffreys, Insight from a Transition Home

Examples of healthy boundaries are:

- ▶ Valuing your own opinion and the opinion of others. For example, if you believe there is a best way to prepare a meal, you also understand that there are other ways to do it.
- ▶ You don't compromise your values for the values of others. For example, if you value time with family, you won't work all the time.

- ▶ You share personal information appropriately (that is, do not over or under-share). For example, when you first meet someone, you don't tell them all your business. But you do share things about yourself once you get to know them.
- ▶ You share your wants and needs with people you are connected with. Sharing what you need in a relationship is important. It is common to hear, "They should know," but how would they know if you don't tell them?
- ▶ It is key to be able to say "no" and to be able to accept "no" from other people. Many people struggle with this.

Although we work towards healthy boundaries, some people tend towards rigid or porous ones. Rigid boundaries are like walls you can't get through, so people can't connect to you deeply. Porous boundaries lead to being too dependent on others, being unable to say "no," and accepting disrespect. We all struggle with healthy boundaries, so it's good to think about our relationships and where we want to improve. Talking to people in our lives about boundaries can be helpful. Prison life and community life lead to different types of boundaries. Rigid boundaries are sometimes maintained in a custody setting due to rules, regulations, and lack of privacy. It may be tricky to figure out what kinds of boundaries you have personally vs. how you have coped with prison life. It is important to think about when and how you will set boundaries. We have also found that once people are in the community, they provide too much information, especially in new romantic relationships. Each of us tends towards either rigid or porous boundaries. But, we also will set different boundaries for different situations. For example, we would be more open with a close family member. We would be less open during a job interview.



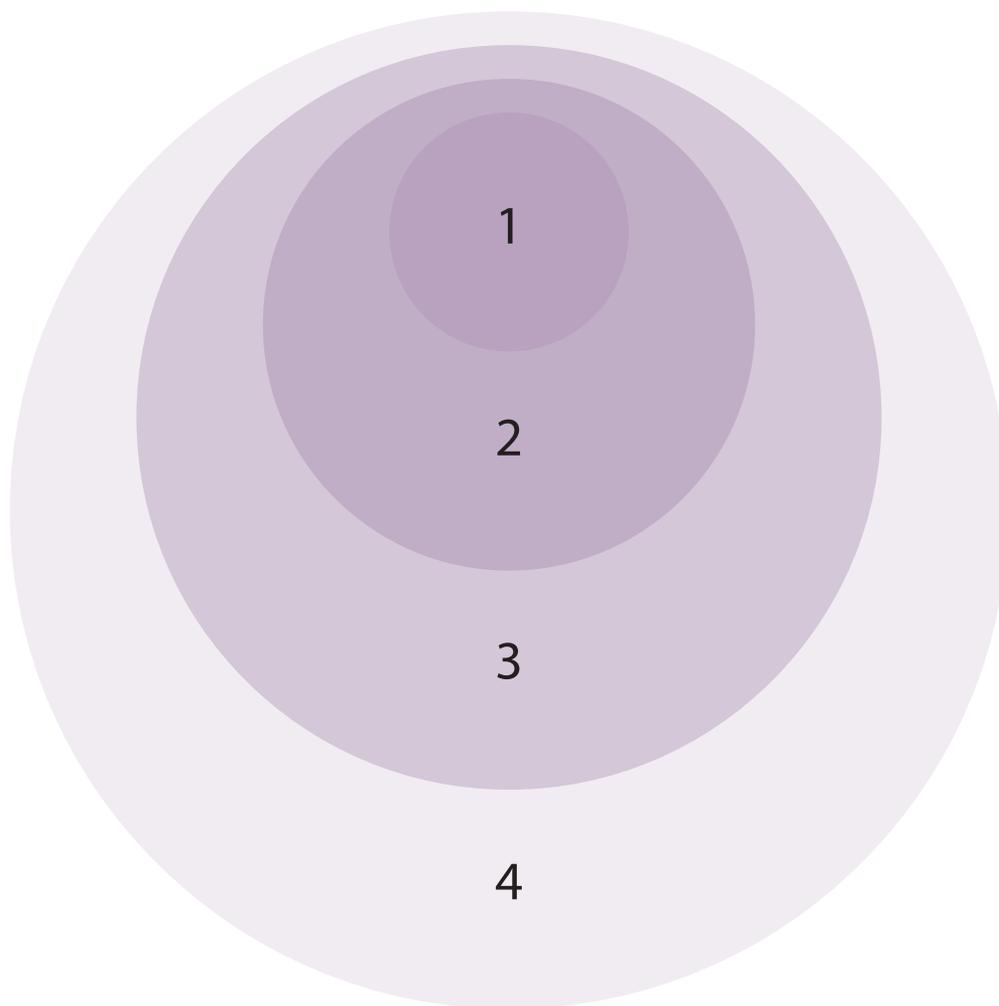
Examples of rigid boundaries:

- ▶ You might avoid close relationships and/or have few close relationships.
- ▶ You may be unlikely to ask for help. We have found that people need a lot of help when they first come out of prison but feel uncomfortable asking for it.
- ▶ You may be very protective of personal information, even with people you are very close to.
- ▶ You may seem detached even from romantic partners and close family members.
- ▶ You may keep others at a distance to avoid rejection.

Examples of porous boundaries:

- ▶ You might share all your personal information when you first meet someone. We found this happened when people started dating when they first came home.
- ▶ You may have difficulty saying “no” to people. We found that people often had trouble saying “no” to people when they were home. They were surprised by the number of people who wanted to spend time with them and had a hard time saying “no” to friends, family members, and partners/wives/husbands.
- ▶ You may get over-involved with others. You may find yourself always helping others and not taking care of yourself.
- ▶ You may feel like the opinions of others are more important than yours.
- ▶ You may accept abuse or disrespect.

- ▶ The worst cases were when people rushed into dating and found out that their new partners were just trying to take advantage of them. These partners would ask for money early in the relationship, saying they needed it for things like rent, phone bills, and other expenses. Sometimes, people hadn't even met them in person yet—they only seemed great online or at first. Relationships are complex, and each one is unique. This section will allow you to explore your current relationships and take steps to improve them. It is also intended to prepare you for some possible challenges when you get home.



H. More Relationship Exercises

Think about the people in your life, considering people you know inside and in the community.

Circle 1: Inner Circle (Closest Relationships)

Definition: The people you feel the closest to emotionally and spiritually. These are individuals you deeply trust and who provide emotional, moral, or spiritual support.

Examples:

- ▶ Immediate family (parents, children, siblings, spouse, or partner).
- ▶ A 12-Step sponsor or a trusted person from your 12-Step group.
- ▶ A trusted cellmate or someone you've built a strong bond with inside.
- ▶ A spiritual leader or chaplain who has provided guidance.
- ▶ A close friend or mentor outside the prison.

Please list 4 people below:

Circle 2: Close but not the closest

Definition: People you share a strong bond with, either emotionally or spiritually, but they may not be your primary confidants.

Examples:

- ▶ Extended family or friends from outside.
- ▶ Individuals who are incarcerated with you and who share your faith or participate in religious or spiritual practices (e.g., prayer group members or meditation partners).
- ▶ A 12-Step sponsor or a trusted person from your 12-Step group.
- ▶ Religious or spiritual leaders who offer guidance but are less personally connected (e.g., visiting clergy or volunteers).
- ▶ Program facilitators or peer counselors.

Please list 4 people below:

Circle 3: Acquaintances and Community Connections

Definition: These are individuals you interact with regularly, share common experiences with, or feel a sense of connection to, even if the relationships are less personal.

Examples:

- ▶ People on the same yard as you.
- ▶ People you meet during group worship services, prayer sessions, or meditation groups.
- ▶ A trusted person from your 12-Step group.
- ▶ Distant friends or family members who occasionally write, visit, or send messages of encouragement.
- ▶ Individuals in programs, classes, or work assignments who you know casually.

Please list 4 people below:

Circle 4: Outer Circle (Distant or Loose Connections)

Definition: Individuals you know and interact with occasionally but don't have a close or personal relationship with. These relationships may still hold meaning or significance in your life.

Examples:

- ▶ Religious or spiritual leaders you only see in large group settings (e.g., chaplains, visiting clergy).
- ▶ Individuals in prison with you who you greet in passing or occasionally share a conversation with.
- ▶ Staff members, volunteers, or others who provide guidance but aren't part of your inner or close circle.
- ▶ Distant family or friends who you rarely hear from but still think about.
- ▶ People on the same yard as you.

Please list 4 people below:

Optional Reflection Prompts:

- ▶ Who in your circles helps you feel connected to something greater than yourself?
- ▶ Are there ways you can strengthen your connections, even with people outside the prison?
- ▶ How do your religious or spiritual practices support your relationships with others, inside and outside of prison?

I. Relapse Prevention Plan: Preparing for Healthy Relationships

Why Create a Relationship Relapse Prevention Plan?

Unhealthy relationships can have a major impact on your well-being, decision-making, and overall stability. If past relationships have led to negative outcomes in your life, creating a relapse prevention plan can help you recognize patterns, set healthy boundaries, and develop the skills needed to build positive, supportive connections. This plan will help you stay focused on your goals, manage emotional triggers, and prevent returning to harmful relationship patterns. With preparation and self-awareness, you can create meaningful relationships that support your growth and success.

1. Identify Relationship Triggers

Triggers are situations or behaviors that bring up strong emotional reactions which can lead to unhealthy responses. Knowing your triggers helps you prepare to manage them constructively.

Examples of triggers:

- ▶ Feeling ignored or disrespected.
- ▶ Arguments or raised voices.
- ▶ Receiving unwanted advice.
- ▶ Being reminded of past mistakes.



What situations or behaviors tend to upset you the most?

Examples of what to include:

- ▶ Feeling left out of conversations.
- ▶ When someone speaks to me in a demanding tone.
- ▶ When people don't respect my time.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

2. Develop Healthy Responses to Triggers

Planning how to respond to triggers can help you avoid conflict and maintain healthy relationships.

Examples of healthy responses:

- ▶ When I feel frustrated, I will pause, take a deep breath, and calmly express my feelings.
- ▶ If someone brings up my past, I will politely say, "I prefer not to discuss that right now."

How will I respond to my triggers in a healthy way?

Examples of what to include:

- ▶ When I feel overwhelmed, I will take a short walk to clear my mind.
- ▶ When someone speaks harshly, I will respond calmly and ask for respect.
- ▶ When I feel _____, I will _____.
- ▶ When someone _____, I will _____.
- ▶ When I feel _____, I will _____.
- ▶ When someone _____, I will _____.

3. Establish Boundaries

Boundaries protect your well-being by setting clear expectations for how you want to be treated.

Examples of boundaries:

- ▶ It's okay for people to ask me questions respectfully.
- ▶ It's not okay for people to yell at me or pressure me into things.

What boundaries do I need to set to feel safe and respected?

Examples of what to include:

- ▶ I will let others know that I need space when I'm overwhelmed.
- ▶ I will not accept negative comments about my past.

- ▶ It's okay for people to: _____.
- ▶ It's not okay for people to: _____.
- ▶ I need to set boundaries around: _____.
- ▶ I will communicate my boundaries by: _____.

4. Build Coping Strategies

Having strategies in place can help you handle stress and emotions in relationships.

Examples of coping strategies:

- ▶ Take a break and find a distracting activity when feeling overwhelmed.
- ▶ Practice deep breathing to stay calm in difficult conversations.

What coping strategies work best for me?

Examples of what to include:

- ▶ Writing down my feelings in a journal.
- ▶ Talking to a trusted friend for support.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5. Improve Communication Skills

Good communication helps you avoid misunderstandings and build trust in relationships.

Key communication strategies:

- ▶ **Active listening:** Show interest and listen without interrupting.
- ▶ **Use “I” statements:** Express feelings without blame (e.g., “I feel upset when...”).

What communication skills do I need to work on?

Examples of what to include:

- ▶ Practicing active listening by repeating what I hear.
- ▶ Speaking calmly even when I feel frustrated.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

6. Plan for Difficult Emotions

Relationships can trigger difficult emotions. Planning for them helps you stay in control.

What emotions do I struggle with in relationships?

Examples of what to include:

- ▶ Feeling anxious when I meet new people.
- ▶ Getting frustrated when things don't go as planned.
- ▶ When I feel angry, I will _____.
- ▶ When I feel anxious, I will _____.
- ▶ When I feel frustrated, I will _____.
- ▶ When I feel lonely, I will _____.

7. Celebrate Your Progress

Recognizing your progress builds confidence and reinforces positive changes.

Examples of progress to celebrate:

- ▶ Successfully setting a boundary.
- ▶ Managing a conflict calmly.

My relationship successes:

1

2

8. Seek Support When Needed

Having a support system can help you navigate relationships and stay on track.

Supportive people I can reach out to:

Friends or family members

Counselors or mentors

By preparing for potential challenges, setting healthy boundaries, and focusing on your goals, you can build strong, meaningful relationships that support your transition and personal growth.

In conclusion, we hope you find support in your relationships in prison and the community. Everyone needs to feel supported. It can be hard to know who to trust, which might stop you from asking for help or being open to new relationships. But at the same time, we can't just trust everyone. It's about finding the right balance. The best advice I can give is to value good relationships, know that challenges are normal, and do your best to take care of yourself and each other.



CHAPTER 8

Transition Plan: My Roadmap for Building a Life in the Community

Introduction Your future starts with a solid plan! This checklist is your step-by-step guide to making a smooth and successful transition home. It will help you stay on track with everything from getting your California ID and finding a job, to creating a relapse prevention plan and adjusting to daily life in the community. Whether you're focused on employment, housing, or rebuilding relationships, this checklist will keep you organized and moving forward. Preparation leads to success—start planning today!

Everyone's situation is different, so your plan won't look the same as someone else's. Some people may want to start working right away, while others may retire and live with family or a spouse. There are many other differences, so choose what is useful for you.

We can't cover every topic, so you may have special situations to think about. For example, if you aren't sure where you will be going, you could make plans for two different scenarios. Take your time with this checklist and use it to help you succeed.

Most sections of this checklist connect to topics covered in this workbook. It pulls the workbook together in one place, allowing you to choose what areas to focus on without needing to read chapter by chapter. For example, if you need help getting an ID, see Chapter 5 - Getting Your California ID in the Community. For relapse prevention plans, go to Chapter 6 - Healthy Living, Coping Strategies, and Relapse Prevention Plans. The workbook will provide guidance and resources to help you navigate the steps on your checklist and prepare for your transition home.

This checklist is your road map. Check off each item that applies and keep building your future.

Before I Go Home

California ID/Documents

- Apply for my birth certificate.
- Find out if anyone has my Social Security number, including family, friends, and attorneys.
- Order a replacement Social Security card with help from trusted friends or family on the outside (have it mailed to someone I trust).
- Speak to my counselor about the CDCR California Identification Card Program (CAL-ID).

Community & Support

- Identify support groups I can attend after release.
- Identify 12-Step programs I can attend after release.
- Identify supportive friends and family members who can offer emotional, financial, or practical assistance.
- Develop healthy communication and boundary-setting skills.
- Continue developing friendships and family relationships that contribute to my long-term success.

Employment Preparation

- Complete a practice job application.
- Create my resume and cover letter.
- Identify potential employers and/or specific jobs I can apply for.

- Consider what industries I might be interested in (for example, janitorial, substance abuse treatment, re-entry services, welding, warehouse, food service).
- Begin networking by asking people I know about job opportunities.

Health & Well-being

- Learn about Medi-Cal and other healthcare options for when I am released.
- Make a list of any medications I need.
- Develop a relapse prevention plan for managing stress, mental health, and substance use disorders or any other issues I may be facing when I return to the community.
- Learn simple ways to handle stress, anxiety, and anger.
- Practice breathing exercises or relaxation techniques.

Housing

- Secure a housing plan for my release.
- Research and secure transitional housing options.

Legal

- Seek out legal representation if needed for my circumstances.

First 1–6 Weeks: Laying the Groundwork

California ID/Documents

- Apply for my birth certificate if I have not received it yet.
- Find out if anyone has my Social Security Number, including family, friends, and attorneys.
- Order a replacement Social Security Card.
- Once I have my birth certificate, Social Security Number and other documents, go to the DMV to get my California ID (Review Chapter 5 – Getting Your California ID in the Community to make sure I have all the necessary documentation).

Community & Support

- Strengthen positive relationships and support networks.
- Identify supportive friends and family members who can offer emotional, financial, or practical assistance.
- Continue developing healthy communication and boundary-setting skills.
- Attend a support group or mentoring program.
- Attend 12-Step meetings (if needed).
- Secure a 12-Step sponsor (if needed).

Employment

- Set up an email for job hunting (for example, firstname.lastname@gmail.com).

- Visit a workforce center or job assistance program.
- Begin applying for jobs.
- Ask people I know if they have job leads.

Financial Stability

- Apply for General Assistance and Cal Fresh (EBT) at the County Social Services Office.
- Once I get my California ID, open a bank account (consider a credit union for lower fees).
- Learn the basics of budgeting: write down my income and expenses.
- Start saving a little money each week, even if it's just a few dollars.
- Learn how to use a debit card safely.

Health & Well-being

- Apply for Medi-Cal at the County Social Services Office.
- Set up medical and mental health appointments.
- Begin a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and good nutrition.
- Continue using coping strategies to manage stress and emotions.
- Use my relapse prevention plan and seek support when needed.

Housing

- Move into transitional housing and learn the policies and resources they provide.

Legal

- Meet with my Parole Agent and review my conditions.
- Identify any resources they may have available.

Transportation

- Learn to use public transit or other transportation options (for example, bicycle, ride share).
- Identify people who may be able to give me rides to appointments.

6 Weeks – 3 Months After Release

California ID & Legal Documents

- Continue to work on getting my birth certificate, Social Security Card, and California ID (if needed).

Community & Support

- Continue building meaningful connections with friends and family who support my long-term success.
- Strengthen relationships with supportive friends and family who encourage progress and stability.
- Keep developing and practicing healthy communication and boundary-setting skills.
- Keep attending support groups and 12-Step meetings (if needed).

- Continue working with my sponsor (if needed).
- Find mentorship opportunities.

Employment

- Keep applying for jobs and going to interviews.
- Update my resume and cover letter.
- Keep asking people about job leads.
- Once hired, maintain steady employment, advance in my job, or keep looking for better opportunities.
- Consider taking a basic computer class.

Financial Stability

- Keep saving money, even small amounts.
- Track my expenses to know where my money is going.
- Learn about credit and how to avoid debt.
- Open checking and savings accounts.
- Continue building credit and improving financial habits.

Health & Well-being

- Keep up with medical and mental health appointments.
- Continue to maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and good nutrition.
- Continue using coping strategies to manage stress and emotions.

- Follow my relapse prevention plan and reach out for support when necessary.

Housing

- Prepare for long-term housing if I haven't already.
- Strengthen my support system within my housing community.

Legal

- Continue meeting with my Parole Agent and updating them on any changes.

Transportation

- Save money for transportation expenses (bus passes, bike, ride share).
- If you are a senior or have a low income, you may be able to get a discounted bus or train pass.
- Keep learning about public transit, bicycle, and ride-share options.
- Consider saving for a car while considering costs (insurance, registration, and upkeep costs).

6 Months – 1 Year: Building Stability

Community & Support

- Continue developing friendships and family relationships that contribute to my long-term success.
- Keep attending support groups and 12-Step meetings (if needed).
- Continue working with my sponsor (if needed).
- Strengthen relationships with supportive friends and family members.
- Keep developing and practicing healthy communication and boundary-setting skills.
- Look for opportunities to volunteer or engage with community groups.

Employment

- Maintain steady employment or look for better job opportunities.
- Seek job training, certifications, or skill-building programs.
- Expand my support network and seek mentorship.
- Continue learning computer and technology skills to improve job performance.
- Explore career advancement options or higher-paying positions.

Financial Stability

- Keep saving money and managing my budget wisely.

- Work on improving my credit score.
- Open and maintain a checking and savings account (if I haven't already).
- Plan for big financial goals like housing, transportation, or education.
- Learn more about financial literacy, including responsible credit use and savings strategies.

Health & Well-being

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and good nutrition.
- Continue using coping strategies to manage stress and emotions.
- Follow my relapse prevention plan and reach out for support when necessary.

Housing

- Secure stable, long-term housing if I haven't already.
- Strengthen my support system within my housing community.

Legal

- Continue meeting with my Parole Agent and updating them on any changes.

Transportation

- Keep learning to navigate public transit if needed.

- Save money for transportation expenses (bus passes, saving for a car, etc.).
- If considering a car purchase, plan for insurance, registration, and upkeep costs.

1 Year & Beyond: Long-Term Success

Community & Support

- Continue developing friendships and family relationships that contribute to my long-term success.
- Stay involved in support groups or mentoring programs.
- Keep attending support groups and 12-Step meetings (if needed).
- Continue working with my sponsor (if needed).
- Seek opportunities to give back to the community through volunteering.

Employment

- Keep growing in my career or find better jobs.
- Consider getting additional job training or certifications.

Financial Stability

- Keep saving and improving my credit.
- Stick to a simple budget.
- Learn more about managing money for long-term stability.

Health & Well-being

- Keep up with medical and mental health appointments.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and good nutrition.
- Continue using coping strategies to manage stress and emotions.
- Follow my relapse prevention plan and reach out for support when necessary.

Housing

- Look for permanent, stable housing.
- Learn about programs that help with housing costs (call 211).

Transportation

- Keep using affordable transportation options.
- Continue saving for a car and plan for car-related costs.



APPENDIX

Appendix **A.** What You Need to Get Hired – Summary of I-9 Form Requirements

The information below is a summary and includes examples of documents you may be able to use for the I-9 form. This is **not** an official government document and does not include all possible documents. For the full, official list, go to: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-acceptable-documents>

When you start a new job in the United States, your employer is required by law to have you fill out a federal Form I-9. This form is used to confirm two things:

- 1) Who you are (your identity), and**
- 2) That you're allowed to work in the U.S. (your work authorization).**

You'll need to show original, unexpired documents that prove these things.

You have two options when providing documents for the I-9:

- 1) Bring one document that proves BOTH your identity and that you're allowed to work (called a List A document), OR**
- 2) Bring one document that proves who you are (List B) AND one that proves you're allowed to work (List C).**

List A: Documents That Prove BOTH Identity and Work Eligibility

Examples include:

- ▶ U.S. Passport or Passport Card
- ▶ Green Card (Permanent Resident Card) – Form I-551
- ▶ Work permit card with photo (Form I-766)
- ▶ Foreign passport with a visa or stamp showing you can work

List B: Documents That Prove Identity Only

Examples include:

- ▶ State, Federal, or Local Government ID Card, or driver's license with your photo and personal information
- ▶ School ID with a photo
- ▶ Military issued ID
- ▶ Voter registration card
- ▶ Native American Tribal document or Canadian government-issued ID

List C: Documents That Prove You're Allowed to Work

Examples include:

- ▶ Social Security Card, as long as it doesn't say:
 - 1) NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT
 - 2) VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH INS AUTHORIZATION
 - 3) VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION
- ▶ U.S. birth certificate or certification of birth abroad
- ▶ Native American Tribal document
- ▶ Other documents from immigration or DHS showing that you can work
- ▶ U.S. Citizen ID Card (Form I-197)
- ▶ Identification Card for Use of Resident Citizen in the United States (Form I-179)
- ▶ Employment authorization document issued by the Department of Homeland Security

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Form I-9 Acceptable Documents List. Retrieved from <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-acceptable-documents>

Appendix **B.** Proving Who You Are – Examples of Identity Documents for Cal-ID

This appendix provides examples of documents you can use to prove your identity when applying for a California ID. It is based on publicly available information from the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

This is not an official government document. It is meant to be helpful, but always check www.dmv.ca.gov for the most up-to-date and official information. For a full list of acceptable documents, visit the DMV website.

These are identity documents only. You will also need to show proof that you live in California. See Appendix C for examples of acceptable residency documents.

Proof of Identity (You only need ONE of the following):

- ▶ A certified U.S. birth certificate (from a city, county, or state office)
- ▶ A valid/unexpired U.S. Passport or Passport Card
- ▶ A Certificate of U.S. Citizenship or Naturalization
- ▶ A U.S. Certificate of Birth Abroad
- ▶ Native American Tribal documents, including:
 - ▷ A federal Indian Blood Degree Card (from the Bureau of Indian Affairs)
 - ▷ An American Indian Card
- ▶ Military records, including:
 - ▷ A Military ID Card (Active, Reserve, or Retired)
 - ▷ DD-214 discharge papers
- ▶ Mexican Border Crossing Card with valid I-94 (especially important for people born in Mexico)

- ▶ Canadian birth certificate or valid/unexpired passport
- ▶ A Permanent Resident Card or Employment Authorization Card (EAD)
- ▶ A valid foreign passport with an I-94 or stamp showing legal entry
- ▶ A Northern Mariana Card
- ▶ A valid/unexpired Resident Alien Card
- ▶ A Temporary Resident or Asylee/Refugee Document
- ▶ A certified and signed court order showing your name, birthdate, and legal status
- ▶ A Notice of Action showing pending lawful status or updated residency (I-797)

If Your Name Has Changed (You only need One of the following):

- ▶ A marriage certificate
- ▶ A legal name change paper with your name before and after the name change
- ▶ An adoption record with your adopted legal name
- ▶ A divorce paper showing your name before and after
- ▶ A domestic partnership certificate or registration document

Social Security Number (SSN)

If you have a Social Security Number, you must provide it.

– If you are legally in the US but not eligible for an SSN, you can still apply—you are exempt from this requirement.

Source: California Department of Motor Vehicles. “Driver License and Identification (DL/ID) Card Application Requirements.” Retrieved from <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/driver-licenses-identification-cards/>

Appendix C Showing Where You Live – Examples of Residency Documents for Cal-ID

This guide lists examples of documents the California DMV accepts as proof that you live in California. It's based on publicly available information and is meant to help you understand what's usually accepted. This is not an official government document. For the full and most current list, visit www.dmv.ca.gov.

You Can Use These Residency Documents:

All documents must have your first and last name as well as your California mailing address.

- ▶ Rental or lease agreement with the names and signatures of the landlord and the tenant
- ▶ **No Fee California ID Eligibility form (DL 933) – Request from your Parole Agent**
- ▶ Voter registration letter or card from the California Secretary of State or local elections officer – Apply when you come home
- ▶ Deed or title to a residential property
- ▶ Mortgage bill
- ▶ Utility bill (gas, electric, water, or phone—including cell phones)
- ▶ School document from a U.S. school with your name, birthdate, and a photo at the time the document was issued (if a foreign school, document must be sealed by the school)
- ▶ Medical document (from a doctor or clinic)

- ▶ Faith-based letter on their letterhead with your name and the name and address of the organization stating that the person is a resident of California
- ▶ Insurance document (car, health, life, dental, rental, etc.)
- ▶ IRS or California tax return (any year)
- ▶ Government document from a city, county, state, department or agency that is typed and contains the agency or department name, state seal, or is on official letterhead with your name and address
- ▶ California vehicle registration or title
- ▶ Postal Service Change of Address form (CNL107)
- ▶ Bank, credit union, or credit card statement
- ▶ Court papers showing you live in California
- ▶ Letter from a shelter or nonprofit saying you live in California
- ▶ Proof that you paid in-state college tuition at a public school
- ▶ Claim for a property tax exemption (BOE-266) filed with the County Assessor
- ▶ If your name has changed (due to marriage, divorce, adoption, etc.), you will need to bring documents showing the name change

Source: California Department of Motor Vehicles. “Driver License and Identification (DL/ID) Card Application Requirements.” Retrieved from <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/driver-licenses-identification-cards/>

Residency Documents — Why We Recommend Bringing Two

When you apply for a California ID or driver's license, the rules about residency documents can be confusing. The official law only requires one residency document. But in real life, many DMV offices ask people for two—especially if you have never had a California ID before or you are coming home after being incarcerated for many years.

We want you to be fully prepared, so we strongly recommend bringing two residency documents when you go to the DMV, even though only one is required under the law. Different DMV offices can have different practices, so it helps to ask around: talk to people who recently went to the same DMV and find out what they were asked to show.

Below is the official legal language, followed by an explanation of why it causes confusion.

Official Legal Language (California Code of Regulations, Title 13 §15.01)

“Except as otherwise provided by law, the department may not issue a driver's license or identification card to any person unless the person presents to the department proof of their legal presence, as specified in Section 15.00 of this Article, and proof of California residency.”

- a)** “An applicant for a driver's license or identification card under Section 15.00 shall submit one document from subsection (d) that contains the applicant's residence address. With the exception of documents listed in subsections (d)(19) through (d)(21), the document must list the applicant's first and last name and the California residence address must match the residence address as listed on the driver's license or identification card application. If

the applicant includes a separate mailing address on the driver's license or identification card application, the address on the document must match the mailing address included on the application."

- b) "Notwithstanding subsection (a), a parent, legal guardian, or child may use a birth certificate and a spouse or domestic partner may use a marriage license or domestic partner record..."

What This Means in Practice

- ▶ The law says you need to show one residency document.
- ▶ This applies to both standard California IDs and standard driver's licenses.
- ▶ The regulation has said "one document" ever since it was created in 2017.

However:

- ▶ The California Driver Handbook (which DMV staff use as guidance) tells applicants they must bring two proofs of California residency to get a driver's license.
- ▶ The DMV website uses plural wording—"residency documents"—for both IDs and licenses, without clearly saying if one or two are needed.
- ▶ For a REAL ID, the DMV clearly requires two documents.

Appendix **D.** Getting or Replacing Your Social Security Card – Guide

This guide lists examples of documents you may need to get or replace your Social Security Card. It's based on publicly available information and is meant to help you understand what's usually accepted. These are examples, not a complete list. This is not an official government document. For the full and most current information, visit www.ssa.gov.

When Is an SSN Required?

You are required to provide your SSN when applying for some government services, including a state ID or driver's license. A Social Security Card is also one of the documents that employers may ask for during the hiring process, but it is only one of the documents that can be used to verify your identity and work eligibility.

How to Get or Replace a Social Security Card

To get or replace a Social Security card, you must complete Form SS-5 and provide original documents that prove your identity and your U.S. citizenship or immigration status. There is no fee to apply. You can apply in person or by mailing in your documents to your local SSA office.

Documents the SSA May Ask For

SSA groups documents into three categories:

1. Evidence of Age

Common examples include:

Certified U.S. birth certificate (strongly preferred)

If you don't have your birth certificate, they will consider:

- ▶ Religious record made before age 5 (such as a baptism certificate) that shows your age
- ▶ U.S. hospital record of birth (created at time of birth)
- ▶ U.S. passport
- ▶ Final Adoption Decree (that shows the source of birth date is the original birth certificate)

2. Evidence of Identity

These documents must show your name, date of birth or age, and ideally a recent photo, or if no photo included, must include a physical description with height, hair and eye color, etc.

- ▶ California ID or driver's license
- ▶ U.S. Passport

If you do not have these documents, they *may* accept:

- ▶ Health insurance or Medi-Cal card
- ▶ Work ID, school ID, or medical insurance card

- ▶ School identity card
- ▶ Certified medical record
- ▶ U.S. military identity card

3. Evidence of U.S. Citizenship or Immigration Status

Examples include:

- ▶ U.S. birth certificate
- ▶ U.S. passport
- ▶ Certificate of Citizenship or Naturalization
- ▶ Permanent Resident Card (Green Card) – Form I-551
- ▶ Other official DHS documents showing immigration status

What If You Don't Have the Required Documents?

The SSA has said that if you do not have the documents listed on their website, you can call your local SSA office and explain your situation. They may work with you to find other acceptable documents. To find your local office or get more help, call 1-800-772-1213 or visit www.ssa.gov.

Source: Social Security Administration. “Learn What Documents You Need.” Retrieved from <https://www.ssa.gov> or call 1-800-772-1213.