



REENTRY GUIDE

What every incarcerated individual about to be released needs to remember is that just as you had to learn prison when you first went to prison, the same is true for the returning citizen. You must learn how to be a citizen again. It is wise to study and learn the policy directives of the MDOC that will govern your parole and the parole process. Those policy directives are available online at any time to be perused once you are released, or you can obtain them from the prison law library before you are released. You will want to familiarize yourself with P.D. 06.05.104 Parole Process.

LIFE NECESSITIES

A. Food

1. Bridge Card (Food Stamps)

On your first day of release, or as soon as possible thereafter, go to your local or county Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Explain to them that you have recently been released from prison and are now on parole, and that you need to apply for a Bridge Card, as well as Medicaid. For anyone needing a comprehensive list of the county DHHS offices in Michigan, you can simply contact Humanity for Prisoners (HFP) for the complete list, or just the location and address that you need. You can also go online, or have someone go online for you, to obtain the address to your local DHHS.

What is a Bridge Card? A Bridge Card is what used to be known as food stamps. Now, instead of giving a person a booklet of food stamps, DHHS puts money on a card, like a credit card, that you can use at any store to buy food and beverages. Every month on a certain date, DHHS will reload your Bridge Card with more funds. The amount of funds, and the duration of how long you will remain eligible for funds, will be determined by a case manager that will be assigned to you by DHHS.

While you are at DHHS you should also request to apply for Medicaid. Medicaid is health insurance. It covers medical, dental, and vision insurance. What is the difference between Medicaid and Medicare? Medicaid is income based, and Medicare is age based. You qualify for Medicaid because you have not had adequate income during your incarceration. We will talk more about Medicaid and health insurance below.

It will take about 7 days for your Bridge Card to be mailed to you. During the time being, ask DHHS if they have contact information for any food pantries, churches that provide food or meals, etc. They will have information for you to obtain food while you are waiting on your Bridge Card. Ask them where you can obtain food vouchers. They will most likely send you to Goodwill, but they may have food vouchers at DHHS also.

If you have money and are not wondering where your next meal will come from, then good for you. Go to DHHS anyway and apply for a Bridge Card and Medicaid. The reason being is that you are eligible for that assistance because of your lack of income so why not accept it, and moreover, you are going to need any money that you do have for other things.

2. Food Pantries

Food Pantries (Food Banks) are usually churches that run a food distribution service. DHHS should have a list of Food Pantries that are near you. You can also obtain a list of Food Pantries, Food Banks, or Soup Kitchens from Goodwill. You can contact HFP for a comprehensive list of Goodwill locations in Michigan, or simply a specific location in a specific county. Your parole officer may also have a list of Food Pantries in the area. You won't know unless you ask.

B. Clothing

If you haven't been paroled from the MDOC before, then you should know you will be provided dress-out clothing for your departure. Recently, the policy directive changed regarding dress-out clothing upon release. It used to be that you could wear personal clothing out the gate. Now, the MDOC requires you to wear the dress-out clothing they provide. If you have the means, you can change into civilian clothes as soon as possible upon leaving prison grounds. If not, then you are going to have to obtain clothing once you are released.

1. Goodwill

Goodwill is an American nonprofit 501 organization that provides job training, employment placement services, and other community-based programs for people who have barriers to their employment. Goodwill is a network of 180 world-wide autonomous non-profit charitable organizations governed by local volunteer boards of directors. To locate a Goodwill in your area, simply do an internet search of the city or area you are in. Once at a Goodwill location, inquire as to the services that are provided and ask to speak to someone about available resources. Goodwill will be able to help you with clothing, housing, transportation resources, and employment.

2. Thrift Stores

What is a thrift store? A thrift store sells gently used clothing, furniture, and other household items at a discounted price. Thrift stores are everywhere and are available in most cities. If you do not have a lot of money upon your release and need clothing quickly, a thrift store is a good place to look for discounted clothing.

C. Housing

1. Home Placement

Before you are paroled from the MDOC, the parole board will want to know if you have *home placement* available as part of your parole plan. Home placement is basically the home you will begin living in while on parole. Said home can be your own, or someone else's residence, such as a family member or friend. Keep in mind that usually the parole board will have as a stipulation of your parole, that you must not change your residence without approval of your parole officer first.

2. Community Placement

What is *community placement*? *Community placement* is for individuals that do not have home placement, or that do not elect to go to home placement and are about to be released on parole. Usually, the MDOC has places arranged in every county where parolees can go for housing. Community placement can be a halfway house, a motel room, an apartment complex, or a commercial reentry program. Keep in mind that if you must go to *community placement*, it is only temporary. You can obtain your own home placement as soon as you are able, and your parole officer should not have any issues with you moving into your own place, or an alternate residence. Don't forget to let your parole agent know in advance that you are moving though. Your parole officer will have to approve your new residence before you move there.

3. Reentry Programs

There are organizations that are independent from the state or MDOC that provide reentry services for returning citizens. Usually, those organizations are non-profits and may be religious based, or some of them may be secular. In either case, they usually are a very valuable resource for housing, employment assistance, and recovery services. Some examples of reentry organizations are: *Fresh Coast Alliance*, 1190 Apple Ave., Muskegon, MI 49442, Phone: 231-286-1992. Another similar organization is *70 x 7 Life Recovery*, 97 W. 22nd St., Holland, Michigan 49423 616-796-0685.

4. Missions (Shelters)

There are many missions, or homeless shelters that are available that can provide immediate assistance with food, clothing, and housing. For reentry info specific to a particular county, contact HFP for a county specific reentry resource packet.

D. Transportation

The Office of Passenger Transportation (OPT) administers MDOT's passenger transportation programs, including local transit, intercity bus, and for-hire passenger regulation, to provide a safe and balanced statewide network of passenger transportation services to meet the social, safety, and economic well-being of the state. Unless you live in a metropolis, and work within walking distance from where you live, you will need transportation to go places and do things. For an individual on parole, transportation can be challenging to obtain at first. You will need transportation to the grocery shop, report to your agent, go to school, go to work, go to appointments, etc. Below are some suggestions.

1. Bus

If you have never ridden on public transportation buses, you should know that there are national and regional bus systems. A national bus system, for example, would be like Greyhound, or American Indian. Throughout Michigan, there are 82 local public transit agencies connecting residents to their community. There are Rural Transit Agencies, and there are Urban Transit Agencies. You will have to research your area to determine what mode of public transportation is available, and the costs associated with the same.

2. Uber (Taxis)

To utilize the services of Uber, you must first create an account. Download the Uber app from the App Store or Google Play, then create an account with your email address and mobile phone number. A payment method is also needed before you can request a ride.

3. Transportation Services

There are alternative transportation services available to the returning citizen, i.e., Go2, MiDriver, etc. Some of these services are shuttle bus transport, and some of them are regular automobile transports. You will have to research your options upon your release to determine the best mode of transportation for you.

4. Personal Vehicle

How to buy a used car from a dealer or private seller. A used car is a great way to save some cash but consider these tips before you buy.

Buying a used car is a great way to save money and still obtain the transportation you need for work, school, or life in general. But before you make a purchase, consider these questions:

- Should I buy through a dealer or private individual?
- What are the benefits of trading in my vehicle vs selling the vehicle myself?
- How do I know the used car I want to buy is sound? Once you've decided to buy a used car, here are some tips that may help with the process.

Used car buying tips

Before purchasing a used vehicle, start with these suggestions:

- Inspect the car yourself for mechanical soundness, or have it inspected by a certified mechanic. Look for signs of wear and tear, rust, paint gouges, and other red flags.
- Buy a vehicle report from an independent service, such as CARFAX or Consumer Reports. You can learn about any serious damage the car may have sustained, such as flooding or a bent frame.
- Check official guides, like Kelley Blue Book or NADA, for pricing on the vehicle you want. Value will vary according to the make and model, age, condition, mileage, and the car's features. With this information, you can negotiate with the seller for the best price.

- Protect yourself against fraud. Before buying, check the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to ensure the car hasn't been reported as stolen. Also, look at the VIN tag and registration documentation to be sure they haven't been tampered with. It's wise to take extra precautions with any private sellers who want cash only or won't provide a home address and phone number.

E. Health

Now that you have been released from prison you are responsible for your own healthcare. That includes your physical wellbeing, as well as your mental wellbeing. Most healthcare insurance will cover both.

1. Physical Health

a. Insurance – Immediately upon your release, you should go to DHHS to apply for Medicaid and a bridge card. Medicaid insurance covers medical, vision, and dental coverage. However, when you schedule an appointment for any kind of medical reason, you must first ensure that the primary care provider accepts Medicaid. You don't want to show up for an appointment only to find out that the doctor or dentist doesn't accept Medicaid.

b. Check-ups

As you experienced annual screenings by healthcare while incarcerated, you should schedule regular check-ups to maintain your health, or prevent any medical issues. This would include medical, vision, and dental check-ups.

2. Mental Health

If you were paroled and you have mental health needs, the parole board will place your case in D-47 Deferral status for Mental Health needs, and the parole board will go through the process of having services set up before you parole. If a parolee has mental health needs that are not severe, the Agent can refer the offender to services in the community.

a. Therapy

If the offender has mild mental health needs after being placed on parole, the parole agent can refer the returning citizen to Community Mental Health services in the community as well. There are community service clinics that can be contacted to provide the services you might need. Arbor Circle or Catholic Charities are two of such clinics that provide recovery services, mental health services, and counseling to those in the community. Depending on the type of insurance you have will determine the costs, if any, of the services requested.

b. Medication

When a prisoner is paroled, the facility will give the returning citizen a 30-day supply of the medication the parolee needs. This will give the parolee enough time to see a doctor and get any refills that are prescribed. Additionally, the facility assists with getting the returning citizen set up with Medicaid. Once the medications are prescribed by a doctor, then the parolee should be able to pick-up the medications at a pharmacy with Medicaid. If you have any issues or problems regarding your health or obtaining necessary healthcare, ask your parole officer for assistance.

SOCIETAL NECESSITIES

A. Documentation

To live as a returning citizen in society, you will need certain documents to function productively. It is the law that you have identification to work, go to school, apply for benefits, etc. The MPRI Program of the MDOC does provide some of the documents you will need to function productively, however, some documents you might have to obtain in person.

1. Driver's License

How to Get a Driver's License in Michigan – Over 18 Years Old

If you are over 18 and have never had a license, you will need to head to your local Michigan Secretary of State Office to apply for your temporary instruction permit.

- Book an appointment to reduce time. Some locations may require you to make an appointment in advance.

- Gather your documents. You will need to provide approved documents to prove:
 - Identity
 - Social Security Number
 - Citizenship or legal presence
 - Residency
 - Pass a Vision Exam with or without corrective lenses. If you need lenses to pass, you will be required to wear them while driving.
- Take the Knowledge Test. The written exam contains 50 questions about laws, road signs, and safe driving practices. You need to get 40 questions right to pass, otherwise, you will need to reschedule to take the test again.
- Pay the required fees.
- Practice with a licensed adult for at least 30 days. You will not need to log your hours if you are over 18
- Take the driving skills test. It will measure your familiarity with the road, laws, and operation of a vehicle.
- Have your photo taken, pay the fee, and receive a temporary paper license. Your new Michigan driver's license will come in the mail within three weeks.

2. State ID

Michigan residents can apply to the Secretary of State for a state identification card. Under Michigan law, a state ID card is as valid as a driver's license for identification purposes. ID cards are valid for up to four years and should arrive in the mail within two to three weeks after you apply.

3. Social Security Card

You can get a social security card or a replacement card for free from the Social Security Administration. If you do not get your card before you leave prison, the application and other information can be found at <https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber>. Moreover, there are Secretary of State departments in most counties and in several communities.

4. Birth Certificate

Birth certificates can be ordered while you are in prison from the state where you were born. If you do not get your birth certificate before you leave prison, this website shows you where to write for vital records for each state and territory: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>.

B. Employment

Your resume and cover letter are often the first impression employers will make of you, so it is critical that both reflect the best you have to offer. A well-constructed resume and compelling cover letter can make the difference between getting your foot in the door and being just another name in the pile. In fact, a poorly written resume or cover letter can take you out of the running completely. Take advantage of the many resume and cover letter writing resources available to ensure you are making the best first impression and look at some of our own tips and pointers below to make your resume and cover letter the best it can be!

1. Resumes

Objective Statement – Many people these days like to include an “objective statement” at the top of their resume, but many experts are starting to advise against it as well. If you do want to include one, make sure it adds something to the resume. If your Objective Statement is “I want to work in IT” and you are applying for a job in IT, that does not help the employer. If, however, your Objective Statement is more along the lines of “I want to pursue a fulfilling career in the Healthcare IT industry using my strong computer networking and Java programming skills”, then you may have a case to include an objective statement. Be specific with what your objective is, and if you find that you don't really know what your objective is, then ditch it.

Length – Unless you feel your background really calls for more, limit your resume to one page. Employers don't expect college students and recent graduates to have tons of professional experience, and therefore will be expecting one

nice page. Fill up one page, making sure you are cognizant of the amount of “white space”, with your most relevant points of experience.

Work History – Any work and compelling activities or volunteer experience should be put into strong bullet points, starting with a solid verb. You don’t need more than 3-5 bullets per position, but make sure the bullets accurately and fully describe what your tasks were, how you accomplished them, etc. When possible, try to align your experience and bullets with the job or internship description you are applying for.

Grammar – Double, triple, and quadruple check your grammar. Have your parents, grandparents, and cousins read over your resume before submitting it to any prospective employer, and then check again. There is no excuse for having spelling and grammatical errors on a resume.

Best Experience First – A lot of students have very little relevant work experience, and that’s fine, but make sure your best experience is at the top of your resume. If you have only worked at generic fast-food restaurants or grocery stores, that probably isn’t going to appeal to many IT or engineering companies, so put your education and some interesting classes at the top of your resume. If you taught yourself how to program, make sure employers are seeing that. If you have a strong certificate, make sure that is highly visible. Don’t use a set order on your resume for no reason.

Formatting is your Friend – Find a nice, clean resume template (generally staying away from those with extravagant designs) somewhere on the internet and insert your experience into it, changing around the order when you see fit. It’s very clear to employers when someone starts a resume from scratch, which is OK, but you can find nice templates out there that effectively use bold, bullets, indents, etc. effectively and help your resume look that much sharper.

Avoid opinions – It’s great to showcase what your interests and talents are, even if it has nothing to do with your work experience, but make sure it is adding something to your resume. We don’t need to know what church you go to; we don’t need to know that you think your school is the best, we don’t need to know that you have four siblings. Keep it professional.

2. Applications

The job application is the gateway to an interview with a company. It is critical that your application present the best information possible in the most skillful way possible. Remember, the employer will likely be looking at how you answer the questions as closely as the actual answers. It is critical that your application is accurate, fully complete, and neat. Filling out a practice application first may help you to formulate your answers and ensure a clean final version. Find tips at [About Careers](#) and [eHow](#). Some tips to consider:

Read the instructions and the entire application carefully before you start to fill it out. Write legibly, using a blue or black ink pen. If you have bad handwriting, consider typing your application. Include only positive information on the application – but do not claim to have experience or skills that you do not possess.

If a question does not apply to you, indicate with a N/A or dash. Otherwise, it may appear to the employer that you missed the question. Allocate the most space on the job application to include applicable and pertinent information about yourself. Answer honestly, but do not share more than the question is asking.

Apply for a specific job(s). To indicate you would be interested in other jobs besides the one you are applying for, write the job title followed by (or “similar position”).

3. Interviews

What do you want to do? What skills do you have? What other skills might you need? Do you know which location you want to work? This is especially important if you are looking to change professions or fields.

It is important to focus your job search on jobs you are truly interested in pursuing and are qualified for. Developing a career plan is a way to focus your job search. Start by deciding the following:

- Location
- Career Category

- Job Titles
- Salary Expectations
- Type of Employment (Full time, part time or seasonal)
- Hours Available to Work
- Do you need to continue your education?

Temp Agencies

Many felons report having luck getting employed when they go through a temp agency. The benefit of working with a temp agency when you have a felony conviction is that they will only offer you jobs that they think you can get. The temp agency already has a contract with an employer, and they know exactly who is qualified to get a job. This makes your job search less of a desperate shot in the dark. Additionally, temp agencies enable you to apply to multiple positions at once. When you sign up with a temp agency and submit your resume and references, they do the job search for you. Once they find something, you just must be ready to take it. Signing up with a temp agency will not cost you any money. This is because they get paid by the employers when they recruit someone for an open position. Keep in mind that most temp agencies will run a background check on you, and some will reject you because of the criminal record. However, many temp agencies regularly work with felons and help them find good jobs. While temp jobs can be very frustrating because they last a few weeks to a few months, it's still a step in the right direction and there is some cash flow in your pocket. Although not ideal long term, having various temping jobs helps you build your resume and demonstrates to prospective employers that you are serious about working hard and holding down a job.

C. School

If you are considering furthering your education, we highly recommend that you do. Furthering your education is one of the smartest decisions you can make in your life.

1. Vocational Certifications

Vocational schools and certificate programs train students for skilled jobs, including automotive technicians, medical assistants, hair stylists, certified nursing aids, electronics technicians, paralegals, and truck drivers. Some schools also help students find possible employers and apply for jobs.

Some community colleges offer professional training programs that might give you the experience, degree, or certification you need. And community college tuition may be less than at private vocational schools. Some businesses offer education programs through apprenticeships or on-the-job training. Do some research and talk with people in the field. Find out if apprenticeships are an option for you.

If you're considering a four-year university, use the Department of Education's college search tool — College Scorecard — to find and compare colleges and career schools that fit your goals.

2. College

Investing in oneself is invaluable and going to college is an excellent way to do just that. Now, anyone can get a free college education up to an associate degree. Below are some of the things you need to know about financing your education.

a. FAFSA

FAFSA is an acronym that means Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It encompasses federal student loans, special grants, as well as the Pell Grant. You can complete the free application online, or you can mail the application in through the postal service. Most people submit the form online because of convenience and the time saved in having your application processed. If you choose to mail your application via the postal service, mail your application to the address below.

b. Pell Grant

A Pell Grant is a subsidy the U.S. federal government provides for students who need it to pay for college. Federal Pell Grants are limited to students with financial need, who have not earned their first bachelor's degree, or who are enrolled in certain post-baccalaureate programs, through participating institutions. Originally known as a Basic Educational Opportunity Grant, it was renamed in 1980 in honor of Democratic U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island. A Pell Grant is generally considered the foundation of a student's financial aid package, to which other forms of aid are added. The Federal Pell Grant program is administered by the United States Department of Education, which determines the student's financial need and through it, the student's Pell eligibility. The U.S. Department of Education uses a standard formula to evaluate financial information reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for determining the student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Pell Grants were created by the Higher Education Act of 1965. These federal funded grants are not like loans and need not be repaid. Students may use their grants at any one of approximately 5,400 participating postsecondary institutions. These federally funded grants help about 5.4 million full-time and part-time college and vocational school students nationally.

c. Michigan Reconnect

Michigan Reconnect (Reconnect) is a last-dollar scholarship program that pays for you to attend your in-district community college tuition-free or offers a large tuition discount if you attend an out-of-district community college. You can use the scholarship to complete an associate degree or a Pell-eligible skill certificate program.

To be eligible, you must:

- Be at least 25 years old when you apply.
- Have lived in Michigan for a year or more.
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Have not yet completed a college degree (associate or bachelor's)

d. Scholarships

Scholarships are gifts. They don't need to be repaid. There are thousands of them, offered by schools, employers, individuals, private companies, nonprofits, communities, religious groups, and professional and social organizations.

Some scholarships for college are merit-based. You earn them by meeting or exceeding certain standards set by the scholarship-giver. Merit scholarships might be awarded based on academic achievement or on a combination of academics and a special talent, trait, or interest. Other scholarships are based on financial need.

Many scholarships are geared toward groups of people; for instance, there are scholarships for women or graduate students. And some are available because of where you or your parent work, or because you come from a certain background (for instance, there are scholarships for military families).

A scholarship might cover the entire cost of your tuition, or it might be a one-time award of a few hundred dollars. Either way, it's worth applying for, because it'll help reduce the cost of your education.

D. Recovery Programs

1. Addictions

People with addiction lose control over their actions. They crave and seek out drugs, alcohol, or other substances no matter what the cost—even at the risk of damaging friendships, hurting family, or losing jobs. What is it about addiction that makes people behave in such destructive ways? And why is it so hard to quit?

Scientists are working to learn more about the biology of addiction. They’ve shown that addiction is a long-lasting and complex brain disease, and that current treatments can help people control their addictions. But even for those who’ve successfully quit, there’s always a risk of the addiction returning, which is called relapse.

The biological basis of addiction helps to explain why people need much more than good intentions or willpower to break their addictions. “A common misperception is that addiction is a choice or moral problem, and all you must do is stop. But nothing could be further from the truth,” says Dr. George Koob, director of NIH’s National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Other forms of addiction include:

- Anger
- Codependency
- Eating Disorder
- Food Addiction
- Love & Relationship Addiction
- Physical-Sexual-Emotional Abuse
- Alcohol / Drug Addiction
- Sexual Addiction
- Gambling Addiction

2. Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous (AA/NA)

Alcoholics Anonymous offers a correspondence service connecting those in prison to AA members on the outside. This link brings you to the form. https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/f-73-ccs-2_InsiderRequestForm.pdf Corrections contact: Eileen Allers 212-870-3085

Narcotics Anonymous is a twelve-step based fellowship for those who think they may have a drug problem. They are a volunteer based, peer-support organization and they are not affiliated with any other recovery programs, rehabilitation centers, sober living homes or halfway houses. It is outside their purview to provide any advice or information related to those areas. The primary role is to help addicts find recovery through the NA program and to provide support to NA service bodies in their efforts to serve their respective communities.

NA World Services does not coordinate sponsorship or provide contact information for members from your local NA Community. If an inmate writes to them, they will provide them NA service committees for sponsorship or correspondence programs. Once you are released, you will be able to find a local AA or NA meeting near you. A simple Google search will provide multiple locations for said programming in your area.

NA World Services

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, California USA 91409

E. Your Record (Discrimination)

Michigan law prohibits discrimination in employment, education, housing, public accommodations, and public service. Unfortunately, the reality is that you will be discriminated against because of your felony conviction. You must refuse to be discouraged by this and continue to pursue the life you deserve.

1. Housing

Housing discrimination continues to be a significant problem in America nearly a half century after the passage of the Fair Housing Act. It is estimated that, annually, 4 million people experience discrimination in the rental housing market (NFHA, 2015). A very small number of those experiencing discrimination, however, report it. In 2014, for example, only about 27,000 housing discrimination complaints in both the rental and sales markets were filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Justice, and other substantially equivalent fair housing agencies (NFHA, 2015).

Despite the naked truth about housing discrimination, the parolee can find housing. You must remain persistent and not get discouraged.

2. Education

Educational institutions have a responsibility to protect every student's right to learn in a safe environment free from unlawful discrimination and to prevent unjust deprivations of that right. The Office for Civil Rights enforces several Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education.

Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 200 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20201 (800) 368-1019.

Rights to Equal Opportunity in Education

A complaint may be filed if, for reasons of religion, race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, or disability, a person has been:

- denied admission, services, activities, or programs.
- disciplined or expelled as a student without just cause.
- denied employment.
- forced to work or attend school-segregated facilities.
- treated unequally in terms of quality of education.
- treated unequally in working conditions.

Discrimination based upon your felon status is a grey area. Some argue that this type of discrimination is permissible, and others argue that such conduct is covered by Title VI of the federal code. The reality is that you *may* be discriminated against because of your previous incarceration. If this happens, you must be prepared to protect your rights. You may file a complaint with OCR using OCR's electronic complaint form at the following website: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html>.

3. Employment

You need to know whether you can legally do any of the jobs on your list and whether your community needs employees for the jobs on your list. Sometimes the law forbids people with criminal records from working in certain jobs and occupations. But some states and the federal government have taken steps to prevent discrimination against those who were incarcerated. Restrictions differ from state to state. You may want to consider some career pathways that are "reentry friendly" — that is, employers who welcome and encourage applicants who are reentering from the justice system.

Examples include computer science, culinary arts, business administration, communications, welding, and social work. Some states offer ways to get past these restrictions. These include Certificates of Rehabilitation, orders given by a judge or parole board in certain states that pardon a reentering citizen and restore their rights. A Certificate of Rehabilitation also removes restrictions like those on getting a license from a state industry licensing board. See the Clean Slate Clearinghouse website (<https://cleanslateclearinghouse.org/>) for state policies and information on clearing your record and

links to legal services in your state. Once you focus on specific jobs you'd like, you need to make sure that your record will not prevent you from working in that field. Some resources for finding out about these restrictions include the following:

- If you're still incarcerated, check with your correctional facility's education department, or ask your counselor or case manager.

- Information on work restrictions is available at <https://www.careeronestop.org/ExOffender/ExploreCareers/LearnAboutCareers/work-restrictions.aspx>.

- The report *After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry* describes barriers facing people with criminal records in all 50 states. It is available at https://law.stanford.edu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/default/files/publication/259864/doc/slspublic/LAC_PrintReport.pdf.

- The report *Criminal Records and Employment: Protecting yourself from discrimination* explains what New York employers may and may not ask about your criminal record. Find it at https://www.lac.org/assets/files/Criminal_Records_Employment.pdf.

- For more information about why employers should give a fair chance to workers with records, go to <https://www.nelp.org/publication/thebusiness-case-becoming-a-fair-chance-employer/> and download "The Business Case: Becoming a Fair-Chance Employer." Once you have narrowed your list down to a few career pathways, find out as much as you can about them.

For example, what jobs are available in this field? How many job openings are there in the community where I want to work? Do the jobs pay a living wage? Do they prepare me for the next steps in my career? What credentials or degrees will I need?

F. Relationships

Men and women who are incarcerated face substantial challenges to maintaining their family relationships, both intimate and parenting. These difficulties continue as they reenter into society after their incarceration.

1. Family

Among the many challenges facing prisoners as they return home is their reunification with family. For most former prisoners, relationships with family members are critical to successful reintegration, yet these relationships may be complicated by past experiences and unrealistic expectations. Family relationships are critical. More than 80% of men reentering from incarceration receive some kind of family assistance, and most name family support as the most important factor in helping them stay out of prison (La Vigne, Schollenberger, & Debus, 2009). Family support, acceptance, and encouragement for formerly incarcerated individuals are associated with more success in finding employment, reduced criminal behavior, and less substance abuse (Griswold & Pearson, 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003). You should know that rebuilding relationships with people takes time, it takes patience, and it takes empathy. You must care enough about the other person that you must want to learn about them and get to know them again.

2. Friends

Research highlights the importance of friends in determining whether returning prisoners will commit new crimes. A considerable body of prior research has demonstrated the importance of family relationships to the returning prisoner, but a new study John Boman and Thomas Mowen suggests that peer relationships may exert an even greater influence over success or failure.

3. Intimate Relationships

Many human services programs recognize the power of “social capital,” or the value that arises from relationships. Understanding what supports strong relationship quality among the formerly incarcerated and their partners could have an impact on individual, interpersonal, and community safety and wellbeing. Our advice regarding intimate relationships is to go slow. The process of rebuilding your life should be your top priority, but if you do enter an intimate relationship after your release remember that communication is key to any successful relationship. Moreover, you should know that relationships take work and patience. Don’t rush into a relationship either. Take your time.

G. Technology

If you don’t yet know how to use a computer or the internet, it’s very important to learn. Many adult education programs, public libraries, and the Department of Labor American Job Centers offer free classes on using computers and the internet. You also can use computers and the internet for free at your local public library if you have a library card. Keep in mind that you don’t need to become a “computer expert” and learn everything a computer can do. You can decide to learn more computer skills after you have figured out the basics. At a minimum, you need to create an email address so that you can communicate and receive information about education programs and jobs. You can get a free email address at websites like <https://mail.google.com> or <https://www.yahoo.com>. If you want to learn or improve computer skills on your own, there are free online resources that can help. You can learn basic computer skills like typing, using email, searching online, and using work-related software. Ask your education supervisor or the librarian in your facility if any resources are available in a computer lab onsite. You can also find online programs by going to the Department of Education’s LINCS Learner Center at <https://learner.lincs.ed.gov/>. Click on “Get Job Skills” at the top of the screen and look for resources that mention digital learning or computer skills. For example, Digital Learn (<https://www.digitallearn.org/>) and NorthStar Digital Literacy (<https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/>) offer basic and practice courses on using technology.

1. Smart Phones

Communication has evolved over time making methods simpler to contact someone thousands of miles away. Instead of waiting weeks for a response to a letter, you can get one back in a matter of minutes through texting or email. Technology continues to evolve; as a result, we must adapt and learn how to evolve with it.

Understand what kind of smartphone you have. While there are many makes and models of smartphones on the market today, the two major platforms they run on are Android and iOS.

- **iOS:** iOS is developed by Apple and is used on all iPhone and iPad devices. iOS devices tend to be a little more expensive, but they are also a little more user-friendly and have better security features. Apple is a little bit stricter on what apps are allowed for iPhone and iPad and does not allow you to install apps from unverified third-party sources.
- **Android:** Most non-Apple smartphones run on the Android operating system. It’s a little more complex and not as easy to use. Smartphone developers can customize the Android operating system for their own phone models. This means that the layout can be a little different from one phone make and model to another. Android is a little less strict on what apps are allowed on the platform, and you can install apps from unverified third-party sources. This also means that Android devices have more security flaws and require you to be more vigilant about what you download and install on your smartphone.

The types and styles of smart phones are numerous. You can purchase locked phones, unlocked phones, phones with service contracts, and those without contracts. Determining what type of service, you want, or need can help you determine the type of phone you will want. You will have to do some research to provide information regarding the different types of phones and models available.

Government Cellular Phones

Assurance Wireless is a Lifeline Assistance federally funded program. Assurance Wireless provides eligible, low-income customers a free Android cell phone with the most generous cell phone plan under “Assurance Wireless Unlimited.” It combines a Lifeline service with the temporary Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) to give eligible

customers unlimited data, texts, minutes and 10 gigabytes of hotspot data. You can apply for a government phone by going to assurancewireless.com.

2. Computers

The internet is a huge source of information and help. Even more important, today many applications — for jobs, for services, to get important documents, and to enroll in education programs — are submitted mostly or only through the internet. You'll see that most of the resources this guide recommends are online. To get access to them, you'll need to use a computer, mobile phone, or tablet with internet service. To apply or other important documents, though, you should use a computer or tablet. The larger screen size on computers and tablets will make it easier for you to check your work. Some online applications or other documents may not open properly on a mobile phone.

3. Social Media – **What Is Social Media?**

The term social media refers to a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone via web-based software or applications.

Social media has changed the way we all interact with each other online. It gives us the ability to discover what's happening in the world in real-time, to connect with each other and stay in touch with long-distance friends, and to have access to endless amounts of information at our fingertips. In many senses, social media has helped many individuals find common ground with others online, making the world seem more approachable.

Facebook is the largest social media platform in the world, with a clear advantage over other social media, though it has similar audiences to others like Twitter and Instagram. The figures for the most popular social media websites as of January 2021 are as follows:

Regarding social media, the best advice that we can provide to a returning citizen is to **NOT** give out your personal information to anyone. You should protect your social security number most of all.

H. Supervision

1. Parole

The Michigan Parole Board is the only body with authority to parole a felon in the custody of the Michigan Department of Corrections. The 10-member board gains jurisdiction over a case when the prisoner has served his or her entire minimum sentence. While a person is on parole that person is actually serving their sentence in society.

The Field Operations Administration (FOA) is responsible for state parole and probation supervision as well as other methods of specialized supervision.

FOA's parole and probation offices are in 10 regions throughout the state. While on parole, a person is typically supervised by a parole agent for a period of one to four years. A person is supervised by a parole agent who serves as a resource to increase the person's successful reintegration into the community. Parole Agents coordinate needed services such as mental health treatment, substance use counseling, housing, and employment. Probation agents supervise persons convicted of certain misdemeanors and felonies to ensure they comply with a court's probation order. Unlike parole, conditions of probation are set by the court that retains legal jurisdiction over the person's status. For those of you on probation, it would be advisable to familiarize yourself with the following policies:

Policy Directive 06.04.130 Case Management of Probationers and Parolees

Policy Directive 06.06.100 Parole Violation Process

Policy Directive 06.06.120 Probation Violation Process

The FOA also employs specialized supervision of persons including the use of electronic monitoring, sex offender specific caseloads, veteran caseloads, mental health caseloads, risk-based responses and incentives to technical parole violations in lieu of return to incarceration and coordinating and overseeing offenders who are supervised under the Interstate Compact Agreement.

You must follow all rules and stipulations assigned to you by the parole board, and/or your parole officer. It would be wise to familiarize yourself with all of the policy directives that center around the parole process. These will include, but are not limited to:

Policy Directive 06.04.104 Parole Process

Policy Directive 06.06.100 Parole Violation Process

What is parole like in Michigan?

Parole is a **conditional release** and is governed by Michigan Compiled Law 791.233. During a period that can range from one to four years, the parolee must meet the terms of supervision or risk being returned to prison for any period, up to the maximum sentence.

When you are released on parole, you will be required to report to your parole agent on the first day of your release. The parole board may have ordered that you wear a tether on your ankle. Or you may be required to wear a SCRAM Unit (Alcohol Monitor). It is not unheard of that the parole board requires a parole to wear both. Upon your first visit, your agent will place any monitors on you if necessary. You should know that you will be required to pay for the monitor, whether tether or SCRAM, in addition to any supervision fees. Your parole officer is there to assist your transition back into society. Don't hesitate to ask your agent for resources available to you in your county regarding food, transportation, employment, etc.

Common Parole Violations

Many different actions can result in violating parole. It is important to remember that each person will have different conditions for their parole. Here is a list of the most common violations:

- Not keeping the conditions court has assigned- this can include community service, meeting with your parole officer, and completing necessary paperwork on time
- Failing a drug or alcohol test
- Breaking the law or being accused of committing another crime.
- Missing court
- Leaving the state of Michigan without permission from your parole officer
- Moving- regardless of whether you are moving across town or to another state, you must get permission from your parole officer.

2. Probation

Statutory Authority

In all prosecutions for felonies or misdemeanors other than murder, treason, criminal sexual conduct in the first or third degree, armed robbery, and major controlled substance offenses, if the defendant has been found guilty upon verdict or plea and the court determines the defendant is unlikely to again engage in an offensive or criminal course of conduct and the public good does not require that the defendant shall suffer the penalty imposed by law, the court may place the defendant on probation under the charge and supervision of a probation officer. MCL 771.1(1).

General

A district court probation officer, under the general direction of the chief judge, judge, or court administrator, conducts investigations and prepares information to assist the district court judge in determining appropriate sentences of

individuals brought before the court. The district court probation officer shall supervise the probationer during the term of probation and may recommend relevant programs for rehabilitation. Just as with a parole officer, you will have to follow all rules imposed on you by the probation officer.

The probation officer is responsible for informing the client of all terms of probation as written on the order, facilitating the probationer's compliance with these terms, monitoring the probationer's progress, and informing the court of the probationer's conduct during the period of probation when the probation is terminated. Similarly, if the probation officer believes the probationer has violated the terms of probation during the term of reporting probation, the officer should bring probation violation or revocation procedures (SCAO approved form MC 246 or MC 246a). All monitoring is done through face-to-face contacts and interviews.

Conclusion

One thing that the parolee must not forget is how it felt in prison. Remember the sounds of the siren for emergency count or remember what it was like to have a corrections officer pressuring you to finish your food tray and exit food service. Or remember what it felt like when a guard flips your property during a shakedown. You must not forget what it was like. You must remember the details of your incarceration that you hated. That is how your complete parole.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR SUCCESS ON PAROLE OR PROBATION

1. **Take it seriously.** For people who follow the rules of their supervision as meticulously as they followed prison rules, their parole or probation officers can put them on non-reporting status. Having to report to the parole officer then becomes less and less frequent. Under less intrusive supervision, the chances of getting in trouble may reduce. Eventually, a person can ask the judge to terminate their supervised release early.
2. **Read parole/probation order.** People need to make sure to know the standard conditions of release as well as the specific ones for their case. Avoid unpleasant surprises. Prioritize knowing the rules. Ignorance of the rules serves no purpose.
3. **Follow the rules.** Comply with all the conditions. Report as instructed. Avoid alcohol and non-prescribed drugs. Report all prescribed drugs to the probation officer. Pay fines and restitution as soon as possible. Do not travel out of state without permission. Time on supervised release is temporary, so stick to the rules. Something as simple as failing to report a change of address, for example, can cause significant trouble. The court must always know a person's address during probation and supervised release. Changing jobs requires notice from the parole/probation officer as well. Another rule people often break unwittingly is undertaking new financial commitments without permission from their probation officer. Many white-collar defendants, for example, have a condition of release that bars them from applying for credit cards at all, let alone without permission. Follow the rules.
4. **Keep a calendar, plan it out.** Making a timeline for all the conditions of probation and when they are to be completed can be very useful. Many people report that a wall calendar system helps keep them focused and on track. It also reinforces the notion that the situation is not permanent. This can also help people get more organized and keep track of dates, receipts, etc. Probation officers want to see their people employed. When unemployed and looking for a job, people need to keep a list of the places where they have applied and a copy of the applications. Their calendar is a contemporaneous record of their job search.
5. **Clarify and ask questions.** Successful people check with their lawyer, probation officer, or another experienced person they trust when they have doubts about anything that could matter. Double-check. Before doing anything, ask. Can a person on alcohol restriction work at a restaurant that serves liquor? Don't take a chance, don't assume. Some parole/probation situations can be up to the discretion of the parole officer. Assume that the parole/probation officer wants to see people succeed, and parole/probation officers should therefore be willing to answer questions and clarify a person's obligations on parole. Remember that pleading ignorance when something goes wrong will not work.

6. **Carefully record community service.** People with community service hours in their judgment need to complete and document these hours. Documentation from the non-profit charity may also be needed. Making a personal record and obtaining a signed letter on the non-profit organization's letterhead are good practices. Even when a person's judgment does not require community service, people who volunteer should keep records as they could be helpful to an application for early termination of supervised release.
7. **Avoid criminal exposure.** While this may sound redundant to tips #1 and #3 ("take it seriously" and "follow the rules"), it deserves special mention. Do not take the risk of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, where other people may be doing something illegal. Some people on probation can get tripped up over business issues or taxes. Consult lawyers, accountants, or other experts to minimize exposure to criminal allegations wherever possible. One of the biggest things that gets people in trouble is catching a new charge. It goes totally against the notion of rehabilitation narrative that the court wants to see. Committing a new crime while on probation upsets everybody, most notably the judge. Avoid trouble.
8. **Maintain perspective and a good attitude.** Probation and supervised release are just for a season. Adopting the best possible attitude under the circumstances can help people get through and even thrive. Avoid arguing with the probation officer, counselors, co-workers, etc., which rarely advances the ball. Be polite and respectful. Keeping perspective focused on medium and long-term goals is vital. While people rightfully complain about being asked to jump through hoops for no apparent reason, being on probation and supervised.
9. **Be extra careful with drugs.** This means more than avoiding taking illegal drugs because just being around drugs can also be a problem. See #7. Moreover, just being around drugs—even marijuana—can result in huge problems. Even trace amounts of drugs in a person's system could have serious consequences. Being at a party where drugs are present could land someone in jail even if they were unaware.
10. **Ease the Parole Officer's job.** Parole/Probation officers appreciate people who actively cooperate with them. Communicate proactively. As people achieve different milestones or complete the various requirements, they should let your agent know. Treat parole officers and all court and parole/probation personnel with respect, humility, and honesty. Parole officers get lied to and deceived; they often already know the answers to the questions they ask. Establishing a reputation for proactive communication and honesty will go a long way toward building a mutually beneficial relationship. Keep up with your responsibilities and keep your word. Follow through. Keep curfew. Be on time. When experiencing financial difficulties, it is ok to let them know. More than anything, probation officers would prefer not to get caught off guard. Anything people can do to make things easier for the parole/probation officer will benefit them.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can I obtain benefits for having been incarcerated? No. There is a myth in prison that the ex-offender is entitled to benefits because of their incarceration. That is simply not true. A prisoner is entitled to a Bridge Card and Medicaid because of their lack of income because of the incarceration. The same is true about disabilities. You can receive benefits for having a mental or physical disability, but NOT for being in prison.

2. Can I vote while on parole? Yes. In Michigan a person on parole may register to vote, as well as vote. A person can register online to vote, or you can mail in your registration.

"When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us."

– Helen Keller