Mapping Your Future

A Guide to Successful Reentry

2026 | Illinois Edition











EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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- educationjustice.jotform.com/241573368576064

or scan this QR code:



Welcome Home!

We're glad you picked up *Mapping Your Future: A Guide to Successful Reentry, Illinois Edition*. Whether you spent many years in prison or just a few, it can help you start your life on the outside. This guide gives you information about employment, housing, education, healthcare, and more. If you are a service provider, family member, or friend of someone who is coming home, this book can help you, too. We hope you will find the information and support you need as well.

Mapping Your Future has five sections:

- **Before You Leave** gives advice about getting ready for release.
- **Once You're Out** helps you set up your life once you're out.
- **Healing and Moving Forward** is about getting used to life after prison.
- **The Reentry Directory** contains useful resources. (See also reentryillinois.net, where we regularly update all resources.)
- **Forms** includes helpful, ready-to-use forms.

Getting used to life on the outside is hard. You may face challenges because of your record. You may have trouble finding a job. People might treat you differently. Your parole may feel unfair. *Mapping Your Future* will help you meet these challenges. Use its resources to help you create a plan for after your release. We believe in YOU and your ability to make a difference in the world. Don't stop believing in yourself.

In this book, you'll find helpful words from people like you who went through reentry. Many of them are alumni of the Education Justice Project college-in-prison program at Danville Correctional Center. It was their idea to produce *Mapping Your Future*. They, and so many others, have successfully reentered the outside world. You can, too.

If you have time, it is best to read the entire guide. You can also skip around to the parts that are most important to you. Are you borrowing this guide from a friend or a counselor? **Write to us to request your own copy**. See the next page for instructions.

Please keep in touch. We'd love to know how you're doing and how we can improve *Mapping Your Future*. Your comments can help those who follow in your footsteps.

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

In solidarity,

the Education Justice Project.

About *Mapping Your Future*

Mapping Your Future was created by the Reentry Resource Program (RRP), a group of committed Education Justice Project (EJP) members. EJP is part of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Since 2008, EJP has taught college courses to people incarcerated at Danville Correctional Center in Central Illinois. We created *Mapping Your Future* because we care about people like you, who are being released from prison.

This guide is also available in Spanish. To request a Spanish copy, write to the address on the next page and ask for *Construyendo tu futuro: Una guía para la reintegración exitosa*.

☆ **Disclaimer:** This guide is for informational purposes only. It offers information about programs, services, and businesses that may benefit formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. Inclusion does not imply endorsement by the authors or affiliated institutions.

While we aim to provide accurate and current information, we cannot guarantee its completeness or reliability. Please confirm details independently and consult professionals when appropriate.

This guide does not constitute legal advice. For legal matters, consult a qualified attorney.

The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees or the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

We hope this guide serves as a helpful starting point, but it should not be relied upon as a definitive source of legal or professional guidance.

We have listed a lot of programs, services, and businesses throughout this guide as resources for formerly incarcerated people and their families. We don't endorse any of these organizations. We also don't guarantee that these resources will be helpful (although we certainly hope they are). Each new version includes the best, most up-to-date information we could find from trusted sources. But because the world is constantly changing, we can't be sure that everything in the guide is current.

You will see many URLs (website addresses) throughout this guide that begin with "**tinyurl**." These are shortened URLs. We used them in place of long or complicated addresses to save you time and frustration. However, because some websites can harm your computer or steal data, using shortened URLs can be risky if you don't know where they go. This University of Michigan cybersecurity page explains how to preview a tinyurl without actually going there: safecomputing.umich.edu/protect-yourself/phishing-scams/shortened-url-security .

You'll find that our shortened URLs all go exactly where we say they will. We were careful, and they are safe. For more information on cyber-safety, see the Technology chapter on p. 100.

Request Our Guides!

Facing deportation to another country after release? Please request *A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities after Deportation*, in English or Spanish, also from the Education Justice Project.

Both *Mapping Your Future* and *A New Path* are free for incarcerated or detained people. Both are available in English and Spanish and can be ordered here:

- educationjustice.net
- (217) 244-2491
- reentry@educationjustice.net
- Education Justice Project, Reentry Resource Program
  1001 S Wright St
  Champaign, IL 61820

Scan this code to request a guide!

Paying for Guides

Please help give *Mapping Your Future* to every person who wants it. If you can, please send a check to the address above, email us at reentry@educationjustice.net, or donate online at educationjustice.net/donate . We don't get money from the Illinois Department of Corrections or the State of Illinois. Each copy of *Mapping Your Future* costs around $12 to print and send. Thank you!

Citing Our Guide

Would you like to reference the guide or resource directory in your own publications or share it on your website? Please acknowledge us using the following citations:

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Education Justice Project, *Mapping Your Future: A Guide to Successful Reentry, 2026 Illinois Edition*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. https://educationjustice.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/MYF-IL_26_En_Int.pdf

Reentry website:
Education Justice Project, *Prison Reentry and Deportation Resources*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2026. reentryillinois.net

☆ If you are interested in creating a new reentry resource, please contact us at reentry@educationjustice.net. We have helped organizations in several states to develop their own state-specific reentry guides, using this guide as a template. You can find those guides here: reentryillinois.net/reentry-resources-in-other-states.

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Myths

What kind of information will you find in this guide? For one thing, it will show you how some common myths you might have heard aren't true. Here are a few:



No one will hire you if you've been incarcerated.

False. You can find a job. Employers in Illinois can choose not to hire you because of your criminal record. But they can't ask to see your record until after they have found you qualified for the job. Learn more in the Employment chapter (see p. 54) and visit the directory (on p. 153) for employment resources.

You must pay for all your own medicine after you leave prison.

Not exactly. It is true that you will have to pay for your medication. Prisons will give you a small amount of medicine when you leave. See our Health Before Release chapter (on p. 19) to find out more.

You can't get financial aid for college if you have been incarcerated.

False. If you are on parole or probation, you can get most financial aid. For more information about education options and how to apply for financial aid, see the Education chapter (on p. 71).

You can't get a bank account if you have been incarcerated.

False. You can open a bank account, though you will still have to meet their requirements. For more information about banking, see our Finances, Credit, and Taxes chapter (on p. 113).

You can get Social Security benefits for your time in prison.

False. You cannot get Social Security benefits while you are in prison. But if you were getting Social Security before you went to prison you can start getting it again. See the Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs chapter (on p. 45).

You can't receive VA benefits after being incarcerated.

False. If you are a veteran, you can have your benefits restarted 30 days before your release date. See the Veterans chapter (on p. 123).

Health insurance costs too much. It is easier to pay healthcare costs out of pocket.

False. Health insurance can be expensive, but there are good options. If you don't have insurance, you'll pay much more if you go to the emergency room. See our Health chapter (on p. 78).

People with criminal records can't vote.

False. In Illinois you can vote after release and should. See our Voting chapter (on p. 121).

Part 1:
Before You Leave

- Prepare Mentally for Release
- Gather Your Documents
- Prepare for Your Job Search
- Find Housing
- Health Before Release
- Prepare for Reunification
- Parole: Mandatory Supervised Release
- Registries

Prepare Mentally for Release



It's never too early to get ready to leave prison. Even if you have a very long sentence, keep your eye on life after release. Find ways to learn and grow while you are there.

- Take Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes or get your GED.
- Take college classes or vocational classes.
- Meditate, play an instrument, draw, join a choir, or read a book.
- Start going to religious services.
- Attend substance use programs or anger management classes.
- Get involved in volunteer activities.

These activities can help you meet other people who can support you. They will help you think about what you have to offer.

You can still make a difference in prison. Education Justice Project (EJP) students incarcerated at Danville Correctional Center in Central Illinois created a program to teach English to others behind bars. They also run anti-violence discussion groups in the prison. Many incarcerated people donate to local charities or tutor people on the inside. What can you do?

Build Your Support Network

People often isolate themselves during tough times. But it can help to stay connected to positive friends and family members. Think about the people you know. Contact family members and friends. Be honest about what you need from them, whether it's housing, help with money, or just support and love. Find out what they expect from you.

Reflect

1. What does "support" mean to you?

2. Who are the people you're counting on to be there for you? Do they know what you expect?

3. Who do you know and trust to help you build your support network?

4. Are there people in your life you'd like to reconnect with as you prepare for reentry?

5. Are there people in your life who might make reentry more difficult? If so, how can you set yourself up for success?

6. How can you strengthen relationships to prepare for reentry?

Prepare for Challenges

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

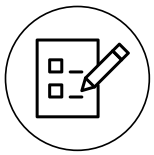
Reentry is very hard. You will need to accept that things may not be perfect or easy. Forgive yourself if you make mistakes. You will probably have some awkward talks with people on the outside. Let yourself laugh them off. People in the outside world have awkward experiences all the time! You may think everyone will know you've just gotten out of prison, but they probably won't.

Patience will be important. Everything may not go the way you want it to. It may be hard to find a job or reunite with loved ones. Sometimes you will feel confused by how much things have changed since you went away. Go slow. Breathe. It is normal to feel stressed sometimes, but you don't want it to get out of hand.

How will you relax once you're out in the world? Life on the outside can feel very rushed. EJP graduates said visiting Lake Michigan, taking long walks, biking, and gardening have helped. How can you include activities like this in your life?

You might learn to practice mindfulness. On the outside, mindfulness courses are offered through some hospitals, social services, and a few churches. The chapter on mindfulness (see p. 143) has a lot of advice on getting started and even has a few guided meditations.

> *Best thing that can reduce anxiety is to have a plan. You don't have to be rigid with that plan, because you're going to get out and realize that the world isn't what you expected it to be.*
>
> **—Joe Joe**



Reflect

1. What skills do you use to manage stress?

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

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

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

Issues you may face upon release	Got this covered	Need to address
Substance use		
Making ends meet		
Family issues		
Housing		
Medical		
Mental health		
Transportation		
Childcare		
Getting a cell phone		
Pending legal problems		
Child Support		

When you're locked up, you have all this time to sit and think. You have ideas of how you want things to go, and then you get out and, of course, those are just ideas. . . . Take care of yourself and everything else will fall into place. . . . You can't stress out over everything that you have no control over. Don't give up hope. There's always hope. And love overcomes a lot of stuff.

—Heather



Gather Your Documents



As your release date gets closer, you should start the process of getting your **birth certificate**, **Social Security card**, and **state ID.**

You will need them as you seek employment, housing, health care, a bank account, and more. It is harder to get them on the outside. Try to begin this process at least **one year** before you are released. Field Services (part of Clinical Services) can help you get your documents. You will need to reach out to them and ask.

Work with clinical services as much as possible. As early as possible. Find out what programs, classes, or resources are available to prepare for release. Sometimes that stuff is hidden. Ask what necessary steps you must take to get documents that would assist you with housing, identification, mental health services, as well as food and clothes and shelters in your area.

—Kilroy

Take responsibility and look for as much information as you can. Go talk to the law clerks, everybody that you can to get information.

—Anonymous

Get your IDs on the inside. The IDOC has announced it will help you to get your important documents in the following ways:

- If you were born in Illinois, you can request your birth certificates at any time during your incarceration; everyone is entitled to one free copy.
- You can request your Social Security cards 180 days before your release. To do this, you must know your Social Security number.
- You can request your state ID before your release. Since this may require that you have your birth certificate, Social Security card, and a fixed address planned for after your release, it is recommended that you begin this process at least six months before your release.
- You can get help filling out these request forms at vital-document drives held at your facility twice every year. You can also request forms from your counselor or the reentry counselor at your facility, or write to the records office.
- If you are being held at an Adult Transition Center, you can go in person to your local Secretary of State or Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office to request your state ID. (For more information on that process, see our Getting Your ID chapter on p. 41)

In case any of these new options don't work, the information in the steps on the next page will help you to gather your documents.



Step 1

Verification of Incarceration

To get started, ask Clinical Services for "verification of incarceration." You'll need this to get your other documents. It's also a good idea to gather any transcripts or certificates from classes you've taken in prison. You can use those documents to get your birth certificate, Social Security card, and state ID.



Step 2

Birth Certificate

Next, you will need a certified copy of your birth certificate. This means a birth certificate that has a state seal and is signed and dated by the county registrar. **You can request a birth certificate at any time.**

To get your birth certificate, you will need to mail in a form. If you were born in Illinois, you can use the "Application for Illinois Birth Record" form. If you were born in Cook County, you can use the "Birth Record Request Form." Both are in our forms section (on p. 191). You can also ask clinical services, your prison library, or a counselor for a form. Fill out the form and mail it to the address on the form. You will need:

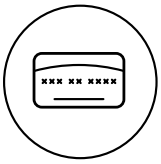
- Your verification of incarceration.
- Another document that shows your name and current address, such as a GED certificate, a transcript from prison education programs, or medical records.
- $15 for the first copy of a birth certificate and $2 for each additional copy of the same certificate requested at the same time.

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

If you were born in Illinois but cannot get your birth certificate before you get out, you can request it at the county clerk in the county where you were born.

☆ Outside Illinois

If you were born in another state, ask a friend or family member to help you get your birth certificate from that state.



Step 3

Social Security Card

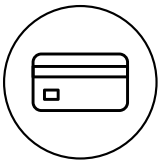
All US citizens and permanent residents have a Social Security number (SSN). This number is used by the government to keep track of your taxes and Social Security benefits. You will need your Social Security card to get a job or open a bank account. If you have lost your card, you can apply for a new one. There is no fee for requesting your Social Security card.

To get your Social Security card while you are in prison, use the form titled "Application for a Social Security Card" in the back of this guide (see p. 196). You can also get the application form at your prison library or from your counselor. If it's possible in your facility, you can also call the Social Security Administration (SSA) at (800) 772-1213. They can mail you the form.

To get a Social Security card you will need:

- Your birth certificate
- Your verification of incarceration
- An information release: You will need to sign an information release form, giving the Social Security Administration the permission to send your Social Security card to your facility. Ask Field Services for this form.

Make sure your Social Security card stays in your master file until you are released. Be aware that sharing it with another person could put you at risk for fraud (see Avoid Scams on p. 118).



Step 4

State ID

A mobile Secretary of State unit may be able to help you get a state ID or driver's license before you leave. Ask Clinical Services if this is an option for you. More information about getting your State ID or driver's license after release can be found in our Getting Your ID chapter (see p. 34). To get a state ID, you will need:

- Your verification of incarceration or another document that shows your name and current address
- Your birth certificate
- A written signature
- Your Social Security card
- $20 (You won't have to pay this fee if you are in prison or if you get your ID within 30 days of your release.)

If you can't get your ID before you leave, ask for an **Identification Card Verification Form** issued by IDOC. You can use this form to get a state ID. You can also ask for a **90-day temporary ID card** from Field Services. You will need to go to a Secretary of State facility during that 90-day period to get a state ID. The temporary ID card doesn't count as a real ID most of the time, but it can help you get your state ID.

If you are under an alias: If you are locked up under an alias, it is really important that you start gathering your documents early. First, write to the county where you are convicted or the state's attorney office. Ask them to change the charging document to reflect your real name. The court will probably not change all the court documents to fix this problem. You may need to talk to a lawyer to see if there are any legal steps you can take. (See "Getting Legal Help" on p. 106).

Pulling Together Your Documents

Use this table to keep track of the documents and forms of ID you may need after you are released. Start gathering them now.

Document	Taken care of	Need to tackle	Not applicable
Social Security card			
Birth certificate			
Driver's license			
Temporary identification			
State ID			
Marriage license			
Divorce decree			
Passport or green card			
Military discharge			

☆ You can get marriage licenses and divorce decrees at the county clerk's office in the county where you were married or divorced.

Prepare for Your Job Search



If you're getting ready to leave prison, you're probably thinking about getting a job. This is an area where you are likely to hit many roadblocks and challenges. The good news is that there are employers who are willing to give you a chance. There are ways you can prepare while still in prison to find a good job. Be hopeful. Many people have found good jobs after incarceration. If you're prepared, persistent, and have the right attitude, you can find one too.

Step 1

Build Experience

In the facility where you're locked up, can you earn certificates, learn new skills, or work? Any experience like this can help you find a job on the outside. They can also make you more confident and help you build skills you didn't know you had.

School is another good way to get ready for work on the outside. Enroll in school programs, from Adult Basic Education to college programs. School records can also show employers you are intelligent and dedicated. Try other things too. Arts, parenting classes, and other programs will give you new skills and confidence.

Step 2

Write Your Resume

Another important thing you can do while you're in prison is to write your resume. A resume is a summary of your skills, education, and work experience. You will need a resume to search and apply for jobs. Even if you don't have a computer or typewriter, write your resume out while you are still incarcerated. You can type it out after your release. Your resume should have several parts:

1. **Name, address, and contact information.** If you are not sure of your address yet, ask a friend or family member if you can use theirs.
2. **Education.** Your resume should have a list of schools you've attended. Add any education you had in prison, especially if you earned any degrees or certificates.
3. **Work experience.** List your jobs, including volunteer work. Include where, when, and for how long you held each job.
4. **Other professional skills.** This includes certifications, technical skills, and languages you speak other than English.
5. **Awards** (optional). If you've ever received an award for your work, like employee of the month, or a scholarship, list them at the end of your resume.

Are you worried about what people will think when they see school or work you did in prison? You do not have to put those on your resume if it worries you. The sample resumes in the back of the book (see p. 197) can show you how other formerly incarcerated people have created their resumes. For information about how to find and apply for jobs once you are released, see the Employment chapter (on p. 54).

Find Housing



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

One of the most important decisions you will make is where to live after release.

Some people choose to live with family or friends after release. **You may need to get approval for the address where you plan to live in order to be released**. The people you plan to live with will need to fill out forms. Talk to them to make sure they understand the parole rules that you need to follow. Some of these rules will affect them, too. A parole officer may visit the home and decide if it's ok for you to stay there. See our Parole (MSR) chapter for more information.

If you are not able to live with family members or friends upon release, you may need to find transitional housing (sometimes called a halfway house).

Advantages of transitional housing:

- Transitional housing provides support services, such as employment help, case management, life-skills training and medical referrals. Having this support can be helpful while you navigate reentry.
- Transitional housing can provide structure and community. It can help set you up for success. It can remove some unknowns and allow you to focus on your priorities.

Challenges:

- The quality of transitional housing varies a lot, and different facilities may specialize in different things. Do your research. Find out about other people's experiences with a facility. Ask for information before committing.
- The cost for staying in transitional housing can vary a lot, too, or it may even be free. Be sure to ask about payment and the payment schedule.
- Program rules and expectations vary widely as well. Many have strict rules. Depending on your needs, these rules may provide helpful structure, or they may feel too strict. Make sure you understand the rules before you commit.

How to Find Transitional Housing

Usually, counselors will call you before your release to place you in transitional housing. A lot of people need these spots. It's hard for them to know ahead of time what will be available. This can create a lot of stress. It may be useful to bring a list of the possibilities you've found to your counselor. It's also a good idea to apply to more than one facility. If you have a trusted friend or family member on the outside, you may want to ask them to call around for you.

Here are some places you can look:

- The directory (see p. 153) provides a list of different transitional housing programs throughout the state, and a few in St. Louis. You can also look online at guide.reentryillinois.net .
- If you live in Chicago, complete an assessment through the Chicago Coordinated Entry System by calling (312) 361-1707. Go to transitionalhousing.org or shelterlistings.org for transitional housing options nationwide.
- Ask around. Do you know people who have had good or bad experiences with these places?

Applying to Transitional Houses

While each housing facilities and correctional centers may have their own process, here are some general steps you can expect to take:

1. **Talk to your correctional center counselor.** Tell them your neighborhood, your release date, and anything else that will help them find the right home for you.

2. **Provide required documents.** Transitional housing facilities may want to see documents like disciplinary history, convictions, programs, and letters of recommendation. They may also want to schedule an interview to make sure it's a good fit.
3. **Wait for a bed.** You may have to wait to see if there is a bed available. For this reason, you may want to ask your counselor to help you apply to more than one facility. When you are accepted, you will receive a letter. Show that letter to your counselor.
4. **Arrange transportation.** When your release date is confirmed, a prison official will usually talk to the transitional housing facility to make sure they have a space for you. The officer will help you plan your release-day transportation.

Finding the Right Fit

Here are a few questions you can ask your counselor or the people at the transitional housing facility to see if it is a good fit for you:

- Who do you welcome?
- How long can I stay?
- What is the cost?
- What programs and services are offered? What will I be doing when I live there?
- Do you provide mental health or substance use treatment?
- What rules will I have to follow while I am there? What freedoms will I have?
- Is this a faith-based program? Will I be required to attend services?

Most transitional houses do not let in people who have been convicted of sex offenses, and some do not let in people who have been convicted of violent offenses. See the Registries chapter for housing advice for people forced to register after release (on p. 32).

If you have a sex offense conviction and are being kept in prison past your out date, contact the lawyers at 5707 W Goodman Street, Chicago, Illinois 60630, (847) 361-3869.

Tips from an EJP Alum

Some people feel their success depends on finding a new location and a fresh start. But your correctional center counselor may assume you want to return to your "county of commitment," the neighborhood where you caught your case and your charges were filed.

If that's not what you want, you need to talk to your counselor. Be specific about where you would like to try to go, based on family, support networks, and any negative environments you want to avoid.

Also, the housing process will usually start two or three months before your projected release date. **Be proactive—reach out to your counselor about housing if you haven't heard from them**. People have been kept beyond their release date because someone dropped the ball on housing. **-Anonymous**



Health Before Release



Planning for health care before you leave prison saves money and helps you avoid problems. There are a few steps you can take before you are released.

Enroll in Medicaid

Ask clinical services to help you get started. If you have a loved one with internet access, they may be able to help you apply at healthcare.gov . Otherwise, you will need to get a paper copy to mail in.

Once you submit your form, it takes 30 days to get insurance, so get started early! This is especially important if you have a health problem that requires treatment.

Once called "food stamps," SNAP (**S**upplemental **N**utrition **A**ssistance **P**rogram) is a government program that gives money to people who need food. (For more information, see Resources chapter on p. 38.) If you are being held in an Illinois prison, **you should be given a chance to sign up for SNAP benefits 5–10 days before your release**. But don't wait for someone to talk to you about this. Request a meeting with a correctional counselor to apply.

☆ The **InReach Project** by the Uptown People's Law Center (UPLC): The application process for Social Security and Social Security disability benefits (SSI and SSDI) can take months or even years to complete. The InReach Project helps returning residents begin these applications before their release. UPLC helps with every stage of the process until a final decision is made. Their goal is to decrease the time between your release and when you have an income. Contact UPLC once you are within eight months of your release.

Get Your Health Records

Fill out a form to get your health records about 90 days before your release. You may have to pay for copies, though the first 50 pages may be free. There are separate forms for medical records and HIV and mental health records. These records can be very useful when connecting with new practitioners.

After release, you can request your health records from the facility where you were held. But if you wait more than a few months, you will need to request your records from the Department of Corrections in Springfield.



Get Your Exams

Request a dental exam, an eye exam, and a physical exam before you leave. Start early (a year before release) in case they find something you need to address.

Medical Release: In 2021, the Joe Coleman Act created medical release for people incarcerated in Illinois. You can apply for medical release if you are **medically incapacitated**, if you have a condition that will cause you to be medically incapacitated in the next six months, or if you have a **terminal illness** with no cure that will cause death within 18 months. To be considered for medical release, you (or someone acting for you) must fill out an application for the Prisoner Review Board. The application is online at tinyurl.com/ILMedicalRelease , and it should also be in the law library and infirmary of every Illinois prison. Learn more here: illinoisprisonproject.org/learn .



Make a Birth Control and Sexual Health Plan

If you plan to be sexually active after release, discuss birth control and safe sex during your physical exam. This may help you avoid an unwanted pregnancy or STD.

Consider your options carefully. Some forms of birth control, like condoms, are easy to get and are fairly cheap. However, they need to be used every time you have sex and may not be as effective as other options. Other kinds of birth control require a prescription from a doctor or a medical procedure.

For women, when you have your physical exam, you may be able to request longer-term birth control options, like pills, patches, or intrauterine devices (IUDs). Implants or IUDs can protect you for several years from unwanted pregnancy. Women should also request a gynecological exam with a PAP smear and ask for a mammogram if over age 40.

Unfortunately, some doctors working in prisons have pressured women to have hysterectomies (sterilization) and men to have vasectomies. While vasectomies are reversible through a second surgical procedure, hysterectomies will prevent you from ever conceiving. No doctor should pressure you into a permanent or long-term birth control or sterilization procedure. Take time to ask questions and decide what is best for you. If you are feeling pressured, remember it's your right to say no.



Make a Medication Plan

Prisons offer people a 30-to-90-day supply of medication upon release. Generally, you will pick up your medications the day before you are released, but you may want to request these medications ahead of time, just to be safe. The doctor will usually give you a prescription so you can get more. Make a plan to get more medication after you leave. Set up an appointment with a doctor on the outside so that you don't run out. This can help you avoid going to the ER to get medications filled, which can be costly.

Plan for Doctor Visits After Release

Before you are released, you will probably receive a medical card that has a list of healthcare providers that accept Medicaid. If you have a serious mental or physical health issue, or will need regular prescription refills, set up your appointments ahead of time. A counselor or family member may be able to help. The directory (see p. 153) includes a list of free or low-cost health clinics throughout the state. Find a list of free clinics here: tinyurl.com/illinoisfreeclinics .

You may have been in a drug or alcohol treatment program while in prison. Continue treatment after release to make sure you don't relapse. Ask your doctor, clinical services, or a family member to help you find a treatment center. Try to schedule the appointment for a few days after your release. The directory (see p. 153) includes a list of many low-cost health clinics and substance-use treatment centers.

A warning: The first few weeks after release are often the hardest. People are at greater risk for suicide. Many return to old habits, like drug or alcohol use. People are at greater risk for overdose because their bodies aren't used to drugs anymore. It is important to get out ahead of this and schedule appointments with health care providers before you leave. You may not need them, but you'll have a plan just in case.

☆ Everyone leaving IDOC is entitled to two doses of naloxone (commonly called Narcan). Narcan can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Even if you don't use drugs, consider accepting the doses to help save someone else's life.

For more information see the Health chapter (on p. 78), the Trauma and Mental Health chapter (on p. 83) and the Substance Use chapter (on p. 90).



Healthcare Checklist

Action	Taken care of	Need to tackle	Where to get help
Enroll in Medicaid			
Enroll in SNAP			
Get health records			
Physical exam			
Eye exam			
Dental exam			
Contraception plan			
Medication plan			
Set up doctor visits for after release			
Set up mental health treatment for after release			
Set up substance use treatment for after release			
Find a support group			

Prepare for Reunification



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

This chapter covers the following topics:

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

Staying Close to Loved Ones

For many, the hardest part of being locked up is the strain it places on relationships. Separation is hard for both you and your loved ones. While you may feel love, concern, and care, there may also be feelings of guilt, loss, frustration, anger, and grief.

> *If you have any emotions at all, you're going to have guilt about making your family suffer the pains that you're going through. Because you're not suffering alone. They suffer with you while you're in there.*
>
> **—Tony C.**

Healthy relationships are open, honest, and deep. Try to maintain regular, open lines of communication through letters and phone calls, when possible. Staying in touch with your loved ones will make reuniting easier on everyone.

> *The complexities of being in prison can startle any relationship. That's why understanding and communication is key. In reality no one wants to be a burden; however, everybody needs someone. The pressure of maintaining a healthy relationship is hard for two people in the free world. When I was doing time, I had to understand the sacrifices I needed to make to maintain a healthy relationship with the people that mattered the most to me. I had to remember what it was like to be free, and I had to educate my family and friends of what it was like to be incarcerated.*
>
> **—Antonio**

> *A lot of times, people get discouraged when family don't take their phone calls. They don't get a response, and they get discouraged. They think, "To hell with it, they don't want to hear from me." Even if they don't respond, you still have to try to cultivate those relationships. A lot of times people are super busy out here. It's not that they don't want to talk to you. Keep cultivating those relationships because they are what's going to help you when you get out.*
>
> **—Anonymous**

It's hard, but you have to make your kids understand that you don't want to be away from them... You love them and you're going to do everything you can to make sure you're in their life.

—Tony C.

During incarceration, some relationships may end, and all relationships will be challenged. Some find it so difficult that they distance themselves as a form of self-preservation. Be aware that this distance can be very hard to overcome upon release.

You spend so many years in there and so much time keeping people at an arm's distance. You never let anybody get close. But when you come home, you've gotten so used to keeping people at a distance that you just continue to do it. It's hard to make new friends.

—Tony C.

You don't want to worry your family with those issues. You get on the phone, and you grind your teeth. Regardless of what you're feeling, you're going to tell them that everything is going to be OK. You get in this habit of keeping things bottled up, and you're dealing with some degree of loneliness and emptiness, because you're not sharing it with your family.

—Roberto

Explore other ways to maintain relationships. While it's painful to not be physically present in your loved ones' lives, there are other ways to be present. Talk, listen, and provide emotional and mental support when and how you can.

Try to find ways to make it easier for them to accept you being gone. Because if you just sit and tell them how horrible it is and you bark at them every time they come to visit you or you yell at them in letters or on the phone, then they're gonna get frustrated with dad and say, "Well hey, you're not even here, so what can you do?"

—Tony C.

Relationships aren't a one-way street. Family members can also do a lot to maintain relationships. They can help those who are incarcerated feel included. They can share everyday things to help them feel connected.

I send him a little bit of money, enough to keep phone calls going, you know, and pictures and stuff and try to set up options for him so he knows he doesn't have to go back to the same stuff. Just let him know that there's help, there's better things in life. I try to talk to him about the good stuff, about working and going to church, when we're playing games with his little sister and stuff like that.

—Heather B.



Preparing for Reunification

You might be scared, worried, or excited about reuniting with family and friends. You can prepare by reflecting on your relationships. Be honest about who is likely to be a positive, supportive influence in your life. You and your loved ones can also set realistic expectations. You are all in transition. A period of adjustment will be necessary.

It is hard to be left at home and hard to come home, even if you were only away for a few months. For loved ones, having the person come home can take some getting used to as well.

You might begin by letting your loved ones know what you are hoping for and what you will need from them during your reentry. This could include both emotional and financial support. Never be afraid to ask for patience.

Listen to the needs and concerns of your loved ones, too. Reuniting will be easier if you can talk ahead of time and learn to compromise.

> *The key thing is honesty. [If] you come out being honest with yourself and with [your loved ones], you can't go wrong, because you're not feeding them a fairy tale. You're giving them you.*
>
> **—Keke**

> *Keep in mind that you are entering somebody else's space. You must be mindful of the relationships around you.*
>
> **—Pablo**

If you were locked up for a long time, you'll need to relearn who you are and who your loved ones are. Children who were young when you left may be teenagers or even grown up with children of their own. You may have different ideas of what the new relationship should look like.

> *Don't come in like they're supposed to know you or even respect you a little bit, because you've been gone. You gotta gain that respect and that trust back when you've been gone so long.*
>
> **—Keke**

> *Recognize that we haven't been part of that house for years, so I can't come in and put down my dominance, something we're used to doing when we're in the cell. We're used to carving up space and making it our own.*
>
> **—Joe Joe**

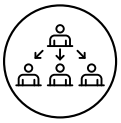
Acknowledge the ways you have changed. You and your loved ones have both grown. Allow for this growth. Be open to the person in front of you and who they are now.

> *First you gotta get yourself together, mentally. Because you might think you know them because they're part of you, but you really don't know them and what they've been through. You know what they tell you. Same thing with you.*
>
> **—Keke**

> *Never expect anyone to evolve at your pace. When you are dealing with people you haven't lived with in a while, you have to be analytical, you have to examine the structure of your own character. And the character of those you live with. Once you are fully in tune with the compound presence of your household, you should become as flexible as a bamboo stick, but it won't be easy. So, get an evaluation and accept some help from those who can help you with your transition.*
>
> **—Antonio**

Oftentimes when people are anticipating going home, they have ideals and expectations on how their reunification with family will be. There's the dream and there's the reality. It's good to have these great expectations, but don't set yourself up for disappointment if people don't live up to the expectations you have of them. People have lived experience that might color the way they interact.

—Joe Joe



Preparing to Reunite with Children

You may have young children you are looking forward to being with. You may be excited to see your kids again, or you might be nervous and stressed. You might feel both of these things. It's ok to have mixed feelings. There's no right way to feel.

There are things you can do to parent from prison and prepare yourself for regaining custody of your kids, if that's your goal. Show your commitment to your children. This will make it easier to get them back when you are out. Here are some ideas:

Before your release	After your release
Stay in touch with your kids through regular phone calls and letters. Record the dates and times so that you have evidence of your involvement.	Prioritize getting safe and stable housing.
Attend all hearings about your child. It's your right!	Follow all parole rules and requirements.
Take parenting classes if offered.	Visit your kids as often as you can. Record details about the visits.
Take job training as well as academic and technical classes.	Continue to attend parenting, job training, or other classes. This shows your commitment to providing a stable home for your child.

If you've been separated from your children, you may be eager to reunite with them as soon as you can. But don't rush things. First you need to have a stable job, safe housing, and sobriety. Getting your kids back too soon can cause more harm than good if you are unable to provide a healthy and safe environment for them.

If you temporarily named a guardian for your child without the court being involved, by signing a "caregiver affidavit," it may be easier to reunite with your children, although this depends on your specific circumstances.

If your parental rights have been terminated, you will need the court's permission to get your children back. Illinois Legal Aid provides information and guidance on this topic: illinoislegalaid.org/legal-information/dcfs-cases-and-child-protection-services .

Even if you don't get your kids back as soon as you would like, you can still make changes and be involved in decisions about them. If getting your kids back is what's right for your family, don't give up, even if there are roadblocks!

Parole: Mandatory Supervised Release



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

IDOC Parolee Assistance Office: (800) 666-6744

When you are released from prison, you will probably be on Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR), commonly called parole. In the state of Illinois, every felony prison sentence has a term of MSR. This means you will be supervised by the Illinois Department of Corrections until your parole period is over.

While on parole, you'll have to follow some rules. It is frustrating to know that even though you are getting out of prison, you will not be completely free. Hang in there. Parole is difficult, but many people have gotten through it. You can, too.

This chapter covers:

- Preparing for Mandatory Supervised Release
- Parole After Release
- Electronic Monitoring
- Parole Rules and Violations

Preparing for Mandatory Supervised Release

The parole process usually begins around six months before your release date.

Step 1

Visit with the Prisoner Review Board (PRB).

The board will make plans for your parole conditions. For example, you may have to go to an anger management class, or you may be placed on electronic monitoring for a while.

Step 2

Find a place to live.

In your parole plans, you will have to submit the address where you plan to live. This is called your "host site." The board will have to approve it. If you will be placed on electronic monitoring, a parole officer will visit the home and decide if it is OK for you to stay there. If you aren't placed on electronic monitoring, they may just call the home and make sure you can stay there.

The Illinois Youthful Parole Act (730 ILCS 5/5-4.5-115). Passed in 2019 and expanded in 2023, these laws created new opportunities for parole. If you were 20 or younger when you were convicted and you were sentenced on or after June 1, 2019, you may be eligible to petition the Illinois Prisoner Review Board for a parole hearing. In order to be eligible, you must have already served either 10 or 20 years of your sentence. Which one depends on your charge. If you are serving a term of natural life, you can petition for parole after 40 years. If parole is granted, the remainder of your sentence (up to ten years) must be served on parole. The requirements of your parole will vary, but are usually similar to the requirements of mandatory supervised release. You may petition for parole review three years prior to becoming eligible. If you are denied and are not serving a natural life sentence, you can apply again after 5 or 10 years.

To learn more, contact the Illinois Prison Project. You can join one of their drop-in Zoom legal clinics (learn more at illinoisprisonproject.org/resources) or find their contact information in the directory on p. 153.



Step 3

Talk to the people you will be living with.

Many of the parole rules you'll follow will affect the people you will be living with. For instance, parole agents may visit your home regularly to check up on you. They may search the property or residence and make sure there aren't narcotics or other controlled substances.

Talk to the people you will live with early and clearly. Let them know what your parole rules will mean for them. They can contact the Illinois Department of Corrections with their questions.



Step 4

Fill out the Host Site Agreement.

The people you will be living with will have to complete a Host Site Agreement. It may come in the mail, or the parole officer may bring it when they visit the home.

Transferring parole to another state. If you would benefit from moving to another state to complete your term of supervision, you can apply through the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS), or what is called the "interstate compact": interstatecompact.org. Requests aren't automatically granted, you will have to show that your chances for success are greater in another state where you have support, like a solid job offer, a stable place to live, and positive relationships with family members or individuals in the community. To find out if you are eligible go to the ICAOS website, here: tinyurl.com/InterstateCompactEligibility. Individuals will have to comply with the rules of the transfer state and the terms in Illinois. Discuss the fees and supervision costs with your supervising officer. If approved, your supervising officer will set a date for the transfer. You have to wait for them to move.

Parole After Release

When you arrive at your host site, **call your parole officer within 24 hours**. You should get your parole officer's name and phone number before you are released. It is your job to get in touch with your parole officer. If you cannot reach your parole officer or do not know who they are, contact a nearby parole office for help.

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

> *After five years on both probation and parole, I learned that communication with my PO was a powerful key to success. It was difficult at first, but after a while I realized that I would much rather have my PO working with me than against me. I tried my best to communicate whatever major issues I was faced with. Keeping them informed of job or address changes and any police contact made my life easier and eliminated any surprise visits and other problems.*
>
> **—Jay**

Senate Bill 423 has made some exciting changes to MSR in Illinois. Among other reforms, the bill establishes a merit-based system for MSR reduction. People on MSR can now earn shortened paroles when they complete certificate-earning programs. Getting your GED or a college degree, completing a technical course, or earning a certificate for participating in a community enrichment program could all qualify you for an MSR reduction. If you haven't already, talk to your parole officer about these possibilities today.

> *Navigating parole can be challenging and you don't want to take any chances… control your conduct. You may not get to choose WHO who your parole agent is, but you do get to choose your choices. Making good decisions may even determine how long you stay on parole. Just choose to be patient. Parole is just part of the process.*
>
> **—Steve S.**

Electronic Monitoring

Many people are placed on electronic monitoring (EM) with their parole. If you have been placed on EM, you will have to follow some extra rules.

Step 1. Sign the form.
On the day you are released, you will sign an Illinois Department of Corrections Offender 360 Reporting Instruction document.

Step 2. Go straight home and call the Parole Control Center.
When you are released, you have to go straight home and check in at the Parole Control Center by calling (800) 666-6744. You cannot leave. Stay there and wait for more instructions.

Step 3. Get your electronic monitor.
A technician will come to your home within three days to set up the electronic monitor. The monitor has an anklet and a box that plugs into the wall. The monitor will probably not be charged when you receive it. To charge it, plug the monitor's battery pack into the beacon, and plug the beacon into the wall. The beacon must be placed in a central part of your house, and it must remain plugged in at all times. Make sure to charge your battery pack at least once per day.

Step 4. Find out when you will be allowed to leave your home.
Once the monitor is set up, you and your parole officer will decide what times you will be allowed to leave your home. After curfew, you can only go a certain distance from your beacon. It's generally just far enough to let you move around in your home and step outside. Ask your parole officer if they can tell you more, so you can safely take out the garbage, get the mail, or sit outside for fresh air.

Step 5. Check in regularly with your parole officer.
Remember, it's very important you answer the phone when the parole agency calls. Not answering could get you in trouble.

Electronic monitoring can be hard for everyone in your house. Until you find a job, you will be home most of the time, which can cause stress. If you need rides during your movement times, you will need to work that out. Talk clearly with the people you will live with. Let them know what you need from them, what they need from you, and how you will address problems.



When you get your ankle monitor put on, if you prefer one leg or the other, let them know. Also if they put it on too tight, say something.
—Scott P.

A Note about Monitors: Ankle monitors will beep, flash, and vibrate to tell you when they're charging, when they're fully charged, and other information. They can also send you personalized alert messages and play messages from your parole officer. The first time you hear your monitor do this, it can be scary. The monitor may buzz and repeat, very loudly, "CALL YOUR OFFICER NOW" until you do. If your monitor's alerts are going off and you don't know why, call the 1-800 number to ask for help.



To reduce discomfort from ankle bands, cut the toe out of a long sock and slide it underneath the band itself.
—Scott P.

BI SmartLINK®

Your parole officer might ask you to download the BI SmartLINK® app on your smartphone. BI SmartLINK® is a tool that lets parole officers and case managers communicate with you on a phone or tablet.
With the BI SmartLINK® app, parole officers don't have to come visit you in person as often. Fewer in-person visits may be nice for you and the people you live with. But the app also lets parole officers see a lot about you. For example, parole officers can use the app to see where you have traveled. The BI SmartLINK® app has the following features:

- **Check in.** Parole officers can check in with you to make sure you're following the rules.
- **Resources for housing, health, and employment.**
- **Messages.** Send messages to your case manager or supervising officer.
- **Supervision terms.** See all the rules of parole you should follow.
- **Calendar.** Get reminders for check-ins and other important dates.
- **Documents.** Send photo documents to your parole officer: court documents, payroll stubs, proof of ID, and more.

☆ **Don't know how to use a smartphone?** Ask your parole officer to help you use the app. The Technology chapter can help (see p. 100).

Parole Rules and Violations

Parole officers have the final say for parole rules. These rules are written in a legal document. Make sure you understand all the rules and instructions before you sign; it is your responsibility to read through the rules of your parole. Ask questions! Some of the most common rules include:

- Do not commit any criminal acts.
- Report to your parole officer on a regular basis.
- Do not possess firearms.
- Allow the parole officer to inspect and search you and your residence.
- Refrain from using drugs.
- Do not leave the State of Illinois.

If you break the rules of parole, you may be sent back to prison. If the police or your parole officer suspects you've broken these rules, they can search your home or vehicle without a warrant. If an officer knows you're on parole, they can perform a search without a warrant even if they have no reason to suspect you've broken the rules.

Follow the rules of your parole very carefully so you can stay on the outside. If something happens that makes it look like you broke your parole, call your parole officer right away to explain what happened. If you haven't broken any rules, your parole officer can ask that you not be charged.

If you are charged with violating the terms of your parole, the law states that:

1. The Prisoner Review Board will appoint a lawyer for you if you need one. You won't have to pay for the lawyer.
2. Your lawyer can show evidence and bring in witnesses to help make your case.
3. You don't have to answer any questions about what happened.

See the Legal Matters chapter (on p. 106) for places to get help.

Registering After Release. Will you have to register after release? If so, there are specific challenges you will need to be aware of. See the next chapter, Registries, for more information.

Registries



If you are someone who has to register after release, you will have additional requirements. Some will be mandated by law and others will be applied at the discretion of your parole officer. These requirements are often burdensome and may last for a long time. Some may even last for your entire life. This chapter will help you prepare for this. It covers the following topics:

- State Registries
- Common Questions
- Transferring Registries
- Housing for People on the Sex Offender Registry
- Movement Restrictions
- Treatment Programs
- Polygraphs and Safety Plans
- Technology Restrictions
- Requesting Contact with Biological Children
- Dealing with Shame
- Resources for More Information and Support

State Registries

The Illinois State Police keep two registries:

- Sex Offender Registry
- Murder and Violent Offender Against Youth Registry ("Murder Registry" for short)

☆ The registries' official names are dehumanizing. EJP believes in using humanizing language to refer to all individuals, including those required to register in our communities. However, for clarity, we refer to the registries by their official names.

These registries are online databases that anyone can see. They have photos and information about people convicted of sex offenses or murder, including their name, age, address, place of work, conviction history, and the age of the person they were convicted of harming.

If you must register, you will likely face many challenges. People may make hurtful comments, harass you, or even target you outright. It may be very hard to find housing and a job. Focus on your self-worth. You are more than your conviction. The registry doesn't define who you are.

Before you are released, you should get a form that tells you when and how to register. If you're not sure, ask your counselor if you will need to register. You can also ask someone you trust to ask the Illinois State Police for you.

Make sure you know and understand the rules. It's easy to make a mistake and go back to jail. You may be charged with non-compliance—a very serious offense—if you miss a deadline or didn't know you had to register more than once. You don't have to figure it out alone. There are people and organizations that can support you:

- The Chicago 400 is an organization that campaigns to repeal public conviction registries and housing banishment laws. Learn more at chicago400.net .
- The Chicago Torture Justice Center provides case management and support to people who register. They also have a campaign to end the murder registry and publish resources on the murder registry (endilmurderregistry.org/resources-materials) including an FAQ: tinyurl.tinyurl.com/CTJCMQVAY
- The Sex Law and Policy Center published a reentry guide called Registering with Dignity. Check it out here: tinyurl.com/RegisterWithDignity or ask a friend or librarian to print it for you.

”

Don't let anyone tell you who you are. The system is designed to turn you into a label, but that doesn't mean you have to conform. Reject stigmas. Stay strong and never let anyone else define you.
—Chad R.

Arson Registry: In 2024, the State of Illinois modified the Arsonist Registration Act and created a new Arsonist Database. With these changes, people convicted of arson are **no longer required to register (or re-register) in person**. Those convicted of arson should now be automatically entered into the Statewide Arsonist Database by Illinois State Police based on their conviction records.

Before the Arsonist Registration Act was modified, anyone convicted of arson in Illinois had to register with local law enforcement within 10 days of their release, and they had to re-register every year for 10 years. **Because this change is still new, make sure to ask your parole officer about your requirements as soon as possible.** Either way, all arson registry information will be made available to the public and shared with local police, arson investigators, and fire departments.

Common Questions about the Illinois Sex Offender and Murder Registries

Where will I register?
Register with your local police or sheriff's department or at your assigned registry location. **Do this on your way to your host site and again each time you are required to re-register**. Once you get to your host site, you could be stuck there for days waiting for your parole officer. That could make you miss registration deadlines.

The registration process can be long. Call ahead to find out when they are open and if you need to make an appointment.

How often will I need to register?
It depends. Ask! You may have to register every 90 days or once a year. If you don't have a permanent address, you may have to register every week.

What should I bring when I register?
You will need your state ID and proof of address (for example, a rental agreement, a bill for your rent or a utility bill, or another official document showing your address). You will be required to provide information, names and phone numbers for your current employment or the school you are attending (if applicable). If you are on the Sex Offender Registry, you may also be required to provide information about online accounts, such as email addresses, instant messaging identities, or social media accounts.

During the registration process, police will take a photo of you and post it on the registry website. They may also take fingerprints or a DNA swab. You will have to sign registration documents. Be certain you understand what you are signing. Ask for help if you need it.

How can I make sure I don't miss an appointment?
You will not receive a notice when you need to re-register. It's up to you to remember. Keep a calendar of all your registration deadlines. Call ahead and make appointments if you can. Keep your documents in a safe place so you can get to them easily. Hold onto documents that explain the conditions of your probation or parole, your registration documents, and any receipts you collect in the process.

For how long will I have to register?
It depends on your conviction. If you were sentenced to probation for a sex offense conviction, you will likely need to register every year for at least 10 years. For more serious sex offense convictions, you may need to register for the rest of your life. If you are on the Murder Registry, you will have to register for 10 years. If you aren't sure if you still have to register, you can look yourself up in the registry. If you are still listed, you are required to register for that year.

How can I look myself up in the registry to find out if I am compliant?
Go to the site sor.isp.illinois.gov/sorpublic . Click "Search" in the upper right-hand corner and then click "By Name." Fill in your personal information and click "Search" on the bottom right-hand side. Below it should say your name, information, and "Compliant" or "non-compliant."

Do I have to register every time I move?
Yes. If you live in a place for more than three days, you will need to register, even if you are just visiting family. You have three days to let law enforcement know that you have moved.

Do I have to register every time I get a job?
Yes. If you get a job, change jobs, or add a second job, you will need to register within three days of being offered the job. You will also need to register if you get a side part-time job in addition to your primary job. You are also required to register if you are enrolling in higher education or changing schools. For people on the Sex Offender Registry, you will need to register if you change your email address or online identifiers (your names on social media, for example).

Do I have to register if I move out of state?
Check the specific requirements in the state you are moving to. Let the police department where you register know that you are moving at least 10 days before you move.

Will I have to pay to register?
People on the Sex Offender Registry are usually required to pay a fee of $100 each time they register. People on the Illinois Murder Registry are required to pay an initial registration fee of $20. After this, the annual registration fee is $10. Failure to pay is a felony. Be sure to ask your parole officer and the police department you register with.

What other restrictions do people on the Sex Offender Registry face?
The Sex Offender Registry has much stricter restrictions that will likely impact your life. You won't be allowed to go in school buildings or on school grounds, or live within 500 feet of a school, park, or childcare facility. You won't be allowed inside parks or public park buildings. You may not be able to use social media, like Facebook or Instagram, or to live with children who aren't your own. While on parole, you will need permission from your parole officer to visit other people's homes, and you will need explicit permission to be around minors, even if they are your own family members. You will not be allowed to visit bars or consume alcohol. You may need to get permission to go to church or to travel. You may not be given permission to use the internet. If you are allowed to use the internet, you will need to pay to have it monitored by your parole officer. The restrictions vary and may end after your parole is complete, so talk to your parole officer to get the full story. See the sections below for more information.

Where can I get more information?
- Illinois State Police Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Registry FAQ: isp.illinois.gov/MVOAY/FAQs
- Illinois State Police Sex Offender Registry FAQ: isp.illinois.gov/Sor/FAQs
- The Illinois State Police Sex Offender Hotline: 888-41-ISORT [(888) 414-7678]

Keep your registry paperwork in order and carry your registry papers with you. People on registries are often targeted by the police. Sometimes there are administrative errors. Registries can take up to a month to update, so you may be listed as non-compliant even if you have already registered. Carrying your registry papers with you can help show that you are in compliance.

It is against the law to harass or threaten people on the registry or their families. If this is happening to you, you can call the police. Talk to your probation or parole officer or call the I-SORT hotline at (888) 414-7678.

☆ Have you been arrested for a registry violation? Reach out to First Defense Legal Aid first-defense.org. They have a hotline for registry violations: (800) 529-7374.

Transferring Registries

In some cases, you can transfer from the Sex Offender Registry to the Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Registry. This will mean fewer restrictions. It's easiest to do the transfer while still in prison. That is another reason why it's a good idea to ask your counselor about the registries before you are released. If you think you want to transfer, your counselor may be able to help you do it before you get home.

People with these convictions may be able to transfer:

- First degree murder of a child
- Kidnapping
- Aggravated kidnapping
- Unlawful restraint
- Aggravated unlawful restraint
- Child abduction
- Forcible detention

Transferring to another registry can be confusing and frustrating. Remember, ask for help from a counselor or your parole officer (if you've already been released). The State's Attorney's Office in the county in which you were convicted may also be a good place to start.

For help, you can contact:

- Illinois Legal Aid (illinoislegalaid.org). They can help you get a lawyer who will work for you for free. If you can't access the internet, try Legal Aid Chicago at 312-341-1070.
- The advocacy groups listed further in this chapter.
- Politicians like aldermen or state representatives. You can reach out by calling their office, telling your story, and asking for their help.

Housing for People on the Sex Offender Registry

We wish we had better news, but it is hard for people on the Sex Offender Registry to find housing. There are many housing restrictions for people with sex offense convictions. Acceptable housing must meet state banishment laws and supervision requirements, and it must have a landlord who will accept people who are on the registry. Some people who are on the registry and have been released are homeless, and they must register every week because they don't have a permanent address.

If you are on the registry for individuals with sex-based offenses, some of the restrictions that make housing so difficult to find include:

- You will not be able to live in public housing administered by the Illinois Housing and Urban Development Authority or Chicago Housing Authority
- You cannot live within 500 feet of a school, playground, daycare center, home daycare, or other facility that primarily serves children.
- If one of these places opens within 500 feet of your home, your housing will become illegal and you will need to move.

Still, there is hope. Have patience and be in frequent contact with your parole officer as you navigate housing challenges. Here are a few options that might work:

- **Living with family members**
- **Private housing**
- **Transitional housing:** The next section ("Places That Accept People with Sex Offense Convictions") lists a few housing options that accept people on the registry.
- **Rapid re-housing:** If you become homeless, you will be eligible for subsidies through rapid-rehousing programs. Learn more about "Rapid Re-Housing" in the Housing After Release chapter (on p 49).

Keep in mind that all the restrictions described above would still apply to these options.

Although it is against the law, sometimes people who are required to register have not been able to get out of prison because they could not find housing. They have been kept past the end of their prison sentence because they don't have a place to stay. If you have a sex offense conviction and are being kept in prison past your out date, contact the lawyers at 5707 W Goodman Street, Chicago, Illinois 60630, (847) 361-3869.

Help and advocacy: We encourage anyone affected by these laws, including family members, to reach out to The Chicago 400. This organization is led by people on public conviction registries. They work to challenge banishment laws and repeal damaging restrictions. They can advise you and keep you updated on registration policies and the best resources. For more information, call them at (978) 414-5373, email Laurie Jo Reynolds at ljr@uic. edu , or visit their website: chicago400.net .

For more information on housing after release see p 49.

Places That Accept People with Sex Offense Convictions

Amer Living, LLC
Multiple Locations in Chicago
(773) 968-4222 or (708) 949-2022

Elite Houses of Sober Living
1236 W 72nd Pl, Chicago, IL 60636
(312) 515-3092, elitehousesofsoberliving.com

Hand N Hand
4207 W Carroll Ave, Chicago, IL 60624
(773) 722-7148

Future Foundations
Multiple Locations in Chicago
(773) 392-5905

New Beginnings Recovery Homes
Multiple Locations in the state
(773) 295-6460, nbrhi.org

New Day Apartments
Multiple Counties, IL
(847) 628-7999, newdayapartments.com

Note on Oxford Houses (below): The residents of Oxford houses vote on new residents. This makes it impossible to say if you will be allowed to live at these places, but some people on the registry have had luck before.

Oxford House Abbey
7759 S Union Ave, Chicago, IL, 60620
(773) 488-2188, oxfordhouse.org

Oxford House Accord
1824 S 4th St, Springfield, IL
(217) 210-2377

Oxford Ajani
6514 Maxwell Dr, Woodridge, IL
(630) 541-8529

Oxford Briarwood
2226 State St, Granite City, IL
(618) 501-1396

Oxford Crest
8904 Crest Dr, Fairview Heights, IL
(618) 381-8700

Sex Offender Registry: Movement Restrictions

People on the Sex Offender Registry are allowed out of their homes only at certain times. Otherwise, they must be at home. Time outside the house (called "movement") is usually allowed for 12 hours stretches. For example, you may be allowed movement to go to work from 6am to 6pm. There is also a limit on how far you can travel from your host site. It is important to do everything possible to respect movement restrictions so that you don't face parole sanctions or ultimately violation of your parole.

Parole officers often have very different expectations. One officer may have you submit information about where you are going a week in advance. They may ask for the time you will leave, the time you will arrive, or the address and phone number of your destination. They may not let you make stops along the way. But depending on where you want to go, other officers may give you more freedom. Talk to your parole officer and make sure you understand their expectations from the start.

If it becomes necessary, you can ask for your movement time to be extended. For instance, if you are relying on public transportation and you get home 30 minutes later than your restrictions allow, you can request that your officer extend your movement to allow for the travel time. Even if they don't extend your movement, asking will still show that you care about successfully meeting your requirements.

Beyond "normal" movement, you may have to request permission before you go to healthcare appointments. Call and get approval to go to the doctor, dentist, therapy, etc. They may be able to change your movement hours when needed.

Plan on going to school? If so, contact your parole officer and the institution you are planning to attend to find exactly what is needed. For more information on continuing your education, see the Education chapter on p 71.

Treatment Programs

Many people on the Sex Offender Registry are required to complete a treatment program. The goal of these programs is healthy reintegration back into society. Treatment groups should provide highly structured programming that is individualized to each person. Trained mental health providers run these programs and provide tasks designed to break through denial and identify areas where a person might not be honestly dealing with their offense. The quality of these programs and services vary widely, as do the personalities of the providers.

IDOC staff often offer free treatment services, but private services are available too. If you are required to enroll in a treatment program, your officer may give you a list of approved providers or tell you which program to choose. If you are given a choice, do your homework. Call them and ask questions like:

- How do they run their program?
- What assignments or tasks are involved in their processes?
- How often will you meet for individual treatment? How often for group treatment?
- What are the costs of each?

Monthly costs for private programs can range from $300 to $700.



It may seem like these groups are punishment, but some people are lucky enough to find positive providers who have made a difference in their lives.
—Scott P.

Polygraphs and Safety Plans

For those on the Sex Offender Registry, depending on the conditions of your parole, your parole officer, and/or your treatment program, you may be required to take a polygraph test or write up a safety plan.

Polygraph tests: If you are required to take a polygraph test, you will be given a list of accepted providers. It's up to you to schedule an appointment and to show up with all necessary documents and fees. A polygraph test typically costs between $300 and $400.

One type of polygraph test is based on a person's sexual history. In this test, individuals are given a list of topics based on their case and told they must disclose all details. There is another type of test called a "maintenance" test. This test asks basic questions about your personalized parole restrictions. For either test, it is best to walk in as calmly as possible and listen to the provider. They will explain the process, how the system is connected to you, and even how the device operates. Be honest. Taking a polygraph can be stressful, but it may be a necessary step that can allow you to move forward.

Safety Plans: Many parole officers and treatment providers in Illinois have moved to having parolees create a document called a "safety plan" for a variety of situations. Safety plans are used when a person is going to a location or event that may carry some risk. The idea is to think things through in detail in advance, so if things go wrong, you have a plan ready to go.

Safety plans often include:

- The type of event and its location or duration
- Possible triggers or high-risk situations that may occur at the event
- A schedule or a structured plan to help you avoid

risky behaviors
- A contact you can reach out to if you feel at risk of breaking parole conditions
- Locations that you will avoid to reduce risks
- Scheduled check-ins with parole officers

☆ If you're going to be on parole as a registrant, you will almost certainly be required to wear an ankle monitor for the duration of your parole. Learn more about this in the "Electronic Monitoring" section of the Parole: Mandatory Supervised Release chapter (on p. 27).

Technology Restrictions

If you are on the Sex Offender Registry, your use of smart phones, computers, and other technology may be restricted. If you are offered a job that would require these technologies, you can ask your employer to write a letter explaining what technology you would need to use, how you would use it, and why it's necessary for your job. You would then need to talk to your parole officer to request approval, but there is no guarantee you will get it.

Getting approval can take some time, and it can be expensive. If your parole officer allows your use of technology, you will need to pay for monitoring apps. Monthly costs are around $50 per device. You may be able to avoid a phone-monitoring app if your employer can monitor how you use devices, but that is up to your parole officer to approve or deny.

If you don't have a job that requires a smart phone or computer, plan to get a flip phone. Common retail outlets still carry them. They cost $30-$50. When you set up service (see the "Getting a Phone" section of the Technology chapter on p. 100), set the phone for only calls and texts.

Your use of social media networking websites will probably also be restricted. If social media was an active part of your life, it may not be now. Talk to your parole officer about that.

Requesting Contact with Biological Children

Many people on the Sex Offender Registry hope to be able to have contact with their children who are under 18 after their reentry. After all, regular phone calls, video visits, or in-person visits may have been allowed on the inside. But depending on your parole officer and your restrictions, that may change. You may have restrictions on **phone contact**, which includes traditional calls, texts, and video calls. Your restrictions might allow **supervised visits**, where you and your child or children would meet in an approved location with an adult who is responsible for staying with everyone for the entire visit.

To have contact with your children, you will need to give your parole officer information about your children and their guardian. This includes information like names, birthdates, etc. The parole officer will then reach out to the guardian of your children. You will then need to give your parole officer proof that you are the biological father or mother of the child/children you want to have contact with. A copy of your children's birth certificates showing your name should work. After that, your parole officer and your therapist will work toward approval for the contact.

Dealing with Shame

For people on registries, you will find a mix of reactions from those you encounter in the world. Some people may surprise you by accepting or even supporting you. But how do you deal with those who try to shame you or harass you? Here are a few tips that may help.

- **Don't be controlled by others' words or opinions.** Often those who make negative comments about people on registries are speaking or acting out of fear. There are many negative words that cause panic in the public. Don't listen to them. You get to choose who to have in your life and who to have contact with. You are allowed to move on. You can surround yourself with positive people.
- **Set Boundaries.** If people will not back down, you may have to set boundaries. Use "I" statements to explain how you think or feel. Set a firm line of what is not acceptable to you. Then decide if you need to limit or cut off contact with such people.
- **Find Support.** As you enter back into society, who can be your ally? Maybe you have family or friends

who are willing to support you. Maybe you have an understanding neighbor or coworker. You might find support in recovery or a support group. Consider finding a personal therapist. Find those who build you up, and work on building relationships with them.

- **Focus on the Positives.** Who are you now? How have you grown? What are you building towards in the future? Don't let others derail your dreams and goals. You have a right to reach for them. You have a right to a bright future!

Resources for More Information and Support

Organization/Resource	Website
Rise Above	wecanriseabove.org
Illinois Voices	ilvoices.org
Women Against Registries	ww1.womenagainstregistry.org
NARSOL	www.narsol.org
Registering with Dignity handbook	tinyurl.com/RegisterWithDignity
Your Life on the List (by Derrick Logue)	tinyurl.com/YourLifeontheList
The Chicago 400	chicago400.net
Illinois State Police website	isp.illinois.gov/MVOAY
Chicago Torture Justice Center	chicagotorturejustice.org
Cabrini Green Legal Aid	cgla.net
First Defense Legal Aid	first-defense.org; Hotline if arrested for a registry violation: (800) 529-7374



You may have to start small and work your way up to where you want to be in life. But don't let that stop you from pursuing your dreams.

—Chad R.

Part 2:
After You Get Out

- Getting Your ID
- Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs
- Housing After Release
- Employment
- Education
- Health
- Trauma and Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Transportation
- Technology
- Legal Matters
- Finances, Credit and Taxes
- Voting
- Veterans
- LGBTQ+ People

Getting Your ID



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

Congratulations, you're out! Now that you're free, you'll need an ID. In this chapter, you will learn about

- How to get your birth certificate and Social Security card
- How to get your state ID or driver's license
- The Chicago CityKey card and how to get one
- Signing up for Selective Service (a.k.a, "the draft")

Birth Certificate and Social Security Card

To get a state ID or driver's license, you will first need a copy of your birth certificate and Social Security card. Here's how to get them:

- If you are able to, go in person to the county clerk's office in the county where you were born to order a birth certificate. If you can't go in person, call them or follow the instructions on their website to request a birth certificate.
- Go to a Social Security Administration Office to get your Social Security card (see our directory on p. 153). Call to set up an appointment and find out what you need to bring before you go.

State ID or Driver's License

Once you have your birth certificate and Social Security card, you can get a state ID or driver's license. These are the most common forms of ID. To get either a state ID or a driver's license, you'll need to visit Driver Services. To find a Driver Services facility close to you, either call (800) 252-8980 or go to apps.ilsos.gov/facilityfinder/facility .

If you plan to get a driver's license, read the Illinois Rules of the Road. You can pick up a copy of this booklet at any public library or download it here: tinyurl.com/IL-road-rules . If you've been incarcerated for a long time, we recommend getting a learner's permit. A permit lets you practice driving until you feel comfortable taking the driver's test. To get a permit, you will need to pass a written test and a vision test. Once you get the permit, you can drive with another driver who has a license.

Are you reading this before your release? If so, you may be able to get a permanent state ID while you're still inside. (See the "Get your IDs on the inside" box in the Gather Your Documents chapter on p. 13)

☆ **Note:** You can get a free state ID if you visit the DMV within 30 days of leaving prison. If you have a temporary ID from IDOC, you have 90 days. To get your free state ID, you will need an IDOC Identification Card Verification Form. This form can be requested from Field Services before you leave.

Going to Driver Services can take a long time, so be sure to bring everything you need:

- An original document with your written signature (credit card, court order, or Social Security card)
- An original document with your date of birth (birth certificate, passport, high school transcript, or college transcript—including a transcript of college classes you took in prison)
- An original document with your Social Security number (Social Security card, IL driver's license record, or military service record)
- Original documents proving you live in Illinois (bank statement, credit report, utility bills, medical record, or HIV test)
- Payment

(By "original," we mean the actual document you received, not a copy of that document).

It took me seven months to get my Social Security card and ID; this time would have been cut in half if I would have been given the information shared here.

—Antonio

REAL ID

Starting May 7th, 2025, all Illinois residents will need a REAL ID card to board domestic flights, enter certain federal facilities, and more. You do NOT need a REAL ID card if you

- Have a valid US passport
- Do not plan to use airplanes for domestic transportation
- Do not plan to visit military bases or secure federal facilities

REAL IDs are available at all Illinois Driver's Services facilities, except for express or mobile facilities. Find which facilities require appointments and how to make appointments here: ilsos.gov/departments/drivers/appointments/home.html . To see a list of required documents, visit the REAL ID Interactive Checklist here: realid.ilsos.gov/checklist.html .

Suspensions

Is your license suspended? A license can get suspended for many reasons:

- Not paying traffic tickets, parking tickets, or tolls
- Being convicted of driving while drunk or using drugs (called Driving Under the Influence, or a DUI)
- Not making child support payments. See our Legal Matters chapter (on p. 106) for instructions on how to change your child support payments so that this doesn't happen.

If your license was suspended, you can get it back after the suspension is over.

☆ **Note:** If your license was suspended due to unpaid tickets, you will need to pay the past tickets, get a notice of compliance from the ticketing agency, and pay a $70 fee for each outstanding ticket. This process can take a long time depending on how long the ticket has been unpaid. Any unpaid tickets can be paid at the DMV office in the state where the ticket was issued.

Make appointments for anything and everything. Don't wait until you have all the requirements in your hand. Just make the appointment. You can always reschedule if you need to.

—Roberto

Revocations

"Revoked" means your driver's license has been taken away. Driver's licenses are often revoked for serious DUIs. For example, if someone was injured because the driver was drunk or using drugs. If your license is revoked, you may be able to get a new one. But you will have to wait for some time. The waiting periods for applying for a new license are:

- 1st DUI offense: one year
- 2nd DUI offense: five years
- 3rd DUI offense: ten years
- 4th DUI offense: life-time ban

If your license was revoked because someone was killed while you were driving, you may not be able to get a new one. But you should still check to be sure.

☆ If you choose to drive without a license, you may face more serious penalties (more time without a license, jail time, or losing your car).

Getting Your License Back

How do you get your license back if it was suspended? First, contact Driver Services. Ask them how long before you can apply for a new license. Find the DMV's instructions on how to see your driving record here: tinyurl.com/IL-DrivingRecord .

You can also ask to meet with a hearing officer at a DMV office. Locations and phone numbers can be found here: ilsos.gov/facilities/facilitylist.html . The hearing officer will let you know if you can get your license back. They can also help you get ready for your hearing.

Informal Hearing Process

You can schedule an informal hearing if you have only one DUI and if that DUI is not a criminal DUI. Contact the Driver Services office nearest you. During the hearing, an officer will tell you what you need to do to get your license back. You will probably need to pay a fee and any unpaid traffic or parking tickets.

If your license was suspended because you did not pay child support, you will need to provide papers showing that you have changed your child support payment plan to one you can afford, and that the court agrees to these changes (see the Legal Matters chapter on p. 106).

If your license was suspended or revoked because of a DUI, you will need

- A Drug/Alcohol Evaluation by a licensed agency
- Papers showing you have completed a DUI Risk Education Course
- Papers showing you have completed substance abuse treatment

Formal Hearing Process

If you have multiple DUIs or a criminal DUI, you will need to schedule a formal hearing. This kind of hearing may include witnesses and evidence. To request a formal hearing

1. Complete a Formal Hearing Request form, available here: tinyurl.com/FormalHearingRequest .
2. Mail the form to the nearest Driver Services office.
3. Pay a $50 fee.

> *If you go with the frame of mind that you are going to spend a hell of a lot of time in that place, it helps. Go with the right frame of mind, otherwise you're going to be miserable.*
>
> **—Anonymous**



At the hearing, a Driver Services hearing officer will decide about your license. They will say you can get a new license, give you a temporary driving permit, or deny your license. It is a good idea to bring documents to show you are a safe driver who won't get another DUI. You can also bring witnesses to talk about how you are safe, trustworthy, and responsible. Some people hire lawyers.

Do you need a license to get to work or school? Bring papers that show that you have a job or take classes. This may help you get a temporary driving permit.

Chicago CityKey Card

If you live in Chicago, you may be able to get a Chicago CityKey card. This is an ID card for all Chicago residents, including people who are undocumented. It is easier to get than a state ID. The CityKey card is also a library card and transit card, and it gets you discounts at some businesses and cultural sites in Chicago. The card also gives you discounts on medications. You can't use the card to open a bank account, but you can use it as an ID for a lot of basic things. For more information visit the City Clerk of Chicago's website at chicityclerk.com/about-citykey .

Selective Service

Did you know you may still have to sign up for "the draft"? Also called the Selective Service, the draft is a program that lets the US military call men to serve. You need to register for Selective Service if you are

- male,
- between 18 and 25, and
- a US citizen or resident.

Registering with the Selective Service does not mean you are in the military. It means you may be called to serve in the military if there is a crisis.

If you need to register for the Selective Service and you don't, you could be fined or go to jail. This could disqualify you for government jobs or government training. You can register online at sss.gov/register . You can send the form by mail to:

Selective Service System
Registration Information Office
PO Box 94739
Palatine, IL 60094-4739

You can also pick up a registration form at any post office.

You don't have to register if you were incarcerated the entire time you were 18 to 25. But to ensure that you don't lose any federal benefits after your release, you should request a status-information letter at sss.gov/verify/sil .

What if you weren't incarcerated but you still didn't register? You can also request a status-information letter. The letter should say that you did not "knowingly or willfully" fail to register for Selective Service. You could mention if you were incarcerated shortly after your 18th birthday, left school early, or anything else that might have made it hard to register.



Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

Leaving prison is exciting but not always easy. Many people have trouble finding a place to live or buying food after they leave prison. Other people struggle with drug or alcohol use or mental health issues. Be patient with yourself. Take your time as you figure things out. There are places you can go to for help.

This chapter has three main sections:

- How to apply for government benefits to meet your basic needs
- Resources for people with disabilities
- Other places to go for help

Apply for Benefits

Did you know the government can help you with some basic needs? One of the first things you should do after release is apply for government assistance programs. If you need help, go to a Department of Human Services (DHS) Family Community Resource Center (see our directory on p. 153). You can also visit a hospital, non-profit organization, your place of worship, or other service provider and ask for help applying for benefits.

To get these benefits, you'll have to meet certain qualifications. For some programs, you must be a certain age. For most, you must meet income requirements (not make a lot of money).

You can apply for these benefit programs by going to abe.illinois.gov or calling (800) 843-6154.

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** used to be called "food stamps." Each month, money is put onto a special debit card called a LINK card. You can use the card to buy food from most grocery stores. If you are reading this before your release, please note that in Illinois prisons, **you should be given a chance to sign up for SNAP benefits 5 – 10 days before your release.**
- **Medicaid** and **All Kids.** Medicaid is a program for people who make little or no money. It helps people pay for medicine, hospital visits, doctor appointments, and more. All Kids is a similar program that helps pay for health care for children.
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).** Provides money for families who need it.
- **Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled Cash Assistance (AABD)** provides money for people who have disabilities or who are blind.
- **Medicare Savings Program (MSP)** helps pay for the costs of Medicare for older people and people with disabilities. (See below for an explanation of Medicare.)

If you are reading this in an IDOC prison, you should be given a chance to sign up for SNAP benefits 5 – 10 days before your release. Request a meeting with a correctional counselor to apply.

Here are some more programs you may be able to use. People at the Department of Human Services Offices can help you apply.

- **The Illinois Court-Based Rental Assistance Program** provides funding to Illinois tenants who have cases in eviction court. Call (866) 454-3571 for more information or visit illinoishousinghelp.org/cbrap .

- **The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** helps people pay their utilities each month (gas, electricity). Call (877) 411-WARM (9276) or visit dceo.illinois.gov/communityservices/utilitybillassistance.html to learn more.
- **Lifeline (Phone and Internet Program)** is a program you can use to help pay for either your phone or the internet. The program will give you up to $9.25 for your bill. Learn more at lifelinesupport.org .
- **The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** helps parents who have a job or who go to school. The program provides money for childcare. Learn more at dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30355 .

Resources for People with Disabilities

There are many resources that can help people with disabilities to have a successful reentry. The **National Council on Independent Living** (ncil.org) offers valuable support and can help you to learn new skills, advocate for yourself, and live independently. They also give referrals and information about other community organizations who can help.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a national program designed to help you get and keep a job. They can help you make a plan to get a job and get any accommodations you need. If your plan requires schooling, they can help with tuition, books, and transportation. They may also be able to help you create a plan to run your own business. Find your local VR agency here: tinyurl.com/askjanVR .

At The A to Z of Disabilities and Accommodations (askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm), you can find all sorts of information on the protections, tools, and services that can help you work.

The American with Disabilities Act exists to protect people with disabilities from discrimination. If you have questions about your rights or need help advocating for yourself, find ADA support at www.adagreatlakes.org or by calling (800) 949-4232.

Social Security Programs

The Social Security Administration has other benefit programs that you may be able to use, including the following:

Social Security Retirement Benefits. You can start receiving your Social Security retirement benefits as early as age 62. However, you are entitled to full benefits when you reach your full retirement age. There are advantages and disadvantages to receiving your benefit before your full retirement age. The advantage is that you collect benefits for a longer time. The disadvantage is that you will receive less money. Each person's situation is different. To get the money, you need to have worked or paid Social Security taxes for at least 10 years before you went to prison. Learn more with:

- A brief and simple **SSA brochure**, located here: ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10035.pdf
- The SSA's **Retirement Planner**, which lets you estimate your personal retirement benefits: ssa.gov/prepare/plan-retirement
- The SSA fact sheet, **When to Start Receiving Retirement Benefits**, which can help you understand how Social Security can fit into your retirement plan: tinyurl.com/Receiving-Retirement-Benefits

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides income payments to people 65 or older and adults and children who have a disability. You may be eligible if you are 65 or older, or you are blind or disabled and have little or no income. You must also be a US citizen or permanent resident. SSI gives people money every month to help with things like food, clothing, and housing. Unlike Social Security Retirement Benefits, SSI benefits are not based on your prior work or a family member's prior work history.

- For information about eligibility, visit: ssa.gov/ssi/text-eligibility-ussi.htm .
- For information on SSI benefits after incarceration, visit: ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10504.pdf .

Medicare provides health insurance to people 65 or older and people with a disability. See ssa.gov/benefits/medicare .

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) gives money to adults with disabilities and some of their family members. To use this program, you need to have worked for many years.

Social Security/SSI While Incarcerated

If you receive Social Security retirement, disability, or survivors benefits, your benefits are suspended if you're convicted of a criminal offense and sent to jail or prison for more than 30 continuous days. Your benefits can start again the month following your release. Although you can't receive Social Security benefits while you're incarcerated, benefits to your spouse or children will continue as long as they remain eligible.

SSI payments also stop while you're incarcerated. If you are locked up for less than one year, your payments will restart the month you're released. Otherwise, you will need to file a new application to receive SSI.

You are allowed to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) a few months before your release so that your benefits can restart quickly. Speak to a reentry counselor at your facility for help.

- For information about the impact of incarceration on benefits, visit: ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10133.pdf .
- For detailed information about eligibility for benefits after incarceration, visit: ssa.gov/reentry/benefits.htm .

Note: Disability applications may be rejected at first. If you don't qualify, don't give up. Keep trying.

Learn more and apply at ssa.gov, or call (800) 722-1213 for help. Get in-person help by making an appointment with your local Social Security office. Go to ssa.gov/locator .

Places to Go for Help

You can go to other places for help too. You can always **call 3-1-1** (throughout Illinois) **or 2-1-1** (in Chicago). They will help direct you to local resources. You can find even more places to go for help in the directory (see p. 153).

I need help with...	Where to get help	How to get help
Food	Food pantries, soup kitchens	Find one at illinoisfoodbanks.org/sites.asp
Health and dental care	Free or low-cost community health and dental clinics that don't require insurance. Go to an emergency room if you have an emergency.	Find a clinic at freeclinicdirectory.org/illinois_care.html . Call 911 if you're having an emergency.
Substance use treatment	Support groups, treatment programs	Call the SAMHSA National Helpline at (800) 662-4357. For support groups, go to aa.org (Alcoholics Anonymous) or na.org (Narcotics Anonymous).
Housing	Emergency housing, transitional housing	Go to hud.gov/findshelter or call 3-1-1 (Illinois) or 2-1-1 (Chicago).
Mental health (emergency)	Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, hospital emergency room	Call 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Call 911 if you are having an emergency.
Mental health (non-emergency)	Mental health clinics that offer free or low-cost services.	Go to tinyurl.com/HealthyMindResources or call the Illinois Warm Line at (866) 359-7953.

Benefits Checklist

Program	Description	Do I qualify?	Have I applied?
SNAP	Money for food, LINK card		
Medicaid	Healthcare help		
TANF	Money for families in need		
AABD	Money for blind/disabled people		
Lifeline	Help with phone and internet payment		
Rental Assistance Program	Help with rent		
LIHEAP	Help with utility bills		
Medicare	Health insurance for seniors, people with disabilities		
SSI	Monthly payments for those with disabilities		
SSDI	Monthly payments for those with disabilities		
Social Security Retirement Benefits	Monthly payments for those who are retired		

I came home after ten years, I went to a homeless shelter and three days later I had a job. A week and a half later, I had an apartment. My first paycheck, I got a cheap studio apartment. So you can do it. Don't let your feelings from being incarcerated judge who you are and what you can do. Because you can make it.

—Tony C.

Housing After Release



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

Finding a place to live is one of the most important parts of the reentry process. It can also be one of the hardest parts. Finding accessible, low cost, and stable housing can be a challenge.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Transitional Housing (halfway houses)
- Emergency Shelters
- Public and Subsidized Housing
- Private Housing
- Help with Rent
- Your Legal Rights
- Housing for People with Sex Offense Convictions

Transitional Housing

Many people who leave prison go to a halfway house, which is also known as transitional housing. People can stay in transitional housing anywhere from three months to two years. If you are looking for transitional housing while you're still incarcerated, please see the Find Housing chapter in Before You Leave (on p. 17). Our directory (on p. 153) lists choices for transitional housing.

Emergency Shelters

If you find yourself without a place to stay, emergency shelters may help. Some shelters are safe houses for victims of domestic abuse. Some shelters may have certain restrictions around pets, particular genders, children, or people convicted of sex and/or violent offenses. Many shelters offer food, laundry, and support services to help you find more permanent housing. To find emergency housing, try any of the options listed here:

- Look through our directory (on p. 153). It lists several emergency shelters in Illinois. Access it online at reentryillinois.net .
- Call 2-1-1 and ask which shelters are accepting people in your area.
- Go to shelterlistings.org to find an emergency shelter in any state.
- Go to www.hud.gov/findshelter to find a list of shelters in Illinois.
- If you live in Chicago, complete an assessment through the Chicago Coordinated Entry System by calling (312) 361-1707.
- In Chicago, you can call 3-1-1 to find open shelters or ask for a ride to the shelter. But recently 3-1-1 has been having problems, and they may not answer when you call.

Rapid Re-Housing

If you are experiencing homelessness, Rapid Re-Housing can help you get on a path to permanent housing. The program provides short-term subsidized housing, usually for 12–24 months. It can provide other services that will help you get back on your feet, too, such as help with employment and finances. These programs are available regardless of criminal record. If you need rapid re-housing, try calling 3-1-1 or visit tinyurl.com/ChicagoRapidRehousing to learn more about rapid re-housing in Chicago.

Public and Subsidized Housing

There are several different subsidized and public housing options in Illinois. These options are supported by the government and have cheaper rents. Space is often limited and there may be waitlists.

- **Public housing** is owned by the government. People who meet income requirements can live there. Contact your local Public Housing Authority (PHA) to find out about public housing in your area. Go to resources.hud.gov to find your PHA.
- **Section 8 housing** is a program where the government helps you cover rent by offering housing vouchers. Section 8 housing is offered through your local Public Housing Authority (PHA). If you qualify, your PHA can provide a list of places where your vouchers can be used.
- **Project-based subsidized housing**, or affordable housing, is privately owned rental housing. The owners receive subsidies from the government to make their housing cheaper for low-income people and families. Find this type of housing here: ilhousingsearch.org . Your local PHA may also have a list of project-based subsidized housing.
- **Permanent supportive housing** may be available to you if you belong to one of these groups:
    - Senior citizens
    - Veterans
    - People with disabilities: This includes physical and mental disabilities, an HIV/AIDS diagnosis, and substance use disorders.
    - Chronic homelessness: This means you need to either have been homeless for 12 consecutive months or four separate times within three years.

  Permanent supportive housing includes support services, such as medical care and counseling. There is no limit to how long you can stay there. There are several ways to find this type of housing:
    - The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) funds supportive housing programs and maintains a list of housing providers here: dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30361 .
    - Visit a Continuum of Care agency (CoC) to locate public supportive housing in your area. hudexchange.info/housing-and-homeless-assistance/homeless-help .
    - If you live in Chicago, use the Central Referral System to apply for permanent supportive housing: csh.org/chicagoces .

How much does subsidized or public housing cost?
This depends on how much you earn. Many places will require you to pay 30 percent of your income to rent.

Can I stay in public housing if I have a record?
In the past, many people with criminal records could not get into public or subsidized housing. This is changing, however. In 2021, Illinois passed the Public Housing Access Bill allowing most people released from prison to live in public housing. Here are some of the key things you should know about the law:

- Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) can't consider arrest records, findings of not guilty, juvenile records, expunged records, and sealed records.
- You can apply right after you are released; there is no waiting period.
- The PHAs can look back at your criminal record six months from the date of your application. PHAs can (but don't have to) deny people with felony convictions within this six-month look-back period. If you were recently convicted of a violent crime, drug use, or making or selling drugs, you may be denied.
- If you were incarcerated or convicted during those six months, you have an opportunity to present your case.
- Living with family members will no longer put your family at risk for eviction.
- PHAs must keep records of the number of formerly incarcerated people who apply for public housing.

Three groups of people still CANNOT live in public housing under federal law:

- People listed on the Sex Offender Registry
- People convicted of producing meth
- People convicted of arson

Chicago's Just Housing policy also makes it easier to access public housing. For more information, read about the Just Housing Amendment in the Legal Rights section further in this chapter.

How can I apply for Public or Subsidized Housing?
Public and subsidized housing programs often have long wait lists. You should apply as early as you can. We have

listed county and city PHAs in our online directory: reentryillinois.net . Call them and ask for instructions. Once you have applied, they will let you know when there's a place available. You can call and check to see where you are on the waiting list.

Private Housing

Private housing can be easier to find than public housing because there is more of it. However, it also costs more. Private housing can be found in the classified section of newspapers and online at apartments.com, zillow.com, forrent.com, craigslist.org, trulia.com, and other websites. You are likely to run into barriers because of your criminal background. It may take a while to find a landlord who will rent to you. Large property management firms almost always conduct background checks, so you may have better luck with units in smaller complexes or in private homes.

Others who have come home from prison before you may be your best source of information. If you are part of a reentry program, use it as a resource. Use your network of friends and family. They may know places where you can stay.

Renting an Apartment

Once you've found an apartment, call the landlord and set up a time to view it. Arrive on time and dress nicely. You want to give a good first impression. On your visit, you may be asked to fill out an application and pay an application fee. The application will ask for information such as your employer, rent history, and current address. You may also be asked for references—people who can vouch for you, like employers or community leaders at your place of worship.

The application may also ask about your criminal history. Many landlords conduct background checks. You may worry that sharing your history will hurt your chance of getting the apartment. Even though this may be true, we suggest that you be up front if they ask. It may not disqualify you.

Questions you might ask a landlord:

- What is the rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- Is there an application fee?
- Are utilities included?
- When is the rent due?
- What is the parking like?
- Are tenants able to make changes (e.g., paint the walls)?
- Is there an additional cost for pets or other family members?
- Is there a background check? If so, who would be excluded from eligibility?
- What are the terms of the lease?
- When will the apartment be available?

Warning: If anyone asks you for money before you have even seen the apartment, you are probably being scammed. Do not pay anything before you have seen the apartment. If a landlord agrees to rent to you, you will sign a lease or a rental agreement.

- A **lease** is usually a year-long commitment to pay a certain amount each month for the whole year.
- A **rental agreement** is typically month-by-month. After 30 days, both you or the landlord are free to back out or change the agreement.

Read the lease or rental agreement carefully before signing or paying any fees. It is legally binding. You won't be able to back out once you have signed. Keep a copy in a safe place.

Security deposits. Many landlords require one to two month's rent as well as a security deposit or move-in fee before you move in. The security deposit may be refunded to you when you move out, but the move-in fee will not. It's a good idea to take pictures of anything that is damaged when you move in so that you can show that you didn't cause it. The security deposit or move-in fee shows that you are serious about renting the apartment. If you choose not to move into the apartment, the landlord keeps this money. Ask for a receipt for the security deposit and any other fees you pay.

When you move out, your security deposit will be used to cover any damage to the apartment that you caused. Your landlord should not use your security deposit to pay for regular wear and tear of living in your apartment, but for items like a broken light fixture or carpet damage. You should receive a receipt for damages when you move out. Any leftover money from the security deposit should be mailed to you within 30 to 45 days.

Breaking a lease. If you need to move out before your lease ends, you can do so, but you may have to pay a fee. The amount that you pay should be listed in the lease, so read it

carefully. You may have to keep paying rent until they find someone else to rent the apartment.

How does renters' insurance work?
If you're renting your home, renters' insurance will protect your things in case of an accident. It will help to pay for damage caused by events such as theft, fire, flood, and more. Landlords have their own insurance to cover the damages to their buildings, but that won't cover damage to your things. Renters' insurance can also help you cover your costs if someone is injured in your rented home. The average cost of renters insurance in Illinois is $13.33 a month, or about $160 a year.

Some popular providers of rental insurance Illinois are Lemonade (lemonade.com/renters), Quote Wizard (quotewizard.com/router), Liberty Mutual Insurance (libertymutual.com/property/renters-insurance), American Family Insurance (amfam.com/insurance/renters/coverages), Toggle (gettoggle.com), and Allstate (allstate.com/landingpages/lsp/renters-quote).

If you have car insurance, it's a good idea to check with that provider. Insurance companies often offer "bundles" where it is cheaper when you get multiple kinds of insurance from them.

Help with Rent

If you're having trouble paying rent or utilities, several programs can help.

- **The Illinois Rental Assistance Program.** Go to an Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) office to apply. You can also call the IDHS Help Line at (866) 454-3571.
- Several cities and counties have rental assistance programs:
    - **Chicago Rental Assistance Program.** Visit a City of Chicago Community Service Center to apply or visit tinyurl.com/rentalassistanceinchicago .
    - **Lake County Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (FERA).** Apply online. For questions or help with your applications, **call 2-1-1** or **text your zip code to 899211.** Visit lakecountyil.gov/4578/Rental-Assistancer email EmergencyAssistance@LakeCountyHA.org .
    - **Madison County Rent & Mortgage Assistance:** tinyurl.com/madisoncountyrentassistance .
    - **McHenry County Emergency Utility and Rental Assistance Program:** tinyurl.com/mchenrycountyhousingassistance .
- **Community Action Agencies** across the state provide help with rent and other services, like help paying for utilities. Call 2-1-1 to find a Community Action Agency near you, or visit www.iacaanet.org .
- Call "Help is Here" at (833) 234-6343 to reach the **Homeless Prevention Program**. This program helps with rent and utilities for people who are homeless or in danger of homelessness, eviction, or foreclosure.
- **Call 2-1-1** to be connected to local health-and-human-services assistance.

Your Legal Rights

Important Housing Laws

Below we've listed some important housing laws. If a landlord breaks one of these laws, you can file a complaint (see the Housing Discrimination section below). These laws apply if you are renting or buying a home, getting a mortgage, or seeking housing assistance.

Federal Fair Housing Act
- Landlords cannot discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), family status, or disability.

Illinois Human Rights Act
- Landlords cannot discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, age, order-of-protection status, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, disability, source of income, or arrest record.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development Fair Housing Act Guidelines
In 2016, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released guidance for how the Fair Housing Act applies to people who have arrest or conviction records:

- Arrest records and convictions *can* be used to deny people housing, but landlords who automatically

refuse someone with a criminal record may be violating the law. Landlords can deny housing if they find that an individual's criminal record poses a risk to other tenants or the neighborhood.
- In 2022, HUD released additional guidance for housing providers, encouraging them not to consider criminal history. If they do, they have to consider the individual's specific circumstances. They can't just exclude all individuals with convictions.

Just Housing Amendment (Chicago)
- Criminal history cannot be considered if it is more than three years old, unless you were convicted of a sex offense that requires you to register or follow related residency restrictions.
- Arrests that did not result in convictions cannot be considered.
- If your criminal history is less than three years old, a landlord must conduct an individual assessment before denying you housing. They can consider things like the nature of the offense, how severe it was, age, and evidence of rehabilitation.
- Background checks cannot be performed until after the initial screening process to see if you qualify for housing. Screening criteria may include income, rental history, and credit score.
- Visit cookcountyil.gov/content/just-housing-amendment-information-landlords to learn more.

Some other cities also have housing discrimination laws. For example, the Urbana Human Rights Ordinance forbids discrimination based on arrest or conviction record.

☆ **Uptown People's Law Center** (UPLC) helps people reentering in Cook County with legal problems related to housing. They focus on helping people who have been denied housing or threatened with eviction because of their criminal records. Call them at (773) 769-1411 or visit between 10 am to 4 pm on Tuesday or Thursday (4413 N Sheridan Rd, Chicago, IL 60640). They will investigate your issue and let you know if they can offer free legal help.

Eviction

Are you worried about getting kicked out of your apartment? Go to hud.gov/states/illinois/renting/tenantrights to find information about landlord issues, your rights, and resources across Illinois. Here are a few programs that may help:

- **Eviction Help Illinois:** evictionhelpillinois.org or (855) 621-0811
- **Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt:** cookcountylegalaid.org or (855) 956-5763
- **Chicago Eviction Resources:** Chicago.gov/eviction or (312) 742-7368
- The **Chicago 3-1-1 Hotline** can help find emergency shelter and settle landlord disputes.

Housing Discrimination

If you have been discriminated against, there are several ways you can file a complaint:

- You can file a complaint with the Illinois Department of Human Rights by phone, in person, or in writing. You will have 300 days to file a complaint. **The Illinois Legal Aid Organization** has instructions, forms, and resources to file a complaint: illinoislegalaid.org/legal-information/housing-discrimination .
- You can file a complaint through **HUD**. Submit the complaint as soon as possible. Call them at (800) 669-9777 or (800) 877-8339, or email ComplaintsOffice05@hud.gov .
- You can file a complaint in the city where you live. For instance, if you live in Urbana, you can file a complaint at the city's Human Relations Commission or a similar local agency.

Legal Assistance

Here are a few resources that can help:

- **Law Center for Better Housing:** (312) 347-7600 or www.lcbh.org
- **Center for Conflict Resolution:** (312) 922-6464 or www.ccrchicago.org
- **Metropolitan Tenants Organization:** (773) 292-4988 or www.tenants-rights.org

Will you be on the registry after release? If so, you may be worried about finding a place to live that meets the requirements. For more information on Housing on the registry see the Registries chapter on p 32.

Employment



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

You will hear a lot of discouraging talk about getting a job with a record. While it is hard, some companies do hire people with records. Don't give up.

There is a lot involved with finding a job, so this is one of the longest chapters. It covers these topics:

- Employment Resources
- Make a Plan
- Popular Career Options
- Women and Employment
- Look for Jobs
- Resume, Cover Letters, and the Interview
- Your Legal Rights

Employment Resources

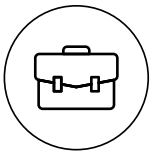
Finding a job and building a career is hard, especially with a criminal record. We strongly suggest that you find people or programs to help you. Here are a few places to start. There are many more listed in our online resource directory: reentryillinois.net .

- **American Job Centers** help people search for jobs and find training. Go to careeronestop.org to find a location of an American Job Center near you. This website has many resources to help you with your job search. Call (877) 872-5627 for help.
- **The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership** (a partner of the American Job Center Network) helps people in the Chicago area find a job and build a career. Call (800) 720-2515 or go to their website: chicookworks.org .
- **The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)** ides.illinois.gov offers many resources for people who are unemployed or who are looking for jobs.
    - Search for jobs, download a resume, look for training and other resources: illinoisjoblink.illinois.gov .
    - Learn about unemployment insurance and how to apply: ides.illinois.gov/unemployment.html .
- **Reentry programs** and transitional housing often offer employment services. Check the ones listed in our directory (see p. 153), such as Safer Foundation, St. Leonard's Ministries, Phalanx Family Services, and READI Chicago.
- Your **parole or probation officer** may have ideas about jobs and training you could apply for.

Home Healthcare Grants

You don't need to choose between taking care of a loved one and earning an income. In Illinois, many programs help caregivers get paid for taking care of their disabled or elderly family members. Programs like Medicaid, Veteran Affairs, or Area Agencies on Aging have different requirements and resources that you can learn about through their websites, or by calling. Find more information here: joingivers.com/how-to-get-paid-caregiver/illinois .





Job Planning Worksheet

Fill out this worksheet to prepare for your job hunt.

What am I good at? Knowing your strengths, gifts, and talents is an important first step.

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

What do I know how to do? Take some time to think about your skills. This could include skills you learned on the job, in prison programs, or by caring for family members.



Check some of the things you like to do:

- ◯ I like to work with people.
- ◯ I like working with food.
- ◯ I like working with animals.
- ◯ I like routine.
- ◯ I like using my hands.
- ◯ I like working with computers.
- ◯ I like solving problems.
- ◯ I like building things.
- ◯ I like being creative.
- ◯ I like communicating with others.
- ◯ I like making a difference.
- ◯ I like helping people.
- ◯ I like caring for people who are sick.
- ◯ I like being part of a team.
- ◯ I like being my own boss.
- ◯ I like being a leader.
- ◯ I like to work outside.
- ◯ I like variety in the things I do.

Jobs that match my skills and interests	Are there lots of openings?	Is special training needed?	What is the average hourly wage?

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

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

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

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

Where can I go for help to reach my goal? List any family, friends, job centers, training programs, reentry programs, or community colleges that can help.

Make a Plan

For many people who leave prison, the goal is to get any job that pays, even if it isn't ideal. The job may not be something you want to do forever, but it can help you get back on your feet. It can give you experience and lead you to a better job in the future.

Even as you look for jobs to meet your basic needs, it's good to explore different careers. Find out what careers match your interests and skills. Look for careers that are in demand where you can earn good money. Learn about the training that you will need. See the Education chapter (on p. 71) about different kinds of training.

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

Here are some websites that can help you explore different careers:

- **careeronestop.org .** Explore careers, find training, check out their toolkit, search for jobs, and more.
- **mynextmove.org .** Explore careers and get information about what you can do to get a job.
- **myskillsmyfuture.org .** Find out how your skills, experience, and interests can lead to a new career.

We also recommend reading *Take Charge of Your Future*. This free guide for formerly incarcerated people will help you take steps to get education and training for a career. It was developed by the US Department of Education. You can find it online here: tinyurl.com/takechargeofyourfuture . If you need help accessing it, call the Department's Resource Center at (800) 872-5327.

In the next few pages, you will find information about popular career options for people with records. These are just a few of the many options available.



Popular Career Options

Commercial Driver

Commercial drivers transport goods, people, and materials. They drive buses, delivery trucks, diesel trucks, and more. Many people who have been incarcerated have had success finding jobs as commercial bus or truck drivers.

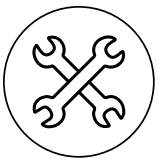
Commercial Driver: Job Facts at a Glance	
Wages	$40,000 to $60,000 per year
Employment	Very large occupation with lots of openings
Education needed	• High school diploma or GED (usually) • Commercial driver's license (CDL)
Other requirements	• Good driving record • Strong customer service skills for some positions

Prepare in prison: If you don't already have your GED, get it! Safer Foundation offers a program at its Adult Transition Center that prepares you to get your Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

Outside of prison: Here's how you can get started in this field:

- **Apply for a temporary commercial learner's permit.** Speak with the Vehicle Services Department to find out what you need to do to get a permit and a license. Your learner's permit is good for 180 days. Make sure to mention if you had a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) in the past or in a different state.
- **Complete CDL training.** If you have not already had training, you may want to take a class at a commercial driver's training facility. Many community colleges (E.g., Olive Harvey) offer this training. Some reentry organizations offer programs to help you get your CDL. If you live in Illinois, you can find a list of Illinois certified training facilities at: apps.ilsos.gov/adultdrivered/providerlist .
- **Study for the road and written tests.** Here's a study guide: ilsos.gov/publications/pdf_publications/dsd_ds9.pdf . You may be able to find a printed copy in your prison's library or resource room.
- **Get your CDL.** You will need to pay $60 for the license and it will need to be renewed every four years.





Construction Jobs

There are many different construction careers. People in these careers build and repair homes, buildings, roads, and more. They install solar panels. They maintain yards and parks. They install and service heating and cooling (HVAC) systems. Jobs include:

- Road worker
- Painter
- Heating and air conditioning (HVAC) technician
- Welder
- Solar installer
- General laborer
- Landscaper
- Building-maintenance worker or custodian

Note: Some construction jobs (such as plumber, electrician, or mason) may require an apprenticeship with a trade union. Some unions have restrictions about hiring people with criminal records. It's a good idea to check before applying.

Construction: Job Facts at a Glance	
Wages	$40,000 to $70,000 per year, depending on the job
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	• High school diploma or GED • Formal training, certificates, or an apprenticeship for some positions • On-the-job training for most positions
Other requirements	Driver's license and/or OSHA certification, depending on the position

Prepare in prison: If you have the opportunity, take construction, building maintenance, or horticulture training while in prison. Many IDOC facilities have these programs. Several IDOC facilities will soon be offering clean energy jobs training to prepare people for jobs like solar installer or building maintenance worker. This training will help prepare you for well-paying jobs in clean energy that are in high demand.

Outside of prison: There are lots of ways to get started in a construction field. Here are a few:

- Some jobs require very little formal training. Look for entry level jobs where you can get training on the job.
- Look for **community-based training programs**. For instance, the Clean Energy Network Hub Program offers free training throughout Illinois for jobs such as solar installer and building maintenance worker. This program specifically recruits formerly incarcerated people. Find out more here: dceo.illinois.gov/climateandequitablejobs.html .
- Many **community colleges** offer affordable workforce programs and certifications in the construction trades. The Illinois Workforce Equity Initiative is a community college program that offers short-term workforce training opportunities in construction and other workforce sectors. Find out if your local community college participates in this program: illinoiswei.org .
- Consider a **pre-apprenticeship program**. These programs are offered by community-based organizations and provide basic construction training and wrap-around services. Find a list of Illinois Works pre-apprenticeship programs here: illinoisworknet.com/ApprenticeshipIL/Pages/PreApp.aspx .
- **Chicago Women in Trades** offers opportunities to women who are looking to enter either construction or welding. All opportunities are free, but you need to apply. Find out more here: cwit.org .

Barbering and Cosmetology

Barbering and Cosmetology: Job Facts at a Glance	
Wages	Illinois average: ~$34,000 per year
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	• High school diploma or GED (for most companies) • On-the-job experience, training, or a license, depending on the job.
Other requirements	Tools, depending on where you work, though you might be able to share these with a coworker.

Prepare in prison: If you can, get training while in prison. Sheridan and Dixon offer barbering or cosmetology training. Cook County Jail also offers a barbering school, administered by Larry's Barber College.

Outside of prison: There are lots of ways to get started.

- **Training.** Larry's Barber College offers courses in four locations in addition to Cook County Jail. Legacy Barber College is a barber school that places extra focus on the needs of returning citizens. Their barber curriculum includes restorative justice principles (see p. 148) and seminars in areas of business, entrepreneurialism, marketing, licensing, and financial literacy.
- **Self-employment.** If you already have the skills and equipment, you can begin working for friends and build up a client base by word of mouth. Think about what you might be able to offer that others won't. Can you work outside of regular business hours? Are you willing to make house calls? Eventually, you may have to incorporate and pay taxes. You can read more about the process of starting your own business later in this section.





Computer and Information Technology Jobs

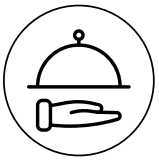
There are many jobs for people who like to work with computers. Jobs include help desk technicians, computer network support specialists, computer programmers, computer systems analysts and more. This industry is constantly growing and well paid. Many of these jobs require only a small amount of training and are in great demand.

Computer or and Information Technology: Job Facts at a Glance	
Wages	A wide range, from about $35,000 for entry level jobs to $80,000+ per year
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings
Education needed	• High school diploma or GED (associate or bachelor's degrees required for some jobs) • Formal training program (such as CompTia A+) • On-the-job training
Other requirements	• Strong computer skills • Customer service skills

Prepare in prison: Take advantage of any opportunity to use computers while in prison and learn some basic skills, such as how to use Microsoft Office. There are a few facilities that offer special computer or IT training: Illinois River, DuQuoin, Decatur, and Lincoln.

Outside of prison: There are many different training programs you can take.

- **Libraries, adult education, and community centers** often offer basic computer classes. Goodwill career centers offer training in computer and digital skills, and some classes are online.
- Go to **Northstar** at digitalliteracyassessment.org to test your digital literacy skills and build your skills. You can access classes online or find a Northstar location where you can attend classes. They offer certificates for skills you have mastered.
- Most **community colleges** offer IT certificate programs and degree programs. Many are very affordable.
- If you are a good self-learner, try taking computer and IT classes online. **Hackbrite Academy** offers a free online course in Python (a popular programming language). **Skillcrush** teaches other important programming languages. **Edx** and **Coursera** also have a lot of free courses for learning skills like coding or data entry.
- **Columbia University's Justice Through Code** program is a free semester-long intensive coding program for formerly incarcerated people. There are openings each semester, and you can complete the course online. The program helps people find jobs after they complete their training. Check it out here: centerforjustice.columbia.edu/justicethroughcode .



Dining and Hospitality Jobs

There are many good opportunities in the dining and hospitality industry, though entry level wages can be quite low.

There are many kinds of hospitality companies, and many kinds of roles within those companies. For a typical restaurant job, there is front-of-house, back-of-house, and bar. There are also positions in fast food chains, bars and clubs, hotels, and catering companies.

Many of these jobs require unconventional hours. This may put a strain on your personal relationships if you are gone most evenings and weekends. These hours can be good if you have kids and want or need to be their primary care provider during the regular working day.

Dining and Hospitality: Job Facts at a Glance	
Wages	A wide range, from $22,000 for entry level jobs to $80,000+ per year
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings

Education needed	• High school diploma or GED
	• Some jobs may also require:
	  ○ An associate or bachelor's degree
	  ○ Certifications (Establishments that serve liquor require the Safe Serve Certification, for example.)
	  ○ Formal or on-the-job training

Other requirements	• Customer service skills • The ability to be calm under pressure, do several things at once, and work well with a team

Prepare in prison: Many facilities have food service programs where you can get experience. Take advantage of those programs if they are available.

Outside of prison: There are many different training programs you can take.

- Many community colleges and other training programs offer food-services certificates. See Southwestern Illinois College, for instance.
- The **COLORS Hospitality Opportunities for Workers** (CHOW) in Chicago offers free training for restaurant-industry personnel. Visit them here: rocunited.org/training-classes .
- **Hospitality Opportunities for People (re)Entering Society (HOPES)** connects justice-impacted people to career opportunities in the restaurant, food service, and hospitality industries. They provide training and assistance in gaining employment in the industry. In Illinois, they work with IDOC and Safer Foundation. Request more information using their online form: chooserestaurants.org/programs/hopes .



Human Services and Advocacy

Many EJP alumni work in human services to help people who have been incarcerated. They are caseworkers, counselors, educators, social workers, mediators, and program managers. They advocate for change and better policies.

We need people who have been incarcerated to help make our systems better! You have experience and wisdom others can learn from. People will be able to relate to you because of your experience.

Social-services careers can be a meaningful way of moving on and helping others. But these jobs can also be stressful. Be aware that working with others who are struggling may be difficult as you cope with your own challenges and past trauma.

Human Services and Advocacy: Job Facts at a Glance	
Wages	A wide range, from $30,000 for entry level jobs to $60,000+ per year
Employment	Large occupation, lots of openings

Education needed	• High school diploma or GED
	• Some jobs require:
	  ○ Short-term or on-the-job training
	  ○ An associate or bachelor's degree
	  ○ A driver's license

Other requirements	• Strong people skills • Ability to work in stressful situations • Basic computer skills

Prepare in prison: Find ways to get involved in programs that help others. Can you tutor others or help lead workshops? Can you facilitate a peer support group or teach a reentry class? These opportunities will give you a taste of what it's like to work in human services. They can help you develop leadership skills.

Most jobs require some education. If you need it, get your GED and then take college classes if you can. Basic computer classes may also help.

Outside of prison: There are lots of ways to get started.

- **Get involved and volunteer.** We recommend that you get involved in reentry programs or other services that interest you. As you participate in these programs, ask the people who are helping you about their jobs and what they do. Then ask if there are things you can do to help. Volunteering is a great way to get your foot in the door. Volunteering can lead to job offers. Even if you don't get a job at that organization, you may make connections that lead to similar job opportunities.
- **Take advantage of leadership and advocacy training.** There are several organizations that offer advocacy training. The Illinois Alliance for Reentry and Justice, for instance, offers advocacy training for formerly incarcerated individuals: www.ilarj.org . JustLeadershipUSA is another: jlusa.org .
- **Go to school.** Depending on what your career goal is, you may need an associate or bachelor's degree or an advanced degree. See the Education chapter (on p. 71) for advice.

Self-Employment

Being self-employed has its merits. You can set your own schedule and the money you make is yours (after you pay taxes). You might buy some equipment to do landscaping in your community. You might rent out a small booth to cut people's hair. You might repair people's homes. You might offer computer support. We interviewed David, a formerly incarcerated individual who started his own business. He offered the following advice.

To get started, you'll need:

1. **A good idea.** Jot down a few ideas on paper first. Ask yourself, what am I good at? What services can I provide? Is there a clear need for this in the community?
2. **Training.** Get all the training you can. Take business or computer classes. You will need strong finance skills, math skills, customer service skills, and more.
3. **Equipment.**
4. **Space for work and storage.** Depending on your idea, you may be able to work at home or rent a storage shed. Maybe you can rent a small booth.
5. **Financial skills.** It can be challenging to manage finances and taxes.
6. **Feedback on your plan from others.** They might see a challenge or a good idea that you initially overlooked.

Growing Your Idea into a Business

Some people who are self-employed decide to grow their idea into a business by hiring a few more people and getting a more permanent location. You might start your own barbershop, a tutoring business, an HVAC business, or a restaurant.

Starting your own business takes a lot of work. Many new businesses don't succeed. Here are the basic things you'll need to turn your self-employment idea into a small business:

- **Capital.** You'll need money to start your business.
- **More space.** Maybe you'll rent an office space or garage.
- **Employees.** Who will be part of your team?
- **Marketing plan.** You'll need to attract paying customers.
- **Information.** Learn everything you can about the industry. What other businesses offer these services? What technologies do they use? How do they get clients?

We recommend that you seek out professional business help. There will be lots of paperwork to manage. You'll have to do taxes and finances for your business. In Illinois, you need to file paperwork with the state to make your business official. You may also want to talk with someone who understands the ins and outs of loans and taxes. Lawyers who advertise experience with incorporation can file your paperwork, but they charge a fee.

Here are some free resources:

- **PERC** is a Chicago-based program for incarcerated and previously incarcerated citizens who want to start or expand a business. They offer pre-release and community training. Find them here: tinyurl.com/percgreenwoodarchercapital or call (773) 341-2070.
- Those who complete PERC's training may apply for small business loans offered by Greenwood Archer Capital **Illinois Small Business Development Centers** are a statewide resource that provides planning advice, counseling, training, and access to financing programs. To find one near you, go online to dceo.illinois.gov/businesshelp/smallbusinessassistance.html .
- **Look for a small business accelerator.** Seek out your local business association or Chamber of Commerce to get help.

> *Starting a business can put a strain on your relationships. Talk about your plans with the people you care about. Keep them in loop. Take care to maintain your relationships even when things are busy.*
>
> **—Anonymous**

Women and Employment

It can be especially hard for women to find jobs after release. When they do find jobs, they often get paid less or work fewer hours. Employers are more likely to hire them in temp and entry-level jobs, even when they have skills and training for more advanced jobs.

As a woman, you may face these challenges when you return:

- **Greater discrimination.** People don't expect women to be locked up and often judge them more harshly.
- **Difficulty balancing family and jobs.** You may be caring for young children, parents, or grandparents. It's hard to work a job and care for your family at the same time. It's hard to find childcare.
- **Many of the popular job options for people with criminal records hire mostly men.** You may feel uncomfortable if you are the only woman on the crew.
- **You may feel unsafe at your jobs, or unsafe getting to the job.**

Despite these challenges, we recommend that you approach your job search with patience and hope. Many women have found jobs after prison. You can, too. Here are a few suggestions:

- Get as much education and training as you can while in prison.
- Find reentry and job programs that serve women. They can help you access childcare and get the emotional support you need. The resource directory (see p. 153) lists a few of these programs.
- Be confident! Sometimes women think that they are not qualified. Don't pass up a chance to apply, even if you don't meet all the requirements.
- Don't be afraid to look for jobs in fields with mostly men, such as construction or IT. In fact, these fields need and want more women! There are free training programs to bring more women into these jobs. Chicago Women in Trades (cwit.org) is one such resource.

Look for Jobs

Look for jobs you think you could be good at. What experience, education, and training do they require? What strengths would you bring? Is the job a good fit for your skills? Even if you don't meet all the requirements, think about applying anyway. Don't sell yourself short! Be confident in your skills and abilities. Sometimes, you can get the training you need on the job.

To find the right job, you will need to be resourceful:

Network. Networking is probably the most important way to find a job. Successful job seekers often talk to many different people. These people may not have a job for you right now, but they could have career advice. Maybe they know someone else with a job lead. They might learn of a job in the future. Mention to friends, family, and casual acquaintances that you are looking for a job. Contact people who do the kind of work that you are interested in.

Search online. Indeed.com is one of the largest sources of job postings in the world. Other online sources include monster.com , careerbuilder.com , linkedin.com , and snagajob.com. These websites can be good if you want to work for a large employer. People often submit online applications to large companies, but it may be hard to stand out this way.

You may have better luck looking at company websites, especially for smaller employers. These sites often have links to "Current Jobs," "Careers," or "Employment."

The website jobsthathirefelons.org has a long list of companies whose hiring policies include people with a background. Honest Jobs (www.honestjobs.com) is another.

When searching for a job online, be careful to avoid **scams**. Scammers may request money or ask for information like your date of birth, Social Security number, or debit/credit card number. Be careful about giving out this personal information on the internet.

Attend job fairs. Meet employers, recruiters, and schools. You may learn about a new field or opportunity that you didn't think of.

☆ Keep a record of all the places you applied: online applications, visits made in person, initial phone calls, follow-up phone calls, and interviews. This can be good information to show your parole officer, too.

☆ Need to use a computer? Visit your public library.

Submit application forms. The purpose of a job application form is to get an interview. Most hiring managers will review your application for 15 to 30 seconds. They'll want to see a form that's neat and complete.

If you might be filling out an application at a job site, bring notes about previous jobs and training, including employment dates, job titles, and former employer contact info.

Tips for filling out the application:

- **List your past jobs and describe what you did.** What skills did you develop? What were the important things you did during your shift?
- **Focus on what you have to offer.** Downplay the negatives.
- **List relevant work experience from your personal life.** Were you a caregiver for your siblings, children, parents, or grandparents? What skills did you develop? Did you learn to communicate, resolve conflicts, manage people's health, or take care of finances?
- **Consider the skills they are looking for.** If they want good customer service skills, explain how you worked with customers or helped people in your past jobs.
- **Use examples from your personal life to explain your passion for this work.** Maybe when you were a young child, you took care of your sick grandmother, and this inspired you to become an excellent home health aide.
- **Do not list your wages from past employment.** Instead, write "will discuss at the interview."
- **We suggest you list the jobs you held while incarcerated.** You gained relevant experience and skills. For in-prison jobs, you can list your employer as the State of Illinois.
- **If asked for a "Reason for Leaving," give a positive reason, even if you were fired or let go.** Some examples of positive reasons for leaving are:
    - You relocated (you can say this if you left because you went to prison or were transferred).
    - You wanted a career change.
    - You became a full-time student.
    - The work was seasonal.
    - You wanted to advance or make more money.
- In Illinois, most employers are not allowed to ask about felonies on job applications. Some still do. **If they ask, "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" we recommend that you check "Yes." Write, "Will discuss at interview."** If you lie, you may get the job, but you could get fired if they find out.
- **The application may ask you for references,** or people who can vouch for you. These should not be family members. Ask people if they are willing to be your reference before writing their names down. Good potential references include:
    - Former or current employers
    - Supervisors
    - Teachers
    - Social workers
    - Religious leaders
    - People you volunteer with

Resumes, Cover Letters, and the Interview

Resumes and cover letters. Many job applications require a resume and cover letter. Resumes cover your past jobs, skills, and interests. A cover letter is an actual letter from you to the employer. It tells a short story about who you are: why you want the job, why you are a good fit, and what's important to you. Keep your letter to one page.

Writing good resumes and cover letters takes time. Examples of a resume and cover letter from someone who has been incarcerated can be found in the forms section (see p. 191). Here are a few online resources that can help:

- hbr.org/2014/02/how-to-write-a-cover-letter
- owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing



I thought I'd be prepared because I had my resume in hand. As it turns out, you need several resumes, adjusted to different jobs, and the ability to write cover sheets on the fly.

—Pablo

Interviews. Once you've submitted your job application, wait to be contacted. Most applications do not lead to interviews. Be patient. Continue to apply to other jobs until you have a job offer. If you get an interview, you may feel nervous about saying the right thing or making a good impression. Here's some advice to help you feel more confident:

- **Practice what you'll say.** Indeed.com has a list of common interview questions and answers that you can practice with a friend, counselor, or family member: tinyurl.com/indeedinterviewquestionprep .
- **Come prepared.** Bring your resume, contact information for your references, a way to take notes, and your Social Security or immigration card. If it makes sense, bring copies of your work licenses and driving record.
- **Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early.** This shows you are responsible and eager to be there.
- **Wear appropriate clothes.** Wear something a bit more formal than what you would wear for the job.
- **Consider your body language.** Even when you are not speaking, you are sending a message. Make good eye contact, stand/sit tall, and smile.
- **Test your equipment.** If your interview is online, test your video and internet connection beforehand. Make sure you're in a quiet place without disruptions.
- **Come prepared to ask the employer questions**. At the end of a job interview, most hiring managers will ask if you have any questions. Here are some examples:
    - What is the organization's plan for the next five years?
    - How would I be evaluated, and in what timeframes? By whom?
    - What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
    - What computer equipment and software do you use?
    - When will a decision be made about this position?

Interview tips? Look good, smell good, speak good.
—David T.

Talking About Your Criminal Record

You may have a hard time answering questions about your criminal record. Here are a few tips to increase your chance of getting hired:

- **Own it.** "At that time, I was making some bad choices and I was convicted of [state your offense]." Address any concerns an employer might have.
- **Redirect.** After addressing your background, steer the interview back to your skills and what you bring to the job. "I can see why that might concern you. But that was several years ago. Since then, I have had a solid work record. I come to work on time. I am a hard worker and quick learner."
- **Explain.** Give helpful context. If your felony conviction is not related to the job you are applying for, you might say, "Yes, I was convicted of a felony, but it was not job related."
- **Keep it positive.** Talk about your current activities and future career goals. Mention education and job training, community work, and other activities. "I thought a lot about where my life was going, and I decided to make some changes."
- **Encourage the employer.** Remind them how much you want the job. "I am a good worker and I want to work; I just need an opportunity to prove my skills to an employer."
- **Make a good first and last impression.** Employers are more likely to remember their first and last impression, so, if possible, try to address your criminal background history in the middle of the interview.

Background checks: Required background checks may not automatically disqualify people with convictions. This can depend on whether the conviction relates to the kind of work being pursued. Many companies set criteria for their background checks. The criteria to "pass" could be a certain amount of time since conviction, certain categories of charges, or charges in certain jurisdictions. If you're comfortable, you could inquire about the company's specific policy related to conviction history.

Zoom Interviews. Since the pandemic, some employers prefer to use Zoom or other online video conferencing platforms to conduct their interviews. If you are invited for a Zoom interview, you must create an account before your interview. See the Technology chapter (on p. 100) for detailed information on how to set up and use Zoom.

Advice From an Employer

We reached out to Tanja, an employer who has hired many people who have been incarcerated. In the interview below, Tanja explains what employers are looking for. She gives advice about how to talk about your criminal history with employers.

What are the most important qualities you look for in a job candidate?
For me, the most important quality is reliability. I also appreciate it when people are eager to learn and respond well to constructive feedback. The fit between the person and the position is also critical.

How much do you need to say about your criminal background?
I think it really depends on the position. It is a mistake to come in and tell me your whole life. That is too much too soon. But being super vague will make me wonder if you are trying to hide something. For me, honesty is critical. I let people know I am not here to judge, and as far as I am concerned, they have done their time. What I care about is the present and the future. Can they do this job now? How much training and supervision will they need? What are their skills and how can these skills aid in job performance?

What impresses you about candidates?
I am usually impressed when I see someone who has done their homework. They know what the position is, they Googled the company, and they know what we are looking for. It is ideal to tailor your history to the position and capitalize on your skills. Link these skills to the job announcement and tell me how these skills will be used to help me. Also demonstrate enthusiasm for what the company does. If it is the restaurant industry, tell me how much you enjoy the food and why.

What questions should the interviewee ask the employer?
Do your homework about my company, the job description, and ask me questions as if you had the position. Ask for details about logistics: How many hours, what days and times do you need me? What qualities are you looking for in a worker? What would a typical day be like on the job? What are the opportunities for growth? Do you offer training, and if so, how does that work? Who will be my supervisor? What is their management style? These questions will make me believe you are serious about the job.

What questions can they expect in an interview, and how would you handle the tricky ones?

- Why are you applying for this job now?
- What is your availability? Convince me that you will be available and reliable. Make sure you can make the work schedule work.
- What are your best skills? What skills would you like to develop in the future?
- What were you doing before? This question can be tricky if you have a big gap in your resume. If you were just released, be honest, but capitalize on the skills you have that make you right for this position even though you have been out of the market for a while. Emphasize how the situation has changed, point me to your references and how they will assure me that you are worth taking a chance on.

> *If you're scared to tell an employer, hey, I've been to prison, just tell them. What's the worst thing they can do? Say no, we're not going to hire you. And you go to the next door. Knock on the next door. Say hey, are you hiring?*
>
> **— Tony C.**

Your Legal Rights

Equal Employment Laws

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a federal agency that enforces federal laws that prohibit discrimination in the workplace. These laws apply to job applicants and employees across the country. The EEOC addresses the following issues:

Background checks. Employers who wish to do a background check must also

- Get your written consent ahead of time
- Tell you if they plan to use the report for employment decisions
- Give you a copy of the report before taking harmful action (like not hiring or firing you)
- Inform you of your right to review and dispute the report

Employment denial. The EEOC cannot keep employers from obtaining or using arrest or conviction records. However, they do work to ensure that arrest and conviction records are not used in a way that discriminates against a person because of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information.

The EEOC suggests employers only ask questions about arrest or conviction records that are related to the job. Factors employers could consider include

- The nature and gravity of the criminal offense or conduct
- How much time has passed since the offense or sentence
- The nature of the job (where it is performed, supervision, and interaction with others)

Employers can still choose candidates with more or better experience, but irrelevant criminal history should not be a deciding factor. If you believe you have been discriminated against, you can file a complaint with the EEOC by mail, by telephone (call (800) 669-4000), or in person at an EEOC office: eeoc.gov .

Certificate of Rehabilitation

A criminal record can prevent you from getting a license in certain fields, including education, transit, and childcare. You may be able to get a Certificate of Rehabilitation. This certificate allows you to apply for jobs that require these licenses. It does not remove offenses from your record, but it may allow you to get the license you need. See the Legal Matters chapter (on p. 106).

Work Opportunity Tax Credits

If employers seem reluctant to hire you, you may want to tell them about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. Employers who hire people with felony convictions can receive a tax credit equal to 40 percent of up to $6,000 of wages paid to eligible individuals with felonies who have left prison within the last year. It is only offered during their first year of employment. You could direct employers to this website: www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wotc .

Fidelity Bonding

When interviewing for a job, you may also want to tell the employer about fidelity bonding. Fidelity bonding is an insurance policy that protects employers against employee dishonesty or theft. The Fidelity Bonding Program provides employers with no-cost insurance coverage for employees with past convictions. Coverage is free for six months and ranges from $5,000 to $25,000.

Ban the Box

By law in Illinois, employers who have more than 15 employees on the payroll cannot access criminal background checks until after an interview is conducted.

This law is called "Ban the Box" because it prohibits employers from asking you to check a box on your application saying you've had a criminal conviction. You may submit a complaint against an employer who violates this rule by visiting: labor.illinois.gov/laws-rules/fls/ban-the-box-complaint-form.html .

Illinois Human Rights Act

It is illegal for employers in Illinois to disqualify a job applicant or fire an employee for having a conviction record unless the conviction has a "substantial relationship" to the job. Employers must consider several factors when making this decision. If you believe an employer has discriminated against you, you can file a discrimination charge with the Illinois Department of Human Rights here: tinyurl.com/illinoiscomplaintinfosheet .

Conflicts and Safety

If you are being harassed or discriminated against because of your race, gender identity, or sexual orientation, your civil rights are being violated. If you are comfortable speaking honestly where you are working, you can speak to your human resources department about what you have experienced.

Sometimes it's better to seek help elsewhere. If you have been sexually harassed, you can contact **RAINN's (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network)** National Sexual Assault Hotline at (800) 656-4673 for personal support. They can help you file a complaint.

It is a good idea to get a lawyer before starting a lawsuit. There are pro bono (free) lawyers who can help. See the Legal Matters chapter (on p. 106). If you want to file a complaint on your own, you may do so at the **US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division**.

If you are working in a place that is unsafe, you can file a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) by calling (800) 321-6742 or going to www.osha.gov/workers/file-complaint . If you think that something may be unsafe, but don't have proof, you may notify your employer in writing. If they do not resolve the issue, you may then file a complaint with OSHA. It is illegal for employers to retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

Of course, it is hard to address these problems if you are in an insecure position and need to keep your job. If you can talk to a lawyer, they might be able to offer helpful advice. See the Legal Matters chapter for more information (p. 106).

Unemployment Benefits

Most people who leave prison are not eligible for unemployment benefits, but you may be eligible if you had been working for a while before you went to prison. To qualify, you must have made at least $1,600 in the 12 months before you file your claim and lost your job through no fault of your own (by being laid off, for example). You cannot receive unemployment directly after you return home if you lost your previous job due to your incarceration or if you were in prison for more than 12 months.

If you believe you may qualify, visit your local Illinois Department of Employment Security office or an Illinois WorkNet Center. To find a location visit ides.illinois.gov/about/locations.html .

You can also file a claim online here: tinyurl.com/unemploymentclaimfiling .



Education



A lot of people think about going back to school after they leave prison. Going to school helps you learn more about the world. It can also help you meet new people and get better jobs.

This chapter has information about:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED, and High School Equivalency Programs
- Vocational Training and Apprenticeships
- College
- Paying for Your Education
- Prison-to-Gown Pathway
- Other Resources for College Students

It's never too late to go to school or college. Learning can even make you feel happier and more fulfilled. You can go to school part-time or full-time. If you are still in prison, you may be able to take classes before you leave.

ABE, GED, and High School Equivalency Programs

Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs can help you get better at reading, writing, math, listening, and speaking. You can usually find ABE programs at adult schools, career centers, libraries, and community colleges. They are free or cost only a little. For-profit agencies like Kaplan and ELS Language Centers also offer ABE, but they charge more money.

ABE programs can also help you learn English or prepare for the GED. A list of ABE programs in Illinois can be found at ilcco.net/AdultEd .

The GED (General Education Development test) is like a high school diploma. If you did not graduate from high school, you can take this test and it will count on your resume as a diploma. The test will have questions about things you would learn in high school. A GED or high school diploma is a requirement for many jobs. If you don't have your GED, try to get one.

You can register online to take the GED test at ged.com . You will probably take the test on a computer at an official GED testing site.

The GED is not an easy test. You will probably need to study. A lot of places have free preparation programs that can help you get ready:

- Community colleges
- Adult learning centers (find one using this directory: nld.org)
- Online study programs
- American Job Centers (find one here: dol.gov/general/topic/training/onestop)

A lot of programs will let you sign up at any time. They can also give you a study plan to help you get better in harder subjects. For more info see study.com/illinois_ged.html .

☆ Do you need help learning how to use new technology? Go to Northstar at digitalliteracyassessment.org to get help. They have online classes and in-person ones at different locations. They will give you certificates when you gain new skills.

Vocational Training and Apprenticeships

Vocational programs help you learn how to do a job. They can teach you things like welding, car repair, plumbing, and more. You can take these classes at community and technical colleges as well as trade schools. Some community-based organizations also offer vocational training.

A lot of prisons have vocational classes. Take them if you can. Vocational classes help you get some experience and see if you like the work. Once you leave, you can get an entry-level position or an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships help you get training and experience. You'll also get paid through an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships are usually offered through trade unions.

Visit the Illinois WorkNet website to find a vocational program: illinoisworknet.com . The USAgov job-training site offers national resources: usa.gov/job-training .For more information on apprenticeship programs in Illinois, go to tinyurl.com/ILapprenticeship .

> *Consider seeking simple certifications, like CDL, sanitation, limo driver, or forklift.*
>
> **—Earl W.**

Degree Type	Information
Vocational certificates	• Certificates that prepare you for specific jobs or tasks • Varied amounts of time required • Granted by community colleges, technical and trade schools, or workforce programs
Associate degree	• Two-year degree • Granted by a community college, university, or technical school
Bachelor's degree (often written as BS or BA)	• Four-year degree • Granted by a college or university
Master's degree	• Two- or three-year degree • Completed after earning a bachelor's degree • Typically requires research
Doctor of Philosophy (often called a doctorate or doctoral degree and written as PhD)	• Typically takes four to six years • Completed after earning a bachelor's or master's degree • Highest academic degree
Professional degrees	• Required to practice in certain professions, like medicine and law • Completed after earning a bachelor's degree



College

Community college

If you haven't been in school for a while, you might want to start at community college. Community colleges are inexpensive and offer many different classes. A lot of them offer programs where you can get a GED and college credit at the same time. Community colleges usually offer associate degrees, certificate programs, and workforce training.

If you start at a community college and decide you want to continue your education at a four-year college, you can usually apply your community-college classes toward your degree at the four-year college. This is called "transferring your credits" (see "Four-year college," below).

Four-year colleges and universities

Many people who want to earn a four-year bachelor's degree start by attending community college. They then transfer to a four-year college or university to finish. This saves money because community college costs less than four-year schools.

You must earn a certain number of credits to get a bachelor's degree. Some credits must be in general subjects, like science, math, and history. If you finish these credits at a community college and then transfer to a school that offers a four-year degree, your credits can transfer too. Make sure to check that your new school will count your transfer credits.

Check out the website of the Illinois Community College Board for information about planning for college, paying for college, and picking a college: iccb.org/students . To learn more, visit the websites of the schools you're interested in. You can also call, email, or visit an admissions counselor or academic advisor at these schools.

What's the difference between a college and university? Both offer bachelor's degrees. Colleges are often smaller and private. Universities are larger, and offer graduate degrees. They are often public and do more than just offering classes. They engage in research and often have a large athletics department.

Where should you apply?

Deciding where to go may take some time. Think about what kind of degree you want and what kind of college or university you want to go to. Research colleges online or at the local library. Almost all colleges have websites where you can learn about their price, academic programs, non-academic activities, the town where they are located, and many other things.

Applying for College

Step 1: Get the application

For almost all colleges, you will apply on their websites. A librarian at a public library can provide help.

Step 2: Gather your information

To apply for college, you will probably need:

- Your Social Security number
- A state driver's license or identification card
- Your dates of high school and any completed college courses
- GED results or unopened transcripts from your high school and/or college, whichever you completed most recently.
- Some four-year colleges will also ask for ACT or SAT test scores (see Step 3, below). You can find specific application requirements on each college's website.

Some applications may ask about your record. If you tell them you have been convicted of a felony, some schools will ask for more information. Just because they are asking for the information doesn't mean you will be rejected, but different schools have different policies about backgrounds. You can also ask to speak with an admissions counselor about this.

☆ The "Ban-the-Box" movement aims to raise awareness around this unfair practice, and their efforts are paying off. In 2023, the federal government endorsed the movement. The Common Application no longer has this question. Advocacy can make a difference! (For more information, see Connecting With Your Community on p. 150).

Step 3: Take the SAT or ACT exam

Some four-year colleges require you to take the ACT or SAT college-entrance exam. Check the college's website for specific application requirements. Many colleges are "test optional," meaning they accept but don't require test scores. In those cases, only submit your scores if they help. The college's admissions counselor can give you more information. It helps to prepare. You can buy

study guides or get them from your public library. Khan Academy offers free online SAT test prep at khanacademy.org/sat .

Step 4: Complete the essay
Most four-year colleges require a "statement of purpose" or "personal statement" essay. This might be the hardest part of the application, but these essays let you shine. Make sure you put your goals in the essay. Ask a few people you trust to carefully check your essay for mistakes. Ask them to also make sure you sound purposeful and confident. Remember that the essay is meant to persuade—it is not just an expression of who you are.

Step 5: Submit the application
You'll probably hear from a community college within a few weeks. They'll let you know by phone or letter if you've been accepted. 4-year colleges and universities can take longer. If you have questions, contact the school's admissions office.



Paying for Your Education

Paying for your education can be hard. Below we describe how you can get money for college.

Free tuition programs
Some colleges offer free tuition if you meet certain income requirements. Many community colleges in Illinois offer free tuition and a stipend to eligible students through the Workforce Equity Initiative. Learn more at Illinoiswei.org .

The University of Illinois offers free tuition for in-state students whose family income is less than $75,000 through the Illinois Commitment program: admissions.illinois.edu/commitment .

Veterans can also get money for college: studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/military .

If you qualify for one of these programs, remember you may still need to cover the costs of books, fees, and other living expenses.

Financial Aid: FAFSA

Do you need financial aid for college? The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the place to start.

How do I apply?
You can find the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov , or you can request a paper copy by calling (800) 433-3243. Applying for federal student aid is free. But it can be complicated. If you're worried or have questions, ask for help. Colleges' financial aid offices can help you over the phone, through email, or in person.

When is it due?
Check on the form to see when it is due for your state. You should also ask your college when it is due. They might have an earlier deadline. Look at the school's website or call their financial aid office. Turn in your FAFSA as soon as you can, because some financial aid runs out fast. If you can, turn in your FAFSA while you're in prison. That way everything will be ready in time for you to start school.

What kind of aid will I get?
The aid you get will depend on how much money you make and the cost of your school. Your aid package may include the following:

- **Pell Grants** are government grants that are based on financial need. You do not have to pay them back.
- **Scholarships** can come from the college or from other organizations. Ask your financial aid office about scholarships. Scholarship information can also be found at public libraries and online.
- **Federal student loans** have lower interest rates than banks, and you won't have to start paying them back until after you graduate. But you will have to pay them back. Think carefully about how you will repay your loans. Your loans will impact your future decisions about money and jobs.
- **Work study positions** allow you to pay for college by working for the school. You can say you are interested in work-study when you fill out the FAFSA. Work-study is a good way to make money and get more work experience. They are often offered first-come, first-served because there might not be enough positions for everyone who would like to work.

☆ New legislation has made changes to federal student loans. Some loan programs will be shut down completely while others will have new limits on how much you can borrow. These changes are set to begin Summer 2026 and include a lifetime loan limit of $257,500 for all student borrowers. You can learn more about these changes, here: tinyurl.com/LoanLimits26 .

Your financial aid package may include several kinds of aid. You don't have to accept the whole package. You can choose the parts that work for you. For example, you could accept a grant but not a loan, or you could borrow less than the amount that was approved. Reach out to the financial aid office at the school you'd like to attend if you have questions or want help understanding your package.

☆ FAFSA has a great video explaining some of the language used to describe federal loans. The video also gives good advice on managing any loans you accept. Find it here: studentaid.gov/entrance-counseling .

Can I get federal student aid if I have a criminal record?

In most cases, yes. There are two exceptions. You cannot get federal student aid if:

- You were convicted of a drug offense (a misdemeanor or felony) while you were receiving financial aid in the past. This might not affect you if enough time has passed, or if you have completed drug treatment. Drug convictions from before you started college shouldn't have any effect. Ask your school financial aid staff for more information about this.
- You cannot receive Pell Grants if you were subject to an involuntary civil commitment after completing a period of incarceration for a forcible or non-forcible sexual offense.

> *A full-time, work-study student with Link benefits can bring in $800 a month plus free transportation. That is a game changer.*
> **—Earl W.**

For more information on financial aid for those with a felony conviction, see tinyurl.com/studentaidafter incarceration . It may also help to speak with a financial aid officer at the schools you are applying to.

☆ If a grant, loan, or scholarship offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. There are many for-profit companies that take advantage of people who are looking to go to college. Applying for financial aid should be free. Research the agency or company offering you financial aid before you apply.

Remember to keep copies of all applications and related paperwork in a safe space.

Planning to apply for federal financial aid while you're still incarcerated?

- Pell Grants are now available to you! They cannot be used for correspondence classes or graduate-level courses, but they may be used for asynchronous online undergraduate courses and courses taught in person at your facility.
- Just like students on the outside, you can apply for Pell Grants at the FAFSA website.
- If you can't access fafsa.gov directly, request a paper copy of the FAFSA application at your prison library, from your counselor, or from someone in your HEP (higher education in prison) program.
- Filling out the FAFSA will require specific information about the program you're applying to. Ask someone from your HEP or the financial aid office at the program you're applying to for help.

EJP scholarships

The Education Justice Project (the creator of this guide) has a scholarship program. All our scholarships are need-based, meaning they go to people who need financial help. You can use them for school costs (tuition, books, fees) at accredited postsecondary schools. The deadline for application is usually in November each year.

EJP offers:

- **NEW:** Two $1000 scholarships to individuals currently incarcerated in an IDOC facility. (This can include payment for correspondence courses or past student loans.)

- One $1000 scholarship to a family member of an EJP student
- One $1000 scholarship to a family member of an IDOC or IDJJ staff person
- One $1000 scholarship to a family member of an incarcerated individual
- Two $1000 scholarships to individuals who have been released from an IDOC adult facility
- One $1000 scholarship to an individual who has been incarcerated in an IDJJ juvenile facility

We also offer scholarships to formerly incarcerated individuals who have been deported to Mexico or who were incarcerated in Mexico. Applications for these are due in March of each year. These scholarships provide support for study in Mexico:

- One $10,000 MXN scholarship to an individual who was formerly incarcerated in Mexico
- One $10,000 MXN scholarship to an individual who was incarcerated in the US and deported to Mexico, or to a member of their immediate family

For more information about how to apply for an EJP scholarship, please contact scholarships@educationjustice.net

Defaulted student loans

If you have outstanding student loans that are currently in default, this will impact your eligibility for financial aid. The Fresh Start Program is a temporary, one-time program that can help you get out of default. When you sign up for Fresh Start, your loans will be transferred from a default status to a loan servicer. The default status will also be removed from your credit report. Once you join the program you will have to start paying your loans again, but you can enroll in an Affordable Repayment Plan based on your income. Learn more about Fresh Start here: tinyurl.com/Fresh-Start-Student-Aid .

Useful Resources:

- **How to Earn Your Degree and Get Hired After Incarceration** is a practical guide to getting your education after incarceration. Find it here: tinyurl.com/degreeafterincarceration .
- **The Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network** is an amazing resource! Build community, find support from peers, share resources, find job openings, advocate for policy change, and share your story. Visit: www.ficgn.org .

Prison-to-Gown Pathway

Prison-to-Gown Pathway (PGP) is a new Education Justice Project initiative aimed at reducing the barriers that prevent reentering people from getting an education at the **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign** (UIUC). Using readily available campus and community resources, PGP will support you with academic assistance, peer mentoring, lessons in digital literacy, and community-resource support, from the day you're accepted to the day you graduate.

Academic assistance: PGP will listen to you, help you make connections, and provide warm handoffs to the advisors and academic professionals who can support your specific needs. PGP can provide all kinds of on- and off-campus academic resources that will help you manage your time effectively and improve your study skills—including tutoring and help using the library.

Peer-to-peer mentoring: PGP will be starting a program to help build one-on-one connections between students who have successfully returned to school and students who are just beginning their journey. By providing emotional and social support, this program will help you adjust to college life, earn the best grades you can, and feel like you belong at UIUC.

Digital literacy: PGP staff and mentors can help you learn about technology that may be new to you, like email or other common classroom and communication technologies. PGP will meet you where you're at to help you fill any gaps in your knowledge and experience of today's technology.

Community resources: The PGP toolkit can connect you to all kinds of community resources in the Urbana-Champaign area. PGP will help you find and connect with whatever local reentry resources you need, from mental health and wellbeing services to housing support and food security. PGP understands that to continue your education, it is important to have your basic needs met first.

For more information, please email pathways@educationjustice.net .

Other Resources for College Students

Tutoring centers
Do you need extra help with your classes? A lot of people do. Many college campuses offer free tutoring to their students.

Mentoring and student support programs
Some colleges offer mentoring programs to new students. College mentors are experienced students, faculty, or staff who give support to newer students.

Career center
Most colleges have career centers that can help you find a job while you are in school and when you graduate. Career centers also offer help with resume writing, getting ready for interviews, and more.

Disability services
If you're starting or going back to school and you have a disability, colleges have resources that can help. The National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD) is a federally-funded center with useful and up-to-date information on the resources available to you and how to find them. It's for future and current college students with disabilities and their allies. Find them here: nccsd.ici.umn.edu.

The NCCSD also hosts:

- **CEDAR** (the Campus Disability Resource Database), a searchable list of contact information for disability-resource offices at nearly every college and university in the country. These offices work with students with disabilities of any kind, including physical disabilities, mental health, and learning disabilities. They help college students with disabilities to get accommodations that give them the opportunity to participate in any college activities. They can also help with housing, transportation, and career services. Find it here: cedardatabase.org .
- **DREAM** (Disability Rights, Education Activism, and Mentoring), a student-run support group with a mentoring program, scholarship lists, advocacy opportunities, and news updates. They have chapters in schools across the country, including UIUC. Visit them here: dreamcollegedisability.org .



Health



When you leave prison, you will need to manage your own health. This can be a welcome change, but it can also be stressful. There are many different options for health insurance. There are many kinds of clinics, hospitals, and doctors to choose from. There are paperwork, applications, and bills to figure out. Be willing to ask for help from family and friends as you explore your options.

In this section, we cover:

- Health Insurance
- Dental and Vision Care
- Doctor Visits
- Pharmacy
- HIV/AIDS and Other Diseases

See also the Trauma and Mental Health chapter (on p. 83) and the Substance Use chapter (on p. 90).

Health Insurance

Medical care can be very expensive. Health insurance can help pay for doctor's visits, medications, vaccines, laboratory tests, and emergencies. Health insurance can also be expensive, but medical care can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars if you are not insured.

Getting care if you are uninsured. If you don't have health insurance but need care, there are public and community health programs and clinics all over Illinois that offer free or low-cost services.

These community clinics provide:

- Vaccinations and immunizations
- Full physicals
- Nutrition and food stamp programs
- STD screening, cancer screening, and HIV/AIDS services
- Dental care
- Pregnancy and maternity care
- Programs to quit smoking
- Hearing tests and eye exams

Find a public health program or clinic at illinoisfreeclinics.org . Our directory lists many of these clinics.

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

How to Get Insured

There are several ways to get health insurance. Here is a list of the most common:

- **Government health insurance: Medicare** and **Medicaid** are government health insurance programs for certain populations. For more information, see further in this chapter.
- **Employer health insurance:** Some employers offer health insurance plans for their employees. The employer might cover some of the cost, and the rest would be taken out of the employee's paycheck.
- **Student health insurance:** If you're a fulltime college student, you may be able to purchase discounted health insurance through your college or university.
- **Through a parent:** People who are 26 or younger and have a parent with health insurance can be added to their parent's insurance.

- **Healthcare Marketplace:** Created by the Affordable Care Act, the Marketplace offers health plans for purchase, and the cost may be discounted depending on your income.
- **Through a private agent:** Some insurance companies sell insurance policies directly to individuals.

Medicaid and Medicare

Medicaid and Medicare are federal programs that help with healthcare costs.

- **Medicaid** helps people who earn less than the Medicaid income limit in their state. Most hospitals and health clinics accept Medicaid payments.
- **Medicare** assists people who are 65 years or older, regardless of their income.

To see if you qualify, visit healthcare.gov .

Here's how to apply for Medicaid or Medicare:

1. **In prison** before you leave, if you can. Talk to your counselor or clinical services.
2. **Online** at Illinois' Application for Benefits Eligibility (ABE) page: abe.illinois.gov .
3. **In person** at a hospital, health clinic, or the DHS (Department of Human Services) Family Community Resource Center. You can find the nearest center here: www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12 .
4. **By mail or fax.** You can call DHS at (800) 843-6154 to request a paper application. When it arrives in the mail, complete it and then fax or mail it back to the nearest Family Community Resource Center.

Before applying, you need to have a few documents ready:

- **Income verification:** This could be pay stubs, a financial-aid award letter, a written statement from your employer, or a copy of your check stub showing your total income before taxes. If you haven't been working because you have been incarcerated, you can show your Verification of Incarceration document.
- **Your Social Security number**
- **Proof of residency:** Any official document showing your address and name together will work.

When you fill out your Medicaid application, you can also apply for other benefits, such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). See Resources to Meet your Basic Needs (on p. 45) for more information about these and other assistance programs.

Once you are receiving benefits from the state, make sure to report changes in your income to the state. You may no longer qualify for these programs, and you could start to lose parts of your tax refund. You can report any changes in income through the ABE system (abe.illinois.gov), *by visiting a Department of Human Services Family Community Resource Center, or by calling the Department of Human Services at (800) 720-4166.*

Health Insurance Vocabulary

When you shop for insurance, ask questions. Make sure you understand what you are getting. This vocabulary will help:

- **Premiums**: The amount you pay for your health insurance every month.
- **Yearly deductible**: The amount you pay for covered healthcare services before your insurance plan starts to pay. With a $2,000 yearly deductible, for example, each year you will pay the first $2,000 of covered services yourself. After that, your insurance will begin to pay. Many plans cover the costs for certain services, like a checkup or disease management programs, before you've met your deductible.
- **Copay**: A fixed amount ($30, for example) you pay for a covered healthcare service after you've paid your deductible.
- **Coinsurance**: The percentage of a healthcare cost that you'll pay after you've paid your deductible. If your coinsurance is 20 percent, for example, your insurance would pay the other 80 percent.
- **Approved network** or **in-network**: The facilities, providers, and suppliers that have an agreement with your health insurance provider. In-network providers usually cost less than **out-of-network** providers.
- **Out-of-pocket maximum**: The most you have to pay for covered services in a year. After you've spent your out-of-pocket maximum on deductibles, co-payments, and coinsurance for in-network care, your insurance will cover all costs for the rest of the year.

These definitions and more can be found at: healthcare.gov/glossary/ .

Dental and Vision Care

Get your teeth cleaned and examined regularly. Oral health is important for your overall health. Teeth problems can lead to bigger health problems.

Get your eyes checked regularly, too. If you have vision problems like glaucoma, cataracts, or retinal tears, it is especially important to take care of your eyes.

> *You have to be in charge of everything yourself. You're not going to get called in later for a physical. The onus falls on you.*
>
> **—Pablo**

Dental Insurance and Vision Insurance

Dental and vision are not always included in health insurance plans, so think about your needs and check for each plan before you enroll. You may be able to get a separate dental or vision plan.

Health insurance plans that offer vision care often cover yearly eye exams and some of the cost of glasses and contacts. Medicare covers eye exams, and Medicaid covers vision care for children. If your insurance plan does not cover vision, you may want to buy a separate plan for eye care.

Low-Cost Dental and Eye Care

Here are some options for dental care:

- Go to tinyurl.com/findingdentalcare to find low-cost dental care.
- Find a dental school in your area by visiting this website: ada.org/en/coda/find-a-program . Dental students, under the supervision of professionals, work for a lower cost while gaining experience.

Several programs offer free or low-cost eye exams and glasses:

- **VISION USA** offers eye exams: (800) 766-4466
- **Walmart** and **Target** have stores with eye shops where you can get an exam and glasses at a discount.
- **Eyecare America** offers eye exams: aao.org/eyecare-america
- **InfantSEE** offers free eye exams for 6–12-month-old babies: infantsee.org
- **Sight for Students** offers discounted glasses for children: (888) 290-4964
- **New Eyes** has a free glasses program: (973) 376-4903
- **Zennioptical.com** and **www.goggles4u.com** offer frames starting at just $10, but you will need a prescription from your eye doctor before purchasing glasses online.

Doctor Visits

It's a good idea to establish a regular relationship with your doctor (sometimes called your "primary care provider," or PCP). Most health insurance plans require you to pick a primary care provider. This person will serve as your "medical home" and is usually a family physician, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or internal medicine physician. Having regular visits with a primary care provider is the best way to manage your health. Unless it's an emergency, go see this person instead of going to the emergency room or an urgent-care clinic. This will save you money and time and keep you healthy.

Your primary care physician can give you a full physical exam, perform lab work, and provide prescription renewals. It is recommended that you have a full physical at least once a year and complete routine exams. The table below offers some age-based recommendations for those exams. If you don't understand any terms in the table, ask your doctor to explain.

Your primary care provider can also refer you to specialists for some health concerns. One way to contact your primary care physician is by signing up through your hospital network's online portal. This will allow you to access your medical records, send messages to your doctor, and schedule appointments.

> *Go to a community medical center. You can get a free full physical when you get out of prison. We have to make sure there are no underlying conditions that we aren't aware of.*
>
> **—Joe Joe**

Routine Screenings and Vaccines to Keep You Healthy

Age	Men*	Women*
18-39	**Check your:** Blood pressure, cholesterol levels (with lipoA)	**Check your:** Blood pressure, cholesterol levels (with lipoA)
	Shots and boosters: Flu, TDAP, COVID, HPV (recommended until you're 45)	**Shots and boosters:** Flu, TDAP, COVID, HPV (recommended until you're 45)
	Regular screenings: Skin cancer, anxiety/ depression	**Regular screenings:** Skin cancer, anxiety/ depression, intimate partner violence, PAP smear (every 3 years after you're 21)
	One-time screenings (or regularly if you have high-risk behaviors): HIV**, chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C, tuberculosis, syphilis	**One-time screenings (or regularly if you have high-risk behaviors):** HIV**, chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C, tuberculosis, syphilis
40-64	**Check your:** Blood pressure, cholesterol levels (with lipoA), blood sugar (if you're overweight), prostate (if you have risk factors)	**Check your:** Blood pressure, cholesterol levels (with lipoA), blood sugar (if you're overweight)
	Shots and boosters: Flu, TDAP, COVID, HPV vaccine (recommended until you're 45)	**Shots and boosters:** Flu, TDAP, COVID, HPV vaccine (recommended until you're 45)
	Regular screenings: Skin cancer, anxiety/ depression, colonoscopy (every 10 years starting at age 45)	**Regular screenings:** Skin cancer, anxiety/ depression, intimate partner violence, colonoscopy (every 10 years starting at age 45), PAP smear and HPV (every five years), mammogram (every year), BRCA1/2 risk
	One-time screenings (or regularly if you have high-risk behaviors): HIV**, chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, syphilis, lung cancer (if you smoke or have quit in the past 15 years)	**One-time screenings (or regularly if you have high-risk behaviors):** HIV**, chlamydia, gonorrhea, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, syphilis, lung cancer (if you smoke or have quit in the past 15 years), bone density (after menopause)
65+	Everything as described for men from 40–60, but also include regular hearing tests; the RSV, shingles, and pneumonia vaccines; and regular fall-risk screenings. If you were ever a smoker, after you're 65, get regularly screened for abdominal aortic aneurysm.	Everything as described for women from 40–60, but also include regular hearing tests; the RSV, shingles, and pneumonia vaccines; and regular fall-risk screenings. Mammograms are only recommended to age 75.

*In this chart, "men" and "women" refer to your biological sex at birth.

**Men who have sex with men and members of other high-risk groups should talk to their primary care physicians about PrEP or HIV prophylaxis and have more frequent HIV screenings. Find more information on high-risk groups and behaviors here: hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/who-is-at-risk-for-hiv

Pharmacy

Some insurance plans will help you pay for expensive medical prescriptions, while others do not. If you are having trouble paying for your prescriptions, here are a few options:

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if there is a generic version of the drugs you need. Generic drugs are much less expensive.
- Go to **Goodrx.com** to compare prices of prescription medications. It tells you where you can go for the best price.
- Stores like Target, Walmart, Costco, and Sam's Club often have special programs where you can get cheap generic drugs ($4 for 30-day quantity or $10 for a 90-day quantity).
- Go to rxassist.org to find out if the medication you need is offered for free to people who qualify.

COVID-19. The pandemic is over, but COVID-19 is still around. As with all respiratory diseases, practice good habits like washing your hands, staying home when sick and wearing a mask around others. If vaccines are available in your community, consider getting one.

HIV/AIDS and Other Diseases

Being in prison increases the risk of getting some diseases. After being released from prison, consider getting tested for HIV, hepatitis C (HCV), hepatitis B (HBV), and tuberculosis. HIV, HBV, and HCV can be detected by a blood test. Tuberculosis can be tested by blood or by a skin test. Locations for HIV testing can be found by using the CDC's HIV Test Locator at cdc.gov/hiv/testing .

Sometimes HIV testing is offered as part of the prison-release process. We suggest you take advantage of this free testing, as knowing your status is very important to you and our loved ones.

If you test positive for HIV or another serious disease, you should make an appointment to see a healthcare provider to stay healthy and possibly begin treatments. If the test comes back negative, you should still be cautious. It is possible that the tests missed the virus or couldn't detect it yet. To be safe, request a second test after two weeks.

Fortunately, people who have HIV today can live long and productive lives as long as they stay on top of their infection. To do so, they need daily medication, regular testing and doctor visits, and healthy lifestyle changes (like exercise, stopping smoking, getting enough sleep, etc.).

Risk

The most common way for HIV to be transmitted is through sexual contact. Infected and untreated mothers can also pass it on to their children. Avoid contact with blood, semen, or vaginal fluid from sexual partners who are HIV-positive. Do not share needles or syringes, and make sure to use protection (condoms) for any sexual contact.

Know the risk of spreading HIV to a sexual partner who is not HIV positive. Being treated with antiretroviral medications can reduce your chances of transmitting HIV to a partner. Taking these medications regularly lowers the levels of HIV in your blood. This does not mean that the virus is completely gone, so continue to take precautions and use condoms even though the risk of transmission is low. If you do not have HIV but are in a relationship with someone who does, you can take PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), which reduces the risk of being infected.

There are also certain sexual activities that can increase your chances of transmitting HIV. For more information about HIV transmission and risk factors, visit: hiv.gov/hiv-basics .

Reflect

1. What are my healthcare needs? Do I have any needs that might require special health care?

2. How will I get access to that health care? What are my insurance options?

3. What steps can I take to stay healthy?

4. Who is the doctor or nurse practitioner I can call if I need help? When is my first appointment?

Trauma and Mental Health



If you are struggling with trauma or mental health difficulties, you are not alone. Most people who have been incarcerated have experienced trauma. Many also struggle with their mental health. Being in prison can cause mental health difficulties or make existing mental health difficulties worse. Your time in prison may cause trauma that affects your mental health long after you leave.

If you have mental health difficulties, seek treatment as soon as you are released. Reentry is hard. Trauma and mental health difficulties can make reentry much harder. Sadly, people who do not get treatment are more likely to return to prison.

There are mental health professionals who can help you. They can provide counseling and medication, if needed, as well as other resources to help you cope. They can help you learn to better handle stress and life problems.

You matter! Make your mental health a priority. When you do, you will experience deep personal growth and be able to better help others. You can learn to become stronger so that you can bounce back from hard things.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Trauma
- Attitudes About Mental Health
- Common Mental Health Difficulties
- Caring for Your Mental Health

Trauma

Just about everyone who has been to prison has experienced trauma. Trauma is the emotional response you have to a stressful and possibly life-changing event. It can also be the result of toxic stress that builds up over time. Trauma is more common than people think, and its effects can be very serious. Traumatic events in childhood can have effects throughout your life.

> *Trauma is something that all of us go through. You have to get to the point that you realize that what you've been going through is trauma. Nothing you went through is normal. It's not normal to be secluded. Even before prison, we were on the streets, experiencing trauma and violence to the point that it became a natural thing. We became desensitized to those things. We didn't think, 'Oh wow, this is abnormal.'*
> **—Anonymous**

> *The residue of prison stays with you. Keys rattling means it's a guard coming. You wake up with a heightened sense of alertness. You are late and you worry you have missed your chance. You can't calm down. You have a pattern of sleeplessness. You are easily annoyed. Tense situations escalate into violence.*
> **—Kilroy**

Trauma can come from lots of things, such as:

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Witnessing violence
- Having a loved one with substance use or mental health difficulties
- Parent separation or divorce
- Poverty
- Being incarcerated or having a family member who is incarcerated
- Living in an unsafe neighborhood

There are strong connections between trauma, poor mental health, and incarceration. People in prison, especially women, are more likely to have experienced trauma.

Where to get help

If you have ever experienced trauma, you may benefit from treatment or counseling. Counselors can help you understand the effects of trauma on your wellbeing, your emotions, and your behaviors.

Treatment for trauma can provide you with skills to better understand what happened to you. You can learn to cope with the emotions and memories connected to these experiences. The goal is to help you reach a healthier new perspective on what took place in your life.

Here are a few places you can go for help:

- The Illinois DHS directory of mental health providers: tinyurl.com/findamentalhealthclinic . When calling to set up an appointment, ask if they provide trauma-focused treatment.
- Your primary care provider (sometimes called your PCP). They may be able to connect you to a mental health consultant located in your clinic, so ask if one is available.
- A trusted reentry programs. Many programs provide trauma-informed care (see the resource directory on p. 153). Ask what services they provide.

Attitudes About Mental Health

Some people feel embarrassed or ashamed of having mental health difficulties. These attitudes may have come from your family, your community, or from the media. These attitudes can make it hard for you to get better.

> *In prison, people tend to mock those who go through a mental health episode. Everyone knows who's taking pills. You condition yourself to not talk. You don't want to express your feelings or admit something is wrong.*
>
> **—Kilroy**

Everyone has a role in the fight against these negative attitudes! The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers some suggestions about what you can do to help choose empowerment over shame:

- Think of physical and mental illness in similar ways. Lots of people have mental health difficulties, just as lots of people have physical health difficulties, like diabetes and heart disease. Getting treatment is a positive thing.
- Talk openly about mental health. Share your experience with people you trust.
- Educate yourself and others. Respond to negative comments by sharing facts and experiences.
- Be conscious of language. Remind people that words matter. Try to avoid using words like *crazy* or *insane* when what you mean is that something is frustrating or poorly thought out. This misuse of words can cause shame and hurt, and it happens all too often.
- Show compassion for those with mental health difficulties, including yourself.
- Be honest about treatment. Getting mental health treatment is normal, just like other healthcare treatment.

> *It's all right to show your emotions. It's a natural thing to vent, to cry.*
>
> **—Anonymous**

Reflect

1. What negative attitudes do you have about working on your own mental health?

2. Where do these negative attitudes come from? Try to be specific as you think about this question.

3. What are some things you can do to challenge these negative attitudes?

When I first met with the [support] group, guys would just sit there. They wouldn't open up. So I opened myself up. I'd tell them, this is what's been bothering me. Break the ice. Then someone else would talk about their experience.

—Kilroy

Common Mental Health Difficulties

Several mental health difficulties are common in people who spend time in prison. We describe them here so that you can recognize if you struggle with them, and when you should reach out for help.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Shocking, damaging, or dangerous events can change the way we think and feel for a long time after they've happened. It's natural to feel anxious or depressed after something bad has happened, but if these feelings last for over a month, you may have PTSD.

Common symptoms of PTSD include:

- Having nightmares or flashbacks
- Avoiding people or situations that remind you of the event
- Feeling on edge and anxious a lot of the time
- Feeling depressed
- Trouble remembering things
- Feeling emotionally detached

Post-incarceration syndrome (PICS) is similar to PTSD. PICS can make it hard to trust people and maintain relationships. It can cause disorientation and feelings of isolation. Medications and counseling can help. To learn more about PICS, access this resource from the National Incarceration Association: joinnia.com/post-incarceration-syndrome .

Depression. Everyone feels sad occasionally, but not everyone struggles with depression. People with depression may have lost interest in the things that once brought them joy. They might not sleep well or eat regularly anymore. They may feel hopeless, angry, and miserable without understanding why. If you are experiencing these feelings, counseling and/or medicine can help.

If you are severely depressed, you may think about hurting yourself. You may even feel like you want to die. Severe depression can even make you hear or see things that are not there. If you have these severe symptoms, go to the nearest emergency room right away or call the suicide and crisis lifeline: 988.

Anxiety. Feeling anxious or stressed sometimes is a normal part of life. Anxiety disorders happen when anxiety feels out of control. People with anxiety disorders worry a lot about everyday things that they have no control over, sometimes without understanding why. Anxiety disorders can damage people's ability to focus and sleep, make them feel like something terrible is about to happen, and leave them restless, tired, irritable, and tense. These problems can impact relationships and responsibilities. Counseling can help, and medication is often recommended when symptoms are severe.

Managing some mental health challenges can require help from both medicine and counseling.

People with **bipolar disorders** have intense mood swings that last for several days and experience extreme shifts in mood, energy, and ability to function. These mood shifts include episodes of depression (see above) and mania, when you have so much energy and so many thoughts that you can't keep up with them. Risky behavior often accompanies these manic episodes. Counseling and often medication can help.

People with **schizophrenia** can have a distorted sense of reality and problems with thinking, behavior, and emotions. Schizophrenia can cause people to have delusions and hallucinations. Like bipolar disorder, this is a severe mental health condition that requires attention. Counseling in addition to medicine can help someone with schizophrenia to build life skills to cope.

Bipolar disorder and schizophrenia symptoms cannot be managed without the help of medication. If you have been diagnosed with one of these disorders, make sure you take your medication every day. Don't skip doses. If you have severe anxiety or depression, you will also likely benefit from medication. Taking medication can help relieve symptoms so that you feel better. Combined with counseling, medication can help you lead a healthier and more productive life.

If you think you or someone you know seems to be having these symptoms, make sure to get help as soon as you can.

Multiple mental health challenges. Many people have more than one mental health disorder. People who have depression are more likely to have anxiety, too. Many people who have a mental health disorder also have a substance use problem.

If you think you might be struggling with one—or more—of these difficulties, talk to a healthcare professional. Tell them everything. If you tell them about one problem but not another, you may find it difficult to fully recover.

> *What I felt was most difficult when I first got out is figuring out how to relate to other people. You have both the lack of 'normal' experiences that most people have as late-teenagers and young adults. Plus you have the negative effects of long-term imprisonment.*
>
> **—Greg A.**

Caring for Your Mental Health

Seeking Treatment for Your Mental Health

Everyone can benefit from mental health support during reentry. Reentry is stressful. Even if you do not have mental health difficulties, you may benefit from talking to someone for a mental health check-up to help you adjust.

It is a good idea to schedule an appointment with a mental health provider before your release. Many community mental health centers have long waiting lists, so set up an appointment ahead of time. This will help you get the support you need when things are tough. There are several different options for care, depending on your needs.

Crisis Care

Are you worried about hurting yourself or others? Do you have suicidal thoughts? Are you seeing and hearing things that aren't there? Are your symptoms getting in the way of everyday activities?

If so, find help right away. Here are a few places you can turn to:

- **National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Call 988 or go to 988lifeline.org to get help and chat with someone.
- **Crisis Text Line:** Visit crisistextline.org or text "HELLOHOME" to 741741, available 24/7.
- **Illinois Crisis Respite Directory:** tinyurl.com/IllinoisCrisisRespiteDirectory
- **Illinois DHS Directory of Crisis and emergency mental health providers:** tinyurl.com/crisisandemergencyproviders.
- **Illinois Crisis and Referral Entry Service (CARES) line:** Call (800) 345-9049 (some restrictions apply for adults).

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger

- call 911 and ask for a CIT (Crisis Intervention Trained) officer, or
- go to the nearest emergency room.

If you are in crisis, you may be given an emergency evaluation to see if you need to be hospitalized. Hospital treatments during a crisis are very brief. They are meant to keep you safe and get you stable. You'll get connected to on-going treatment options when you leave the hospital.

After your crisis has passed, be sure to follow up with a mental health professional in your community.

Non-Crisis Care

If you need help but it's not an emergency, find a community provider for treatment. When you call, ask for a mental health assessment or intake with a therapist or counselor, or, for medication, with a psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse practitioner.

These resources will help you find a community provider near you:

- **Illinois DHS Directory of Mental Health Care Providers:** tinyurl.com/findamentalhealthclinic
- **Your primary care provider:** Ask your primary care provider if they can connect you to a local mental health consultant.
- **Treatment Referral Helpline:** Call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at (800) 662-4357.
- **Illinois Warm Line:** Call (866) 359-7953 for mental health and substance use support by phone Mon–Fri, 8am–8pm.
- **Department of Health & Human Services Treatment Locator:** findtreatment.gov . Use this online service to find local help.

Types of Treatment

There are different kinds of mental health professionals. Each can make a diagnosis and provide treatment, but they may take different approaches.

Counselors, **therapists**, and **clinical psychologists** offer assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health difficulties through counseling. **Psychiatrists** and **Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners** assess and diagnose, too, but they can take a medical approach to your treatment and can prescribe appropriate medications.

Some people prefer a one-on-one setting for their therapy or counseling. Others prefer group therapy or sometimes family therapy or counseling. Depending on your needs, it may be helpful to combine different types of therapy alongside medication.

The most important part of treatment is not the type of treatment you choose but the relationship you have with your mental health provider. Make sure that you feel safe and connected to your provider so that you can benefit from treatment. If you do not feel safe and connected, seek alternative care.



I benefited a lot from [my support group]. Everybody in those meetings had a similar experience. We are at a place now where we can reflect on some of the things we went through. Maturity comes with age. They have been part of my unofficial therapy.

—Anonymous

Many conflicts arise because your family has no idea what you've gone through in prison. Or they don't understand your diagnosis. Families need a guide for what it's like for those of us who have been through prison, who have experienced trauma.

—Kilroy

Medication. Just as medication can treat heart disease and diabetes, medication can treat mental health difficulties. Medications are not always needed, but most people with moderate to severe mental health difficulties benefit from medication.

Medications are prescribed by a psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse practitioner after a brief evaluation. Your psychiatrist will monitor your medications and side effects. It takes time for your body to adjust to medications. It also takes time for your provider to find what works best for you. Many medications have side effects, especially when you first take them. Don't give up if the first medication isn't for you. It may take a couple of tries to find the right medicine and dosage.

☆ **Warning: Don't quit taking medication once you start feeling better.** Feeling good may be a sign that the medication is working, not that you don't need it anymore! Always consult with a psychiatric practitioner before stopping your medications. Stopping medications all at once can be very dangerous. Your psychiatrist can help you stop gradually and safely.

Paying for Treatment. Medicaid will cover mental health treatment. If you need to apply for Medicaid, the Health chapter tells you how (see p. 79). Not all mental health treatment programs accept Medicaid. Make sure to ask if the program accepts Medicaid when you call to make your first appointment. If you do not have insurance, some programs will also offer services on a "sliding fee scale." This lets you pay what you can afford.

Most programs that accept Medicaid have long waiting lists, so plan ahead. If possible, make your appointments before your release.

If you are enrolling in private insurance, make sure to select a plan that includes mental health treatment. When you make an appointment, ask if they accept your insurance. You may be able to see a mental health professional in private practice. This may decrease your waiting time for an appointment.

Building Resilience

When you face trauma or stress and overcome it, you can strengthen your ability to bounce back from hard things. This is called resilience.

Being resilient does not mean that stress is not hard for you. It means you have taught yourself to better cope with hard things. Resilience can be learned. It is not a trait that only some people have. It is like a muscle that everyone has the ability to strengthen. It takes time and work, but it can be done. There is hope!

If you feel stuck or are not making progress, seek help from a mental health professional. This is an important part of building resilience.

According to the American Psychological Association, there are four main areas of resilience. Even if you don't have access to a mental health professional, you can do work in each area to strengthen your resilience:

Build connections with people you trust and who understand you.

Remind yourself that you are not alone. If you have experienced trauma, it is common to want to isolate yourself. Fight that urge. Find a group to join and get active in the community.

Foster wellness by taking care of yourself—in body, mind, and spirit.

Take care of your body. Your body needs food, sleep, water, and exercise to fight off stress. When you take care of your body, you will feel better. There is a big connection between your physical and mental health.

> *In prison I had ways to cope with trauma. I would exercise, draw. This allowed me to escape that mental state for a little while.*
> **—Anonymous**

> *Having a support group provides you with a reminder that there are other ways to cope.*
> **—Kilroy**

Practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is being in the present moment without judgment. It can be practiced in many ways. See our Mindfulness chapter to learn more about mindfulness (on p. 143).

Avoid negative outlets. When things are stressful, it is tempting to want to turn to drugs, alcohol, or other negative ways of coping. This is like putting a Band-Aid on a large wound. Instead, try to focus on healthy things you can give your body to help you cope.

Find purpose through service, community, or friendship.

Help others. Find meaning and purpose by helping others. Get involved with a community organization or help a friend who is struggling.

Be proactive. Ask yourself, "What can I do about this problem?" Set achievable goals and break them down into smaller steps. Start working on these steps.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery. Self-awareness can help you grow. Think about how you have grown because of a struggle, like being incarcerated. How have you become a better person? You may find that thinking about your growth helps you increase self-worth and appreciate your path in life.

Embrace healthy thoughts in your everyday life.

Keep things in perspective. You cannot always control events in your life. But you can control how you make sense of things and respond to them. How you think about your situation impacts how you feel, so try not to dwell on those negative thoughts. Recognize that negative thoughts are just that, thoughts that can be acknowledged and set aside.

Accept change. Being able to accept change is a part of life. Everything changes, and some changes may get in the way of your goals. Focus instead on the things that are in your power to change and control. As the saying goes, "Grant me the serenity to accept what I cannot change, the courage to change what I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Maintain a hopeful outlook. It is not realistic to be positive all the time. Allow yourself to feel upset for a little bit, but then focus on what gives you hope. What do you want and how can you make that happen?

Learn from your past. Look back at what has helped you through hard times. Remind yourself where you found strength before. What have you learned about yourself from your past experiences?

For ways to grow stronger in these areas, see the chapters on Building Healthy Relationships (on p. 133), Mindfulness (on p. 143), and Connecting with Your Community (on p. 150).

> *Advice for socializing outside? Learning coping skills and anger management. Being less abrasive and open-minded.*
>
> **—Earl W.**



Reflect

1. What has helped you "bounce back" from hard things in the past?

2. What are some things you would like to try to strengthen your resilience muscles?

Substance Use



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

Do you have difficulty controlling your use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or medications?
If so, this is one of the most important chapters you will read. As you know, drug and alcohol problems can make it much harder to get a job, form healthy relationships, find housing, and stay out of prison.

We urge you to get help. Your reentry success depends upon it! As you begin to recover, your mind will become clearer and you will be better able to rebuild your life.

For many, prison is a time to get clean from drugs or alcohol. But just because you were clean in prison doesn't mean that you are fully recovered. Many people find that problems with drugs or alcohol return when they are released.

Reentry can be a time of stress, anxiety, and fear. You're trying to rebuild your life while also dealing with the trauma of being incarcerated for years. Perhaps you have used drugs and alcohol to cope with difficult feelings in the past. Recognize that this puts you at greater risk of relapse.

> *What ends up happening is you get out and you realize your issues don't end. Now you have to deal with other issues. You get hit with all this stuff. You start to get into bad habits again, revert to old coping mechanisms. You have alcohol available, you have drugs. The bottle becomes more available than the gym.*
>
> **—Anonymous**

There is hope. Know that many people recover, and you can, too. We honor your efforts. Recovery isn't easy, and you may have setbacks. We believe in YOU and your ability to recover.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Where to Get Help
- Safer Drug Use
- Treatment Programs
- Finding a Peer Support Group
- The Road to Recovery
- New Cannabis Laws

Where to Get Help

Let's be honest. The first few days, weeks, and months after release are really challenging. This is why it's a good idea to make plans to get help before you are released.

It's best if you can set up a time to meet with a treatment provider within two to three days of release. Join a support group like Alcoholics Anonymous right away or make an appointment to see a counselor. Don't wait to get help.

Here are a few places you can start:

- Call **311** (in Chicago) or **211** (anywhere in Illinois) to get connected to resources including substance use services and housing.
- Call **(800) 322-8400 (FACT-400)** for mental health and substance use emergencies in Chicago and its suburbs. Get help from mental health professionals rather than police.
- **Call the Illinois Helpline at (833) 234-6343** or **text "HELP" to 833234** if you or a loved one is struggling with opioids or other substances. They can help you find services near you. Visit their website at ilhelpline.thesmartice.com/findhelp .
- Call the **National Helpline** at (800) 662-4357 or visit their website to find help near you: findtreatment.gov .
- Visit the **Illinois DHS Recovery Residence Directory** to find "sober, safe, and healthy living environments that promote recovery from alcohol and other drug use" at tinyurl.com/recoveryresidences . Visit the National Sober House Directory (soberhousedirectory.com) for similar communities across the country.
- **Peer support groups:** Find an Alcoholics Anonymous support group by calling (855) 977-9213 or going to aa.org. Find a Narcotics Anonymous support group by calling (818) 773-9999 or going to na.org.
- For **safe injection equipment and overdose treatment in Chicago**, go to anypositivechange.org .

For more details and information on finding non-religious support groups, see the section of this chapter titled "Finding a Peer Support Group" (below).

☆ In case of an overdose, immediately call 911.

Safer Drug Use

Many substance use treatment programs focus on getting clean or sobering up. There are many reasons you may want to do this. You may need to pass drug tests as a condition of your parole. Many jobs require drug testing. Serious addictions can poison relationships, damage your health, and threaten your reentry journey.

Some people find that quitting completely is the only thing that works for them. If they start drinking even a little, this quickly turns back into drinking a lot. Groups like Alcoholics Anonymous encourage quitting completely and provide peer support to reach this goal.

Quitting isn't easy. Many people can quit for a while, but then return to occasional drug use. If this is your experience, there are things you can do to reduce the harm of drug use in your life. There are ways to manage your drug use so that it doesn't take over your life. Moderating your use of drugs or alcohol is a worthy goal. Work with a counselor or program that offers substance use management.

Here are a few safety tips:

- Learn how to inject safely and care for your veins to avoid getting HIV or another disease: anypositivechange.org/better-vein-care .
- Know where to get safe injecting equipment. The Chicago Recovery Alliance offers supplies and equipment for safe drug injection: sterile syringes, clean cookers, cotton filters, tourniquets, sterile mix water. Look for their silver vans: anypositivechange.org/cra-services . They can also help you safely dispose of used needles.
- Make every effort to avoid fentanyl. It can be mixed into other drugs, and it is 1,000 times stronger than morphine. Even a few milligrams can kill you. (For comparison, a table-top sweetener packet at a restaurant contains 1,000 milligrams.)
- Learn the signs of overdose and how to respond. Teach your friends and family to recognize these signs, too. Keep two doses of Narcan nearby.

Narcan

Naloxone (often called Narcan) is an FDA-approved medicine that can sometimes reverse an opioid overdose. **Everyone leaving IDOC is entitled to two doses.** If you overdose, you can't use Narcan to save your own life, but someone nearby can use it to save your life. Also, you may be able to use it to save someone else's life. If you haven't left yet, make sure to accept your doses of Narcan when you do.

In Illinois you can also get free Narcan at many pharmacies or distribution centers. You don't need a prescription. Some Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Distribution (OEND) centers provide free training on how to use Narcan. The Illinois Department of

Public Health has an Opioid Data Dashboard with distribution locations all over the state: idph.illinois.gov/OpioidDataDashboard .

☆ **Warning**: Did you know that people who have recently returned from prison are at greater risk for overdose? If you stopped using drugs or alcohol while in prison, you may have a reduced tolerance for these drugs. This means that your body can't handle the same amount of drugs that you took before. This can lead to overdose or even death.

☆ Are you part of an organization that helps people who have substance use disorders? The Chicago Recovery Alliance trains service providers to administer naloxone to those who overdose. This training saves lives!

Signs of an Overdose:

- Unresponsive or unconscious
- Slow or stopped breathing
- Snoring or gurgling sounds
- Cold, clammy skin
- Blue lips, discolored fingernails

What to do: Try to wake the person. Call 911 if you can't. Start CPR if their breathing is slow or they have stopped breathing. Provide Narcan.

Reflect

Whether your goal is safer drug use or quitting entirely, take time to reflect on your drug or alcohol use. Here are a few things you should think about, either alone or with a counselor:

1. Where do you use and when? Can you find ways to separate drug use from driving or working tasks?
2. Who do you use with? How are your relationships helping or hurting your recovery? How can you navigate these relationships to quit or be safer?
3. What are your habits or personal rituals around drug use? Can you modify those rituals so that you use less or use in safer ways?
4. Think about your attitudes and emotions about drug use, such as shame and guilt. How are these emotions getting in the way of your recovery?
5. What stresses or emotions trigger your use? What are some more helpful ways to deal with difficult emotions?



Treatment Programs

There are many kinds of treatment programs. There are options for inpatient and outpatient care to help you with substance use. An inpatient program means that you live in a facility with 24/7 care and support, such as a rehab center or recovery home. An outpatient program means that you go to a facility to receive care during the day, but you still live at home. There are also peer support groups and therapy sessions that meet less frequently. The type of care you pick depends on your situation. For help deciding what's right for you, visit: startyourrecovery.org/treatment/rehab-centers/outpatient-vs-inpatient .

If you have severe difficulties with substance use, at least three months of intensive treatment is recommended. After that, follow-up support can be helpful for months and even years.

Some treatments will focus on helping you to manage the stress and triggers that have led you to use in the past. Some treatments include doctors who can prescribe medications (such as methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone) to help you overcome an addiction. Every good treatment program should:

- **Empower you** and build on your strengths. It shouldn't shame you. It should help you take an active role in your recovery.
- **Provide mental health treatment.** Many people who have substance use disorders also struggle with mental health. It is essential to treat both mental health and substance use issues together.
- **Address past trauma.** Many people use drugs to cope with past trauma. A good treatment program will help you develop effective coping strategies and recover from the effects of trauma and violence.
- **Provide support services.** Recovery is about more than just getting clean. Good treatment programs offer services to help you rebuild your life. Such programs may help you find employment and safe housing.

Paying for Treatment

Medicaid covers the cost of many substance use treatment services, such as counseling, therapy, medication management, social work services, and peer support. Our Health chapter explains how to apply for Medicaid (see p. 79). Not all treatment programs accept Medicaid. Before starting services, ask if they accept Medicaid.

If you are enrolling in a private insurance plan, choose a plan that covers substance use treatment. When making an appointment with a service provider or clinic, check that they accept your insurance.

Even if you don't have insurance yet, there are affordable clinics and programs that can help. Look for "sliding scale" services where you pay only what you can afford. We have listed a few in our directory (see p. 153).

Are you pregnant? Do you have children you are caring for? For the sake of you and your children, reach out and get help. Many women are afraid their children will be taken away if their substance use becomes known. But continuing to use drugs or alcohol also puts you and your children at great risk.

As you are surely aware, society is not kind to mothers with substance use problems. You have likely sensed how harshly people judge you. You may have intense feelings of guilt and shame. We recommend that you seek out a treatment program that can help with the unique challenges women and mothers face. We have listed a few recovery programs for women and children in our directory (see p. 153).

Always let your doctor know if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant before starting a medical treatment for substance use. Some medications are not safe to take while pregnant or nursing.

Finding a Peer Support Group

If you are struggling with drug or alcohol use, join a support group to get help and encouragement from others. These groups are usually free.

☆ *Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women* is the inspiring autobiography written by the civil and human rights activist Susan Burton. She struggled with addiction and was incarcerated many times before starting her own nonprofit organization devoted to helping formerly incarcerated people.

In *Becoming Ms. Burton,* Susan Burton describes how her first Alcoholics Anonymous group meeting gave her hope:

> *People stood up and shared their stories… I rose, took a deep breath. "Look what drugs and alcohol have done to me," I said, my voice quivering. My hands were shaking so much the styrofoam cup of coffee I held was wasting on me. But no one seemed to judge my piteous condition. The immediate compassion, the empathy, the love that rolled off these strangers was enough to put a sizable dent in my pain, my shame, my guilt, and all that sorrow. In that room, I found hope.*

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are the largest peer recovery organizations and have chapters throughout Illinois. Visit aa.org or na.org to find a meeting or online group. AA and NA use a religious approach, though they are not tied to a specific religion. Their 12-step process begins by asking members to admit that they no longer have control over their drug or alcohol use. Members are asked to turn themselves over to a higher power to find the strength to change.

There are non-religious support groups, too. They focus on helping people find motivation within themselves. Here are a few popular options, with in-person and online meetings throughout the US:

- **Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART)** peer support groups help participants resolve problems with any addiction. Go to smartrecovery.org or call (440) 951-5357 to find a meeting or online community.
- **Women for Sobriety** is a peer-support program for women overcoming substance use disorders. Go to womenforsobriety.org or call (215) 536-8026 to find an in-person or online meeting.
- **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** is a network of peer groups to help people maintain sobriety/abstinence from alcohol and drug addictions, food addiction, and more. Go to sossobriety.org or call (314) 353-3532 to find a meeting.
- **LifeRing Secular Recovery** is an organization of people who share practical experiences and sobriety support. They focus on empowering you to overcome your addiction. Go to lifering.org or call (800) 811-4142 to find a meeting.

Ask your primary care provider for recommendations. Many community centers and places of worship also sponsor support groups or can direct you to others.

Approach your first meeting with an open mind and try to find out all you can. You may need to attend several meetings before you feel things are "clicking." If you don't feel you have found your group, keep trying. Chapters can be very different, and members come and go. Look for meetings that are warm, friendly, and regularly scheduled. They should offer some structure and focus, but still include informal time to mingle.





The Road to Recovery

The road to recovery can be a long one. Don't be too discouraged if you relapse. A relapse doesn't always mean that the treatment isn't working. Give it another chance. Recognize that if you stopped using once, you can again. You have developed skills that will help you next time. Ask if there is a different treatment that may work better for you. Sometimes multiple periods of treatment are needed.

Recovery isn't just about the need to stop using. It's about the need for change. It's about improving your overall health and wellness. It's about living up to your full potential. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) lists four main aspects of recovery:

1. **Health**: Overcoming challenges to your physical and mental wellness
2. **Home**: Finding a stable and safe place to live
3. **Purpose**: Taking part in meaningful daily activities (job, school, family caretaking, etc.)
4. **Community**: Building relationships and networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope



Reflect

1. What treatments (medication, therapy, peer support groups) have you tried in the past?
2. How have these treatments helped you? What worked and what didn't work?
3. What kinds of treatment would you like to try?
4. Where can you go for help?
5. What does recovery look like to you?
6. Where are you on your road toward recovery?
7. What are some good short-term goals you can work towards?

New Cannabis Laws

The US has a long history of punishing people, especially people of color, for minor drug offenses, such as possession of marijuana. And too often, people with addictions are sent to prison instead of getting the treatment and support they need. The "war on drugs" has greatly increased the number of people of color locked up in the US.

You have likely heard that marijuana is now legal in Illinois. With this change, you may be interested in getting a pardon or sealing your record for a marijuana-related offense. Below we list some things you should know about the law that went into effect January 1, 2020. (For more on pardons and sealing your record, see the Legal Matters chapter on p. 108.)

What to do if you have a marijuana-related offense: If you were convicted for a marijuana-related offense (under 30 grams) before marijuana was legal, you are eligible for a pardon, record sealing, or expungement as long as no violent crime was committed. Cases will be reviewed by the Prisoner Review Board. If you have been charged with a marijuana-related offense, reach out to an Illinois drug crimes attorney.

Purchasing and using marijuana/cannabis

- Only adults (21 and over) can purchase cannabis.
- There are limits to the amount you can purchase: Up to one ounce of the flower (dried herb) and up to 5 grams of cannabis concentrate (hashish or tincture).
- Adults can consume cannabis in their homes or at certain approved places. Be careful: some businesses and landlords don't allow it! Companies can still test current or prospective employees for alcohol and drugs, including marijuana.
- You may be able to use medical marijuana with a doctor's recommendation. If medical marijuana would help you, check first with your parole officer to see what you will need to do.

Warning: The rules of your MSR may not allow you to consume cannabis after release. Please check with your parole office before purchasing or using cannabis products.

Growing, selling, and transporting marijuana

- Only licensed dispensaries can sell marijuana.
- Only people who have transportation licenses can transport and deliver marijuana.
- Individuals can grow up to five cannabis plants at home. The plants must be in a locked room, with no access to anyone under 21. (Check with your parole officer to confirm if you are eligible to grow.)

Joining the cannabis industry: The "war on drugs" has had a devastating impact on communities of color and low-income communities. To address this injustice, the Illinois Adult-Use Cannabis Social Equity Program is making it easier for people in impacted communities to join the cannabis industry. If you want to get involved, you may be eligible for these services:

- Technical assistance for getting a cannabis business license.
- Preference for getting a grower, infuser, or transporter license.
- Reduced license and application fees.
- Low-interest loans for starting and operating a cannabis-related business.

Learn more at dceo.illinois.gov/cannabisequity.html and make sure to check with your parole officer before starting this process.



Transportation

This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

How are you going to get around? Transportation is important for your job, for spending time with friends and family, and for living a meaningful life.

If you return to a city like Chicago, you'll have many transportation options. In small towns, your choices might be more limited. Below we discuss the options and a few practical details.

This chapter covers:

- Transportation Options (buses, trains, taxis, bikes, cars, and more)
- Buying a Car
- Driving Legally

Transportation Options

Buses and Metro

You can save money with public transportation. In most cities, if you use the bus or metro often, you can buy a month- or year-long pass. This will make the cost of each ride cheaper. Students, seniors, veterans, or people with disabilities can get discounts. Here are a few ways to get started:

- Search for "public transportation" with the name of your city. Many systems have online route maps and offer discounts.
- Visit the website google.com/maps or open a map app on your phone. Enter your starting point and where you'd like to go. The app or website will give step-by-step instructions for public transportation. It will tell you how long it will take you to get there and provide directions.
- For information on Chicago buses and metro, go to rtachicago.org . Learn more about discounts at transitchicago.com/reduced-fare-programs .

Trains and Long-Distance Buses

Here are a few good options for longer trips:

- The Metra is a train system that connects to suburbs around Chicago. For information on the Metra, go to metrarail.com .
- Buses are probably your cheapest option. Greyhound, BoltBus, and MegaBus are a few long-distance bus companies. Bus tickets can be purchased online or in person.
- Amtrak (train travel) is a good way to travel long-distances. It has service to many places around the country. Go to amtrak.com for more information.
- Air travel is more expensive but will get you where you need to go much quicker. If you have never flown before or have questions about how flying has changed, check out FirstTimeFlyerHQ.com .

It's always a good idea to compare prices between buses, trains, and planes, as well as between companies.

Ride-Hailing Apps and Taxis

If you have a smartphone and a credit or debit card, you can get a ride-hailing or "rideshare" app like Uber or Lyft. These apps allow you to hail your own ride or share a ride with someone else. They can take you on short trips within your city. These services work like taxis, but the drivers use their own cars. Before you ride, read these tips on how to be safe: tinyurl.com/ubersafetytips . Prices can vary widely between apps and at different times of day.

You can still use taxis in all major cities. They usually cost more than ride-hailing apps.

Biking

Biking is a good way to save money and get exercise. In some cities, you can rent bikes, but this often requires using a smartphone app or possibly a website. You can also look for stores that sell used bikes. If you bike, make sure you know the rules of the road. Usually, bicycles follow the same rules as cars. They have to stop at stop signs and stop lights. You must use hand signals to turn or switch lanes. And you must yield to

pedestrians. **Wear a helmet to avoid head injuries.** Below are some resources on biking:

- Rent bikes to use in Chicago at divvybikes.com .
- For more information on safe riding, visit bikepgh.org/ride-safe or bicyclesafe.com .
- Google Maps provides bike routes as well as routes for walking, driving, and using public transportation. Just type in your destination and touch the bike icon to get directions for how to travel by bike.

Carpool, Rideshare, and Carshare Programs

Another option for saving money is to carpool. You can look up carpool programs online (see pacerideshare.com) to carpool with strangers. Or you can ask someone you know if you can carpool and share the cost of gas.

If you don't need a car very often, consider joining a carsharing program like Zipcar. Zipcar lets you reserve a car when you need it. You won't have to pay for insurance, repairs, or any of the things that make owning a car so expensive.



Buying a Car

If you do buy a car, make sure to consider the bills you will need to pay every month. The down payment is just the beginning. A few tips:

1. **Budget**
   If you are taking out a loan to buy a car, make a budget. Decide how much you can spend on monthly payments. See the Finances, Credit, and Taxes chapter (on p. 113) for more information.
2. **Research**
   Do some research on the types of cars that will meet your needs. Think about what will be safe and reliable. Edmunds.com and Consumerreports.org are great places to start. You can look at how much the cars are worth by going to Kelley's Blue Book (kbb.com).
3. **Buy from a place you can trust**
   Don't go to car dealerships that say they sell to people with bad credit. Be suspicious of companies or people who push you into buying a vehicle before you are ready. Buying directly from a person can be cheaper, but it is also riskier than buying from a trustworthy dealer.
4. **Check out the history**
   Once you've found a car you like, ask the dealer if you can see its history report. Ask for the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). You can check a car's history online at websites like autotrader.com or Carfax, at carfax.com/vehicle-history-reports .
5. **Mechanic**
   If you are buying from a dealer, make sure that the car passes a mechanical inspection. If you are buying from a person, ask a mechanic to look at it before you buy it.
6. **Negotiate the price**
   Check prices on cars like the one you want to buy, and go to more than one place to compare cars. This can help you negotiate a good deal.
7. **Read the fine print**
   Understand the contract before you sign anything. Remember, what counts is what is in the contract, not what the salesperson promised. Make sure that you fill out all the paperwork you need, especially if you are buying from an individual owner.
8. **Title and registration**
   If you're buying a used car, make sure to get the title before you give them any money. Make sure that the title is signed and dated by the seller. Once the car is yours, you will need to get it registered (see the **Car Registration** section below).

For more on how to buy a used car in Illinois, call the Secretary of State's Vehicle Services Department at (800) 252-8980 or read their guidelines here: tinyurl.com/IL-car-sales-guide .



Driving Legally

Car Insurance

You must have car insurance and a driver's license (see the Getting Your ID chapter on p. 34) to drive in Illinois. If you are pulled over and you don't have insurance, you may have to pay a fine. You can also get charged.

When you have car insurance, you pay a monthly fee (sometimes called a premium), and then the insurance covers some of the costs if you get in an accident. In Illinois, you must buy an insurance plan that has these two things:

- **Liability insurance:** This covers the costs if you cause an accident.
- **Uninsured and underinsured motorist insurance:** This covers costs for you and your passengers if you get in an accident with someone who doesn't have insurance, or not enough insurance.

Some insurance plans cover most or all the costs if you are in an accident. Some do not. Some have different costs if you caused the accident or if someone else did. If you get in an accident, you may have to pay more money each month for insurance.

Buying car insurance can be confusing. Here are a few tips:

- Talk to an agent by phone or in person. Don't sign up online.
- Find out what the maximum amount of coverage is for the plan. This is the amount they will pay if you hit a car. You would have to pay anything beyond this amount.
- Compare insurance prices on the Illinois DMV website at dmv.org/il-illinois/car-insurance.php .

Car Registration

In Illinois, you must register your car. You will have to renew this registration every year, for a fee. If you don't register your car or renew your registration, you can get a big ticket.

There are a few ways to register:

- Online at cyberdriveillinois.com
- In person at the DMV. Go to www.dmv.org/dmv-office-finder.php to find your local DMV office, then go to www.dmv.org/car-registration.php to find what to bring with you to the DMV
- With a car dealer. Car dealers may complete the registration paperwork for you when you buy your car.

Car Inspection

In Illinois, your car may also need to get inspected for emissions and safety every two years. If you get your car inspected and it does not pass, you will need to fix its problems before getting it inspected again. Not all cars need to be inspected. To find out if your car needs inspections, go to ilsos.gov/regstatus and type in your vehicle VIN (Vehicle Identification Number).

Rules of the Road

Be safe when you drive. We care about you! Don't drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Don't text or use your phone while driving. Wear your seatbelt; it reduces your chance of death in the event of a serious accident by 50 percent!

Police Interactions

Whether or not you were following the rules, you may get pulled over. Black and brown drivers who are doing little wrong get pulled over more often than other drivers doing the same thing. This can be stressful and scary, and it might make you feel angry. You can reduce your risk by staying calm (see the Mindfulness chapter on p. 143) and knowing your rights. Take a breath and stay in control of your actions.

Here are some tips to help you stay safe:

- Keep your hands in view at all times.
- Remember your rights and the rules of your parole.
- Ask what you have been stopped for, do not assume. It is your right to know why you are being stopped.
- Do not argue with officers.
- Do not confess to any crimes.
- Do not give permission to be searched.
- Have someone record the interaction, or, if it's safe, record it yourself.

The ACLU has written a guide on how to respond when you've been stopped by the police. Read it here: www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/stopped-by-police .

☆ If you were incarcerated in Illinois, the Offender 360 database will follow you during your MSR. It is updated for every police interaction, even if you've done nothing wrong and received no citation. Report all police interactions to your parole officer. They will find out anyway, and it's best they find out from you.

Reflect

1. What are my transportation needs? What are my transportation options?

2. What transportation options are new to me, and how can I learn more about these options?

3. What do I need to do to prepare to get a car? What will I need to do after my purchase?

Technology



Technology has changed a lot in the last few years. If you've been inside a long time, you might feel stressed by all the new technology. Don't worry! You'll be able to figure it out.

You will need phones and computers for a lot of things after you leave prison. You will use them for work, banking, communicating, making appointments, meeting with parole officers, ordering pizza, watching TV shows, paying bills, shopping, applying for jobs, and much more.

Ask your family and friends to help you learn how to use a cell phone, smartphone, or computer. Learning how to use them can be fun. Play around with games, news, and sports apps, or even watch cat videos! Playing can help you learn. Take your time and get used to the technology—soon it'll feel like second nature.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Getting a Phone
- Technology Basics
- Using the Internet
- Email, Passwords, and Security
- Smartphone Apps
- Social Media
- Video Conferencing
- Digital Literacy Resources

Getting a Phone

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

- **Landlines** (or landline phones) are phones connected to people's homes or businesses. They can't move around. Fewer people are using landline phones these days, but they are still one of the cheapest kinds.
- **Basic cell phones** let you call people and send text messages. They are cheaper than smartphones and easy to use.
- **Smartphones** can make calls and send text messages, and you can use them to get on the internet. Smartphones have programs (called "apps") that can do things like play music, give driving directions, check the weather, take pictures, and go on social networks like LinkedIn and Facebook. A smartphone can help you find jobs, look up services, find your way around, and more.

Lifeline and SafeLink

Do you have Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, or Public Housing Assistance? If you do, you should be able to get a free or discounted phone or internet service. **SafeLink** will provide you with each of these for free:

- **Smartphone**
- **SIM card**. New smart phones come with their own SIM cards. A SIM card is a small memory card that goes into the phone and lets it connect to a mobile network.
- **Phone plan**. A phone plan lets you text, make calls, and use data (get online information and use websites).

Lifeline is a program that works with SafeLink to lower the monthly cost of phone and internet. Lifeline can be used for phone or internet, but not both.

How to apply

When you apply for public benefits (such as SNAP or Medicaid; see Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs, (p. 45), ask if you can apply for SafeLink and Lifeline as well. If you are eligible, apply online at safelinkwireless.com . You can also get help by calling (800) 723-3546. You can apply for Lifeline at www.lifelinesupport.org . To apply for these services, you will need your contact info, mailing/home address, and Social Security number. You will also need proof that you meet the income requirements. These services are typically limited to one person per household.

Phone Services and Plans

What if you need to buy your own phone? MetroPCS and Family Mobile (Walmart) make good phones. They aren't the best, but they won't be too expensive. If you had a cellphone before you were incarcerated, ask your family if they still have the phone. It might still work. You may want to use it again or change the number. Contact the phone service provider for help with this.

Cell phones come with service plans that you have to pay every month. You have two basic options for service plans:

- **Prepaid phone plans** or **no-contract plans.** You pay at the start of each month. You can stop your service at the end of each month or switch to a different service. Tracfone is a popular no-contract phone option.
- **Post-paid phone plan with a contract.** You enter a contract to pay a monthly fee for service. They add up your costs at the end of each billing cycle and charge you. These plans can cost less each month than prepaid phone plans, but make sure you understand the commitments you are agreeing to in your contract.

Phone plans have different options. Generally, the services will cover the following:

- **Talk:** How many minutes you can talk on the phone each month. Many plans these days have unlimited talk time.
- **Text:** How many text messages you can send each month. Many plans these days have unlimited text.
- **Data:** Data lets you use your phone to go on the internet when you don't have access to Wi-Fi (see Technology Basics below). If you only need a phone for calls and texts, you may not need to purchase a data plan. You can use the internet on your phone for free at the library and many other public places and restaurants that offer free Wi-Fi. If you do need data, start with a small amount, like 1 or 2 GB, and use your data carefully. You can always get more if you need it.

Phone service companies like T-Mobile and MetroPCS have different plans and rates. Some offer deals for sharing a cell phone plan with family members. Think about what you will use your phone for and how much you can afford to spend on it.



Technology Basics

Here are some technology basics to help you get started:

- **Internet:** A network that connects computers and phones all over the world. Through an internet connection, people can share information, access resources, and communicate. Sometimes people call the internet the World Wide Web, or they will say, "you need Web access," which means you need to be able to connect to the internet.
- **Online:** When you "are online" or "go online" you are using technology that is connected to the internet. People might say, "Go online to access this resource." This means that you can access the resource over the internet using a computer or smartphone.
- **Smartphone:** A phone that does a lot of the things a computer can do. It usually has a touchscreen surface and internet access, and it lets you download apps (short for applications). Apps let smartphones do more things. They help with work, entertainment, money, weather forecasts, and much more. Most people these days have a smartphone.
- **Wi-Fi:** To access the internet, you need to be connected to it. One way to do that is through Wi-Fi access. Wi-Fi access allows you to connect to the internet without using wires. You can access Wi-Fi for free at public libraries and some restaurants (McDonald's, Starbucks), or you can buy and install Wi-Fi access for your home.
- **Mobile Hotspots:** Some public libraries will have Wi-Fi "hotspots" for you to check out. These are portable devices that you can take anywhere. They will allow you to have internet access outside of the library.
- **Data:** Another way to connect to the internet is through a smartphone data plan. Data allows you to connect to the internet on your smartphone if you are in a place that doesn't have Wi-Fi. Data plans can be expensive, and they usually have limits to how much data you can use every month.
- **Web browser:** A web browser is a program that allows you to access the internet on your phone or computer. Examples of web browsers are Google Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari.
- **Website:** All types of people and organizations have "websites" where you can find information, resources, entertainment, and more. There are millions of websites on the internet.

- **Web address** or **URL:** This is a website's "address" or location on the internet. Type this address (also called a URL) into a web browser's address bar to see the website. We have included the URLs for many websites in this guide and in the directory. Web addresses usually look like this: http://example.com. When you type in a web address, you can leave out the *http://* and the *www*.



Using the Internet

Make sure you have a way to get on the internet when you need to. Until you have your own device, you can borrow one from a friend or family member or use a computer at the public library.

Do you have a smartphone, laptop, or tablet? Free wireless internet is available at the library, as well as many restaurants, coffee shops, hotel lobbies, chain technology stores, and even parks! You may have to ask what the password is before you can log on with your device.

There are also options for affordable internet plans and computers:

- EveryoneOn.org allows you to input your zip code and find low-cost internet service and computer offers.
- PCsforPeople.org and Compudopt.org provide free computers to eligible individuals.

Most people find what they need on the internet by using a search engine. When you start your web browser, the first page it opens will usually have a search box where you can type in what you are looking for. Here are some tips for good searches:

- Start with a simple search like "Where's the closest Amtrak?" or "Pizza in Chicago." You can always add more words if you need.
- Search engines understand complete sentences, but they do not require them. Searching for "Who can apply for SNAP benefits in Ohio?" will get similar results to searching for "SNAP eligibility Ohio."
- Don't worry about the little things. Even if you spell words wrong, your search should still work.

Reader Beware: *Not everything you find online can be trusted.* Anyone can create a website, and not everything online is true. Some websites are more reliable than others. It's important not to believe everything you read or watch. It's also important not to spread information that isn't trustworthy.

- **Search engine:** A search engine is what you use when you are trying to find information on the internet. First, you will open a web browser. You should see a bar at the top with a little magnifying glass. If you type a question, the name of a website, or a web address into the bar, a search engine will try to find the information you need. Google, Yahoo, and Bing are examples of search engines.

In recent years, a new kind of technology (generative artificial intelligence or generative AI) has made it even harder to tell what's real and what's not. Some tools can now create fake news articles, realistic-looking photos, videos, or audio clips of people saying things they never actually said. These can be used to trick or manipulate people. Just because something *looks* or *sounds* real doesn't mean it is.

Here are some questions that can help you figure out if information is trustworthy:

- What is the intention of the website you're on? Does it have an agenda, or is it just educational? Is it trying to sell you a product?
- If the website does seem to be influenced by its author's opinions, it may be biased. If it seems biased, is the bias upfront or hidden? Are they honestly trying to persuade you to believe something, or are they being manipulative and sneaky?
- Is the information up-to-date and accurate? Can you find other sources that confirm it?
- Who wrote it? What makes them someone you would trust and believe? Who do they work for? Do they have a background that makes them a good source of information on the topic you're reading about?
- Does the website leave out any important viewpoints?
- Could the content you're looking at- especially videos, images, or audio- have been generated by AI?

Use questions like these to evaluate what you read on the internet **before** you share what you've read. These skills are sometimes called "information literacy." To learn more, visit Georgetown University's guide to evaluating internet content at tinyurl.com/Is-it-trustworthy or the Justice Institute of British Columbia's guide on evaluating AI generated content at tinyurl.com/is-it-ai1.



Email, Passwords, and Security

You will need your own email address. Email is now used more than paper mail. One way to do this is through Gmail, because Gmail accounts are free. Type gmail.com into the web browser and click "Create account."

You will select your own email username. It should be something easy for you to remember, like your own name, or some combination of your name, initials, and numbers. You will probably use your email to apply for jobs, so make sure your email address sounds professional.

Your password should be something easy for you to remember, but hard for other people to figure out. The best passwords use capital letters (ABCD), small letters (abcd), numbers (1234), and symbols (#@!%).

You will probably use the internet to set up accounts for things like paying bills or accessing files for school or work. Protect your information by keeping your passwords secret and changing them every so often. Don't use the same password for every account you have. If you forget a password, you can usually change it by following instructions on the website. If you had email and other online accounts before you were incarcerated, you may want to reactivate them or close them. Change the passwords to keep everything safe.

☆ If possible, do not give sensitive personal information (like your Social Security number or credit card information) to a website when you are using a public computer or public Wi-Fi that you can access without a password.



Smartphone Apps

Most smartphones come with these basic apps:

- Text messaging
- Telephone
- Camera
- Clock
- Web browser (for example, Safari or Chrome)
- Calendar
- Calculator
- Address book (sometimes called "contacts")
- A map service that can give directions

You can get (or "download") more apps for your phone. They can be found in your phone's "store" (through an app called App Store or Play Store on most phones). Many useful apps are free. You will need to have either data or a Wi-Fi connection to download apps. If an app costs money, your phone should give you the option to enter your credit or debit card information and will ask you to confirm the purchase before downloading.

Here are some apps you may want to use:

- Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp are text or video messaging apps where you can communicate with family and friends. You can also talk to people in different countries without paying an extra fee.
- Facebook and Instagram let you share and view photos and comments.
- Spotify lets you listen to music.
- Banking apps help you manage your money and pay bills.
- Google Maps, Citymapper, and other transportation apps can help you use public transportation or find your way around.
- Many parole officers use the BI SmartLink® App. This app lets your parole officer connect with you without having to come to your house.

Be careful with apps. Use careful judgment about what you'd like to keep private. Most apps are connected to the internet. Be aware that apps can use up your phone data.



Social Media

Many people stay in touch with others and get news through social media. Social media websites and apps allow people to talk and share photos. Some social media sites are used mostly for friends and family while others are used for jobs. Here are two popular social media platforms:

- **Facebook** is a popular social media website and app that people use to share photos, updates, and news. It helps people stay in touch with family and friends; others use it for work. You can comment publicly on posts created by others or message users individually. Two other popular social media apps are **Instagram** and **TikTok**. Instagram is mostly about sharing pictures and short "reels," or videos. TikTok

is all about sharing videos, it's a fun and easy way to express yourself and build a community.
- **LinkedIn** is a social network created for finding jobs. You can use it to talk with employers and share your resume. To create an account, download the app or type www.linkedin.com into your web browser, and then click "Join Now." Search "How to Create a LinkedIn Account Wikihow" to learn more.

Staying Safe on Social Media

Be careful when sharing information on any social media app. You can change the privacy settings so that only your friends see your posts, but public posts can be accessed by parole officers, employers, and anyone else. If you're new to these apps, it's hard to know what will be public and what will be private. Also, be aware of online scam artists, who use social media to trick people into giving them money.

And remember that the information that you see on social media may not be trustworthy. It's a good idea to check with other sources. See the **Reader Beware** section above to learn more about evaluating the sources of your information, and try not to share anything that you think might be untrue.

Video Conferencing

Many people use video conferencing to talk to family, friends, and co-workers. With video conferencing, you can talk to multiple people at the same time and see people's faces. Video conferencing apps can be a great way to stay connected to family members and friends. Lots of meetings these days aren't in person; instead, they use video conferencing. Many job interviews also use video conferencing. You will need to set up an account with the platform (Zoom, Skype, etc.) before the interview.

Common video conferencing options include Facetime, Google Meets, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, Skype, and Zoom. If you have a computer or phone, you can download these apps for their video conferencing. Most are free.

In most cases, you will be a guest in a video conferencing meeting. This means you will get an invitation in your email with a link that says "Click to Join." When the webpage opens in your web browser, you may join via the app or your web browser. There may also be an option to call in with your phone.

Setting up and Using Zoom

Zoom is probably the most popular video conferencing platform in use today.

What you need:

- An active email (Gmail, AOL, Yahoo, etc.).
- A computer or electronic device with an internet connection.

How to create a Free Zoom account:

- Go to zoom.us/freesignup/ .
- Enter your email and follow the prompts.
- Be sure to use your legal name.
- Create a password that you will remember.

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



Zoom Controls

Common Zoom features:

1. **Mute/Unmute:** Use this to control your microphone.
2. **Start/Stop Video:** Use this to control your camera.
3. **Invite:** People hosting video conferences, like interviewers or meeting leaders, use this feature to invite new people to join.
4. **Participants:** This shows you who is in the call with you.
5. **Share screen:** This allows you to share your computer screen with other participants if needed.
6. **Chat:** Used to send messages to others in the call.

Video conferencing etiquette tips:

- During an interview, it's best to mute your microphone when you're not speaking. Do the same if you're in a big group, so the whole group doesn't hear any background noise.
- Be aware of your appearance and background. If you do not want people to see you, you can turn your camera off by clicking the camera icon.
- If you want people to see you but not your living space, you can use a "virtual background."
- For job interviews, it's important to have your camera on, your lighting good, and your background clear of distractions.



I need assistance with the most basic things. That does make me somewhat defensive, and I'll end up trying to do things on my own and then I crash and burn.

—Pablo

Digital Literacy Resources

Learning technology is a lot like learning a new language, but there are many free learning resources:

- **Techboomers.com** is a free website that teaches people basic computer skills to help them improve their quality of life. You can learn about helpful websites, social media, online shopping, and technology basics.
- **Netliteracy.org** has resources and training on everything from basic email and social media to artificial intelligence.
- Mentioned above, **Northstar**, at digitalliteracyassessment.org , will test your skills and help you learn more.

Getting Help

- Ask a librarian to help you figure out the basics. They are there to help.
- Go to **Northstar** at digitalliteracyassessment.org to test your skills and learn more. Take classes in person or online. They offer certificates for skills you have mastered.
- **GCF Global** has a lot of free courses on how to use technology. Type this address in your search engine and click on a topic: edu.gcfglobal.org/en/topics .
- **Wikihow** also has lots of resources to help you figure out how to use technology. Type "wikihow" in your web browser, and then enter your question in the search box at the top of the page.
- Many community colleges, libraries, and adult basic education programs offer lessons on everything from basic word processing to programming code.



Reflect

1. **After my reentry,** what will I need to use technology for? What will I want to use technology for?
2. What technologies do I know how to use?
3. What will I need help with?
4. Can my friends and family help me learn? Where else can I go for help?

Legal Matters



After you are released, there may be times when you need to go to court or get legal help. For example, you might want to get your record sealed so you can get a better job. Maybe you want to get back custody of a child.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Getting Legal Help
- Child Custody
- Child Support
- Fees and Fines
- Expunging or Sealing Records
- Certificates of Rehabilitation
- Executive Clemency
- The Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity-Today Act (SAFE-T Act)

☆ Please note that we are not lawyers and do not provide legal advice. This chapter will help you understand your legal options, but it just covers the basics. Ask a lawyer if you need more help. There is a Legal Resources directory (on p. 185) in the back of this book.

Getting Legal Help

Pro bono. Figuring out the courts can be frustrating. It is best to get the help of a lawyer. Lawyers understand the rules and know how local judges and courtrooms work. Lawyers are often expensive, but there are lawyers who will work on your case for free (pro bono). These services are available through legal aid programs. See our Legal Resources directory (on p. 185) for a list of legal aid programs. Begin your search for a legal aid office near you here: lawhelp.org . The Justice Department offers this list of pro bono help for immigration issues: justice.gov/eoir/list-pro-bono-legal-service-providers .

Pro se. Some legal matters, like sealing criminal records and small claims, do not require a lot of legal expertise. In cases like these, you might choose to go to court without a lawyer and represent yourself. This is called pro se representation. Although it is often cheaper, it is almost always better to hire a lawyer or find one who will work for free.

If you decide to file pro se, most counties offer **pro se help desks**. The service is free. There are workers who can help you with pro se forms, courthouse directions, and legal consultations. Call your county's circuit clerk's office for information. For Cook County help desks, see this website: tinyurl.com/peoplewithoutlawyers .

☆ **Need Legal Help While Still in Prison?** The Illinois Prison Project (53 W Jackson #452, Chicago, IL, 60604) publishes resources on commutation, sentencing credit, medical release, pardons, and more. The Uptown People's Law Center (4413 N Sheridan Rd, Chicago, IL 60640) publishes legal resources for people in prison. Their publications explain how to file lawsuits or grievances from within prison, and they cover topics like excessive force and your rights to out-of-cell time. Write directly to these organizations to request copies of their publications.

Child Custody

Custody in Illinois has two parts:

- **Parental responsibilities**: If you have parental responsibilities, it means you can make choices about your child's future, like where they go to school.
- **Parenting time**: If you have parenting time, it means you can spend time with your child. The court will decide how much time you can spend together. Even if you don't have parental responsibilities, you can still have a good amount of parenting time.

Custody can be complicated. If you had a custody

order put in place while you were inside, and you want to challenge the custody order, you may want to hire a lawyer to help you. If you choose not to have a lawyer, you will need to file a petition to modify custody. Petitions can be found online or by visiting your county's circuit clerk's office. There will usually be a fee. Once you have filed your petition and the court has read it, the court should set a date for a hearing to consider changing custody.

Foster Care and Reinstating Parental Rights

What if your child is in foster care or with a relative? What if your parental rights have been terminated? You may still be able to get your rights restored. The first step is understanding how the process works. The second step is understanding where you are in your own case.

After your case has started, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) may remove your child from your home. If this happens, DCFS will try to place your child with family members, or people who serve as family members. DCFS may not know of all your family members, so tell them if there is someone who can help they don't know about.

If your child is taken by DCFS, your child will be assigned a caseworker whose job it is to protect their best interests. You will also need a lawyer. Let the judge in your case know if you can't afford a lawyer. The judge will assign one to you.

DCFS has to try to help you get your child back. They will give you a list of things you need to do for your child to come home. This list may include:

- Parenting classes
- Counseling
- Continuing education
- Anger management
- Drug or alcohol classes
- Minor changes to your home

For the safety of your child, you will have to show the judge and DCFS that you are making "reasonable progress" to finish everything on the list.

It is very difficult to show you are making reasonable progress while incarcerated, but it is not impossible. It is important to try to do the things on your DCFS list as well as you can. Try to keep records of this for your lawyer.

Once you leave prison, you can work to finish your list. If DCFS doesn't see you making reasonable progress, they should try to identify any barriers and encourage you to look for ways to solve the problem. They should also see what they can do to help you solve the problem. Finally, DCFS will decide if you are making reasonable efforts to comply, and a judge will say whether you get your child back.

If your child is out of your care for 15 months out of a 22-month period, the judge can terminate your parental rights. This means you would not be your child's legal parent anymore. The 15 months starts when your DCFS case begins. That's why it's important to always keep track of your case and the timeline.

If you no longer have parental rights, it is possible to get them back. But it may be hard. You can file something called a motion to reinstate your rights. You can hire a lawyer to do this or do it yourself. In order to ask for your rights back, a few things have to happen:

1. At least three years must have passed between the termination of your rights and your asking to get them back.
2. Your oldest child must be at least 13. They must show they understand what a successful reinstatement would mean and that they want it to happen.
3. You must show clear and convincing evidence that reinstatement is in the child's best interest.
4. If the court previously denied a motion to reinstate your parental rights, you must show a "substantial change in circumstances" since you lost your rights. Leaving prison and having a steady job and place to live can show a judge that your child should return home with you.

Child Support

If you don't live with your child, you may need to pay child support. Child support is money that you pay to the person who is taking care of your child. Child support lasts until children turn 18, or 19 if they are still in high school. You will pay a certain amount of your income in child support. The amount you pay depends on many things, including how many children you have. A judge

may order you to pay for other things too, like healthcare, child-care, or school costs. The Illinois Child Support Estimator may help you know what to expect: tinyurl.com/child-care-estimator .

Reducing Payments

If you owe child support, it is very important to pay it. If you don't, your child might suffer, and you might have money taken out of your paycheck. Other consequences include contempt of court charges, driver's license suspension, and criminal conviction (which could violate your MSR). You may be able to get your payments lowered if you

- Are suddenly making less money
- Are incarcerated
- Have large healthcare costs

If one of these things happens to you, you need to let the court know as soon as you can. You'll need to file a petition with the court. You can hire a lawyer to do this or do it yourself. Once you file the petition, you'll probably need to go to court to talk about your case.

Getting Payments You Are Owed

Are you getting child support? You can ask for more child support from your child's other parent if that parent is making a lot more money or your childcare expenses have gone up. Changes in childcare expenses might include

- Medical bills for the child
- New education expenses
- A big change in your household's cost of living

If you are not getting the child support payments you believe you are owed, contact the Illinois' Department of Healthcare and Family Services' Division of Child Support Services by calling (800) 447-4278 or by visiting their website: tinyurl.com/illinoischildsupport .

Fees and Fines

There are many different legal fees and fines you may have to pay:

- Traffic tickets
- DUI fees
- Payments to the victims of the crime you were convicted of
- Other fines related to the crime
- Fines and debt for failing to pay child support
- Parole or probation fines, such as fees for anger management or parenting classes and fees for any required registration

Even small fees can make it hard to get back on your feet.

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

It's important to plan for how you will pay these fees or fines. Not paying your fees or fines can get you in more trouble. Sometimes people are returned to jail for not paying fees, especially if they "willfully" do not pay them.

Sometimes fees have a high interest rate, meaning the amount you owe will get larger and larger the longer you wait to pay. You should pay off fees with a high interest rate as soon as you can.

But there is good news. There are programs that can help you with your fees. Here are a few we are aware of:

Waivers for court fees

In Illinois, there is a state waiver program for court costs for people who earn up to 400% of the federal poverty level. You can apply for this waiver to get rid of some or all of your court fees, but it will not work for fines or traffic offenses. You can find more detailed information here: tinyurl.com/Waiver-overview .

Expunging or Sealing Records

Sealing your record means your record will be hidden from most people. Law enforcement agencies and employers who are required to do background checks will still see it, but it will be hidden from most employers and other people (like landlords). This could make it easier to find a job. You can try to get your record sealed once you have been off MSR for two to three years, depending on the charge.

Sometimes it is also possible to get a record expunged. An expunged record is erased. This means nobody can see it anymore. This usually only happens if your charges were dismissed, you were acquitted, or you were sentenced to court supervision or certain types of probation. All crimes can be sealed except these:

- DUIs
- Reckless driving
- Crimes involving animal abuse
- Sex offenses (Misdemeanors, public indecency, and prostitution can be sealed.)
- Domestic battery
- Violations of orders of protection

To begin the process of sealing your criminal record, submit a petition to seal. You can get a petition at your county's circuit clerk's office. This form can also be found online at tinyurl.com/expungementinformation .

Once you have filled out the form, submit it to the circuit clerk's office of the county where you live. There is a fee for filing these petitions (but see Waivers for court fees, above).

The judge will decide if your record gets sealed. It won't happen right away. In many Illinois counties, they hold events called "expungement fairs" at least once every year. Volunteer lawyers at these fairs can help you learn more about expungement and sealing. Check the website of your county's circuit clerk's office to see if they hold fairs like these. Sometimes they ask you to sign up for the fair ahead of time. The Safer Foundation in Chicago offers support to seal records. Contact them at (312) 922-2200.

Information on Expungement: The Office of the State Appellate Defender provides information about sealing, expungement, and other forms of criminal records relief. Access their website at osad.illinois.gov/expungement.html or call the Expungement and Sealing Unit at (866) 787-1776.

To fill out this petition, you will complete a full criminal history. You will need to gather the following information for each arrest on your record:

- The case number
- The date of your arrest
- The law enforcement agency that arrested you (city or state)
- The charges that were brought against you
- The final outcome (disposition) of each case, such as supervision or probation

The request form is here: tinyurl.com/Expungement-Request .

☆ **As of October 31st, 2025, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Clean Slate Act**. This legislation will **automatically** seal certain criminal records after a specified period of time depending on the offense and jurisdiction. To see if your record will be sealed automatically, visit this webpage: cleanslateillinois.org/access-records-relief.

Certificates of Rehabilitation

These are official documents that can restore rights you lost because of your conviction. Certificates of rehabilitation can allow you to apply for jobs that require licenses issued by the state. These jobs include work in child-care, education, and transit.

Everyone is eligible for a certificate of rehabilitation except those convicted of

- Arson or aggravated arson
- Kidnapping or aggravated kidnapping
- Aggravated DUI
- Aggravated domestic battery
- Any offense or attempted offense that subjects you to registration under the Sex Offender Registration Act, the Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Registration Act, or the Arsonist Registration Act

Illinois has two kinds of certificates of rehabilitation. The type of convictions you've had will determine which you should apply for:

A **certificate of relief from disabilities (CRD)**. You can request one of these after some time has passed after your sentence has ended. There is a waiting period of one year for misdemeanors and two years for felony convictions. This period begins after your MSR has

ended. A CRD can help you get a license in 27 areas that people with convictions usually can't work in.

A **certificate of good conduct (CGC)** does the same thing as a CRD, and it also allows you to run for public office. In the state of Illinois, there are at least 364 state laws that restrict occupational licensing for people with a criminal record. A CGC can help you get one of these jobs.

To receive a CRD or a CGC, you must file a petition with the circuit clerk of the county where you were convicted. You can hire a lawyer, or you can do it on your own. Doing it on your own will take more time and energy.

Petitions of rehabilitation are granted if you meet three things:

1. **Eligibility:** Your conviction is not one of the exceptions listed above.
2. **Rehabilitation:** Judges will look at a lot of information to decide if you are "rehabilitated." They look at how many times and how often you have been convicted, your job history, your schooling, if you went to substance abuse counseling (if your conviction is drug related), whether you do community service, and if you have done other positive things after getting out.
3. **No risk to public safety:** You can convince a judge that you are not a risk to public safety. This is only required for a CRD.

As part of your petition, you will need to give the court a full criminal history. For this, attach a local police RAP sheet, certified court dispositions, or an Illinois State Police Statewide Criminal History Transcript, if possible.

Letters of recommendation are also recommended. Letters should show that you are "rehabilitated and not a risk to public safety." These letters should come from people such as family members, counselors, clergy, or employers.

For more information on certificates of rehabilitation and other forms of relief, see the Office of the State Appellate Defender's website: tinyurl.com/certs-of-rehab .

If you need help getting a certificate of rehabilitation, contact a legal aid organization. Safer Foundation in Chicago may be able to help. (See also the Legal Resources directory on p. 185.)

Executive Clemency

You may also be able to ask the governor for executive clemency or a pardon. This is another way to remove the barriers in your way after incarceration. There are different types of executive clemency you can request, including a pardon, expungement, commutation of sentence, or reprieve. Many of the requirements are the same as outlined above in the "Sealing Records" section including the details of your conviction.

You will need to explain why you are seeking executive clemency, including opportunities that were denied to you because of your criminal record. You can also submit character-reference letters. Friends, family, former teachers, and employers would all make good letter writers. After you submit the petition, you can request a hearing in front of the Prisoner Review Board. These take place four times a year, in Chicago and Springfield.

Many people choose to hire a lawyer to represent them in this process. Illinois Legal Aid Online has more information about this process at tinyurl.com/filing-for-clemency .

Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity-Today Act (SAFE-T Act)

You may have heard about a new Illinois law called the Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity-Today Act (SAFE-T Act). This is a major criminal justice reform law that affects

- people who are currently incarcerated,
- people on electronic monitoring,
- people waiting for their trial, and
- how the police can interact with you.

Here's what this law means for people who are currently incarcerated:

- **More discretionary sentence credit.** The law allows IDOC to award more **Earned Discretionary Sentence Credit (EDSC)** based on good conduct. Eligibility may be based on participating in programs, improving your disciplinary history, and showing a commitment to rehabilitation. Eligibility will also

Sentence Categories. If you're still inside and want to understand how this law affects you, you need to know how your sentence is being served. There are four categories:

- **Day-for-Day:** If you are serving a day-for-day sentence, your projected release date will automatically move back one day for every day you serve. This is called statutory credit. This means you can serve just 50 percent of your sentence. **Statutory credit** can be taken away for tickets (disciplinary infractions). Your projected release date may already include your statutory credit.
- **75 Percent:** With this kind of sentence, you automatically earn 7.5 days of statutory credit per month. You can serve 75% of your sentence.
- **85 Percent:** With 85% sentences, you automatically earn 4.5 days of statutory credit per month.
- **100 Percent:** With this kind of sentence, you must serve your entire sentence.

Everyone falls into one of the four categories listed in the box on the previous page. Your category depends on the date and kind of conviction or convictions you have. These categories affect the ways you can get statutory credit. This is explained in the list above. They also affect how you can get Earned Discretionary Sentencing Credit (EDSC), and programming credit. EDSC and programming credit are explained below.

Figuring out which category you are in may be confusing, especially if you're serving concurrent or consecutive sentences. For help, request a copy of this guide from the Illinois Prison Project: tinyurl.com/EDSC-info .

depend on the category of sentence you're serving (see Sentence Categories above):

  - **Day-for-Day:** If you are in this category and you are serving a sentence of
    - less than five years, you can earn up to 180 days of EDSC;
    - five years or longer, you can earn up to 365 days of EDSC.
  - **75 Percent:** If you are in this category, you must serve 60% of your sentence. That is the only limit on how much EDSC you can earn. (But if you have been convicted of gunrunning, you must serve 75% of your sentence.)
  - **85 Percent:** If you are in this category, you must serve 85% of your sentence. Unfortunately, this means you may have enough statutory credit that you cannot earn any EDSC.
  - **100 Percent:** People in this category cannot earn EDSC.
- **More earned program sentence credit. Programming credit** is credit that you can earn against your release date for participating in a variety of programs, including some jobs, educational programs, and treatment programs. Different kinds of programs have different rules and will earn you different amounts of sentencing credit. Qualifying programs include:
  - Full-time substance abuse programs
  - Correctional-industry assignments
  - Educational programs
  - Work-release programs or activities
  - Behavior-modification programs
  - Life-skills courses
  - IDOC reentry planning
  - Adult-transitional programs

  If you participate in self-improvement programs, volunteer work, or other work assignments, you can earn up to half-a-day credit for each day you spend participating. **Getting your associate degree can earn you up to 120 days of credit. Getting your GED can earn up to 90 days**. To get your programming credit, the IDOC must see that you completed your program. To learn more about programming credits and how they work with the kind of sentence you have, request a copy of the Illinois Prison Project's guide to earned credits: tinyurl.com/EDSC-info .
- **Removed time limits on restoring earned sentence credit.** It's possible to lose some of your earned sentence credit, but, if you avoid disciplinary violations, you can request that IDOC restore your lost credit. The SAFE-T Act gets rid of the 30-day time limit on making that request. However, the approval of each request still depends on an IDOC review.
- **Better treatment of pregnant women, new mothers, and infants.** The SAFE-T Act improves conditions in a few ways:
  - It requires that prison staff get trained on working with pregnant women and their newborn children.

- If you're pregnant or have given birth in the past 30 days, the law protects you from getting segregated.
- The law also makes it so you can stay with your newborn for 72 hours after you give birth, and it grants you access to any necessary nutrition and hygiene products during that time.

What the law means for people on electronic monitoring:

- **Limits on electronic monitoring.** The law establishes guidelines for when electronic monitoring can be used. It requires that judges determine when electronic monitoring is necessary. They must reconsider this every 60 days.
- **More electronic home detention.** The SAFE-T Act allows IDOC to offer more people electronic home detention. You are now eligible if you were convicted of a Class 3 or 4 felony non-violent crime and have less than four months of your sentence left. The law also says that "home detention" can mean less than 24 hours per day, possibly without electronic monitoring.
- **More movement while on electronic monitoring.** The law allows people on electronic monitoring to earn sentence credit and move more freely to meet their needs. People on electronic monitoring must be allowed to participate in essential movement at least two days per week. This includes movement to take care of your basic needs, like going to buy groceries.
- **Limits on penalties for violations.** People on electronic monitoring can't be charged with felony escape unless they are in violation for more than 48 hours.

What the law means for people awaiting trial:

- **No money bond.** No one will be required to pay money to get out of jail while they await their trial.
- **Fewer arrests.** The law requires police to give people tickets for certain low-level offenses rather than arresting them.
- **Restrictions on pretrial detention.** The law limits when judges can order pretrial detention. Only people accused of certain crimes may be held in jail pretrial. Those accused of such crimes may be jailed only if a judge finds they pose a flight risk, or that they are a threat to someone else.
- **Release and detention decisions.** When making decisions about release, there are fewer factors to consider. Risk assessment tools can't be the only reason for jailing people before trial. Judges are required to review pretrial conditions or incarceration at each court date and decide if conditions can be made less restrictive.
- **More phone calls.** People in police custody can now make three phone calls within three hours at no cost. Calls with a lawyer cannot be recorded.
- **Reduced penalties for violations.** The law reduces penalties for violations of pretrial release conditions, like missing a court date or a misdemeanor arrest. These violations are now misdemeanors, not felonies, and they do not require jail time (unless the violation is possession of a firearm).
- **Fewer warrants for arrest when people miss court dates.** If someone misses court, judges can issue a notice to voluntarily appear in court within 48 hours, instead of issuing a warrant for arrest that forcefully brings people to court.

What the law means for police:

- **Limits on the use of force.** The law puts limits on when officers may use force.
- **Easier complaint process.** The law makes it easier to make anonymous complaints.
- **Better record keeping.** The law requires police misconduct records to be kept.
- **More training.** The law requires more police officer training.
- **Body cameras.** The law requires police to wear body cameras.



Finances, Credit, and Taxes



Thinking about money can be stressful. Take small steps toward managing your money, especially if you're doing it on your own for the first time. Having control over your finances will help you avoid money troubles in the long run. It will help you take control of your life and feel more secure about the future.

This chapter covers the following topics:

- Banking Basics
- Using Bank Cards for Purchases
- Budgeting and Financial Resources
- Avoiding Scams
- Credit
- Filing Taxes

Banking Basics

It's a good idea to open a bank account so that you have a safe place to put your money. A bank account also helps you avoid the fees that come with cashing checks and transferring money.

There are two basic types of bank accounts: checking and savings accounts. A **checking account** keeps your money safe. It also gives you easy access to your money so you can buy things and pay bills. When you open a checking account, you get checks and a debit card. You can use these to buy things, pay bills, or get cash from your account using ATMs. Some checking accounts have monthly fees while others do not, so make sure you ask about fees.

Once you have some money saved, it's a good idea to open a **savings account**. A savings account allows you to earn more interest on your money. This means that if you leave the money in your savings account, it grows over time (usually at a very slow pace). You cannot write checks from a savings account, but some savings accounts will allow you to access your money through an ATM.

There are many good reasons to have a bank account:

- Putting your paychecks in a bank account is cheaper than paying fees for check-cashing services.
- Some employers put your earnings directly in your account. This is called "direct deposit."
- If you have a debit card, you don't need to carry lots of cash. Your money is better protected against being lost or stolen.
- Many banks offer free access to online banking services, which you can use to keep track of your money, pay bills automatically, and transfer money between accounts.
- Smartphone apps like Venmo let you transfer and receive money without any fees. You can get Venmo on your phone and use it if you have a bank account.
- You can work with your bank to get car or mortgage loans, develop a retirement investment plan, and invest in stocks.

You don't have to be a US citizen or have a Social Security number to open a bank account. You can open an account using the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) assigned to you by the IRS, regardless of immigration status. Visit IRS.gov for more information about ITINs.

Choosing a Bank

Banks and credit unions offer different products to choose from, like checking and savings accounts, loans, rewards programs, and credit cards. Before choosing a bank, think about what you need. When you first go to the bank, ask to speak to someone who can help you understand their services and how they can meet your

needs. understand their services and how they can meet your needs.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Is the bank only local, or does it have ATMs and branches in other cities? If you plan to travel a lot, you may want to choose a bank that has many locations. Online banks are also an option.
- What fees does the bank have? Look out for overdraft fees (when you take out more money than you have), fees for closing accounts, fees for foreign transactions, and monthly maintenance fees.
- Does your employer, school, or community have a credit union? If so, you should consider it. Credit Unions usually have better in-person customer service, higher interest on savings accounts, and lower rates on loans. Unfortunately, they don't usually offer many online banking services, and they have fewer locations and ATMs.
- Do you have bad credit? Has a bank ever shut down your checking account? If so, banks might reject your account application. Don't worry, though, because some banks offer second-chance checking accounts. Call and ask smaller local banks and credit unions about their account policies. The Prior Banking History section of this chapter (below) has more information about this. Is your bank or credit union backed by the government? If it is, that means that if the bank closes or has other problems, your money is protected. Make sure your bank is a member of the FDIC or NCUA.
- Are you a veteran? If so, you qualify for a USAA account. USAA members and their families can often get good rates on loans. Visit usaa.com for more information.

To open a bank account, you will need:

- A valid government ID.
- A Social Security number (or Individual Taxpayer ID for non-US citizens).
- Money to make an initial deposit.

Banks may also require a second form of ID and/or proof of address, like a utility bill. Visit the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's detailed Checklist for Opening a Bank or Credit Union Account for more information: consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools .

Prior Banking History. When you apply for an account, the bank may pull a checking account report through a screening agency. This report shows history from the bank accounts you've had in the past, up to seven years. If your report shows certain high-risk behavior, like unpaid fees or fraud, your application may be denied.

If you are denied, you can take steps to address the problem, or find another bank or credit union that has a more flexible application process. Every bank is required to provide a notice of the reason for a denial. If your checking report is the cause, you can request a free copy. Every person is also allowed to pull their report for free at least once per year. Request yours either by phone (800) 428-9623, by visiting: chexsystems.com or downloading and mailing a request form to:

Chex Systems Inc., Attn: Consumer Relations
805 Hudson Road, Suite 100
Woodbury, MN 55125

If you have a negative banking history, "Second Chance Checking" may be a good option for you. Find a list of banks that offer second chance checking here: www.nerdwallet.com/article/banking/second-chance-checking.

Consumer Finance Protection Bureau Resources

The Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (CFPB) explains how all of these reports work (banking history, credit reports, criminal background checks, and more). It also has information on how you can request or dispute your reports: tinyurl.com/consumerreportingagencies .

The CFPB shows the pros and cons of the various ways to receive paychecks, based on your wants and needs. It compares prepaid cards, direct deposit, cashing checks, and more.

If you are uncomfortable when it comes to banking or if you have never had an account before, you might appreciate the CFPB's Guide to Selecting a Low Risk Account: tinyurl.com/lowerriskaccountinfo .



Using Bank Cards for Purchases

If you've been in prison for a long time, buying things at the store may be very different. Perhaps you carried around cash in the past or wrote paper checks. Most people these days use debit cards or credit cards rather than paying with cash or checks. Most stores no longer accept checks.

Here are some card options:

- With a **credit card**, you are borrowing money and will need to pay it back. We talk more about credit cards in the next section.
- **Debit cards** look just like credit cards but work differently. Most debit cards are linked to a checking account, and they only let you spend money that you already have in that account. Debit cards can be used wherever credit cards are accepted. You can also use your debit card to get cash from an ATM.
- With **prepaid debit cards**, you can load money onto the card when you get it. Then you use it to make purchases until the money runs out. Prepaid debit cards are often used by people who can't get a bank account. You might use one if you don't have your ID yet. Bluebird and Chime are prepaid debit cards with no monthly fee.
- Another option is **a secured credit card**, which is a kind of credit card for beginners. You can use it to establish a credit history. Most have no monthly fees, no interest, and you cannot overdraft. You can get one with a security deposit of at least $100–200. As you use it, you can improve your credit score. If you have a checking account, your bank or credit union may be able to help you set one up. If not, Chime Credit Builder card is one good option. If you have no or bad credit history, or you want to avoid running up a costly debt, this may be an option for you.
- **Gift cards** work like prepaid debit cards. Some cards—like a Visa Gift Card—can be used at any store, while other gift cards only work for specific stores.
- The **Link Card** is Illinois' electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card for food stamps and/or cash benefits. You can use these cards just like a debit card at stores that accept EBT. Most grocery stores, dollar stores, pharmacies, and gas stations accept Link Cards. To find out more about applying for a Link Card, see our Resources to Meet Your Basic Needs chapter (on p. 45).

For debit cards and Link Cards you will need to make a 4-digit PIN number, which is like a password. Before you use your card, make sure you have your PIN number set up. Usually, there is a phone number on the back of the card that you can call to set up the PIN number. Illinois's EBT customer service number is (800) 678-5465. When using a debit card or Link Card, make sure you know how much money you have. If you don't have enough money, your card may not work.

You may feel embarrassed if you don't know how to use a card. **Here's a brief guide (summarized from the Wiki-how website) about what to expect when you check out at a store.**

1. When you go to pay, there will likely be a card reader on the counter. Card readers look a little bit like calculators. They usually have a screen with instructions to follow.
2. The screen on the card reader may ask if you agree to pay the amount on the screen. You may have to press "enter" or "yes" to continue.
3. Next, the screen may ask you to swipe your card. Other times, the cashier will let you know when the machine is ready for you to swipe your card.
4. Some card readers will need you to swipe your card on the right side. Others will need you to stick your card into a slot and leave it there until it is approved. Don't worry if you don't get it right the first time. Lots of people have to swipe their cards a few times. Everyone needs to ask the cashier for help sometimes.
5. Card readers may ask you to "tap" your card. This means that you lay your card down on the chip reader instead of inserting or swiping it. This only works with some cards.
6. The card reader may ask whether you want to pay by "debit" or "credit." Hit the "debit" button if you are using a Link Card. If you hit debit, it may ask you to enter your 4-digit PIN number. Once the screen says "Approved," you should get a receipt. You can take your items and your receipt and leave.

7. Some debit cards allow you to get "cash back" with your purchase. This is like an ATM withdrawal. The card reader screen will ask if you want cash, and you will enter the dollar amount you would like. The cashier will then give you the cash. The amount will come out of your bank account with no additional fees charged.
8. If you are using a credit card, you may be asked to sign a paper receipt or sign the screen with a special pen that is attached to the card reader. Once you have finished signing and get your receipt, you should be ready to go.



Remember: It's OK to ask for help! Lots of people have problems using their cards. The cashiers are there to help you, and they are used to doing so.

Learn more about how to use a debit card here: wikihow.life/Use-a-Debit-Card
Learn about how to use an ATM here: wikihow.com/Use-an-ATM

The first time I went to the store by myself, I got up to the front of the line and didn't know how to pay for my groceries. I saw this contraption for a card that looked real complicated and didn't know how to use it. A long line of people were behind me and getting restless when I was just standing there looking dumbfounded. I didn't want to tell anyone I had been locked up and didn't know how to use a link or debit card. I was embarrassed and panicked!

—Michael

Budgeting and Financial Resources

One of the best things you can do to manage your money is to make a budget. Budgeting can help you know where your money is going so you do not spend more than you make. There are thousands of different budget forms you can download online for free. Budget apps for your phone allow you to track purchases as you make them. To make your own budget, add up how much money you make every month. Then, make a list of everything you spend money on in a month and compare the two numbers.

You can find information online about banks, credit unions, account options, and strategies for saving your money. Some financial planning websites let you ask an advisor a question and get an answer right away.

Below is a budget template for monitoring your monthly expenses. It is based on a monthly income of $2,600 (after taxes), you can adjust if you are making more or less. Expenses may vary from person to person. You may customize the plan to fit your personal needs or goals. Monitor your expenses month-to-month. Set aside some savings for a rainy day. Make a plan and try to stick to it.

☆ Typically, housing can account for 30% of your monthly income. Living in Chicago can be expensive, so finding a place in the suburbs or elsewhere in Illinois may be preferable.

My monthly income: $2600	
Expenses	**Monthly Cost**
Rent	$1000
Electric bill	$150
Water bill	$30
Groceries	$250
Child Support	$700
Savings deposit goal	$200
Cell phone bill	$75
Total expenses per month	$2,405 *(add all monthly costs)*
Leftover for other expenses	$2,600 - $2,405 = $195 *(monthly income minus total expenses)*

You can fill out the empty template below to begin your personal budgeting journey:

My monthly income:	
Expenses	**Monthly Cost**
Rent	
Electric bill	
Water bill	
Groceries	
Savings deposit goal	
Cell phone bill	
Other	
Total expenses per month	
Leftover for other expenses	

Here are some resources for help with money:

Free budgeting app	• ramseysolutions.com/ramseyplus/everydollar
Budgeting and understanding money	• thesimpledollar.com
Budgeting, banking, credit, financial planning, mortgages, and insurance	• nerdwallet.com
Budgeting, personal finance, credit, and more	• annuity.org • annuity.org/financial-literacy • annuity.org/annuities/types/income
Financial planning	• learnvest.com • mint.com
One-stop-shop finance education and advice	• Finance at Khan Academy: khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/core-finance • CNN's Money 101: money.cnn.com/pf/money-essentials • The Federal Financial Literacy and Education Commission's site: MyMoney.gov • For a longer (but older) list of popular financial-advice websites, visit businessinsider.com/best-websites-money-advice-2014-12

Disclaimer: Please remember that we are not telling you that you must use any of these websites or services. The resources listed here are suggestions. It is important to think on your own about any money advice.



Avoid Scams

You don't want to become a victim of a scam. Visit this website for a list of common scams and their warning signs: fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes .

Here are a few ways to avoid common scams:

- Be suspicious of emails or calls that offer you lots of money or "free gifts" if you pay a small fee. If the reward sounds too good to be true, avoid it.
- Beware of companies that try to push you into signing up for something immediately. Only sign up for services you understand. If you ask for more information and they become impatient or don't answer you, do not trust them.
- Only give personal information (such as account and Social Security numbers or your birthday) to companies you know to be trustworthy.
- Never pay for a letter of credit.
- "Phishing" scams use emails and texts that look official to get your personal or financial information. Learn how to identify and avoid them here: consumer.ftc.gov/articles/how-recognize-and-avoid-phishing-scams

There are always new scams to be aware of. In addition to the FBI site, the Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker (bbb.org/scamtracker) and the Federal Trade Commission (consumer.ftc.gov/scams) both have information on many of the latest scams. They also let you report if you've been a victim of a scam.



Credit

You may be considering getting a credit card so that you can buy things with credit. Buying on credit means that you buy things now and pay for them later. A bank or credit card company loans you the money, and you agree to repay them later. Usually, this means that you buy something with your credit card, and then you make monthly payments to the bank until the loan is repaid.

When you buy with credit, you must pay interest. Interest is a fee for borrowing the money. A loan's interest rate determines how much interest you will owe every month. High interest rates can be very expensive. Think hard before you get any credit card, and make sure not to sign up for too many. The more cards you have, the more payments you will have to make. Also, having too many credit cards will damage your credit score. A bad credit score will make banks want to charge you more interest. Credit card companies make money when people get deeper and deeper into debt. You do not want to be that customer!

A credit counselor at a nonprofit organization can give you good advice about getting a credit card. One example is credit.org, which offers free telephone counseling sessions.

Sometimes, credit cards can lead to a lot of trouble. If you buy too much with credit cards, it can be hard to make your monthly payments. A service like credit.org can help you figure things out if you get overwhelmed. To be safe, only buy with your credit card what you can pay for within a month. Be very careful: it is easy to slip into the bad habit of making purchases that you can't afford, which can lead to debt.

☆ Looking for a starter credit card but worried about debt or your credit history? Consider getting a **secured credit card**. See the description on p. 115.

It's different for major purchases, like a car, a house, or college tuition. In these cases, getting a loan makes sense. You may be unable to pay for a car all at once, but the cost becomes easier if you can spread it out over many months. Make sure to choose a car that is affordable, so that you can manage your monthly payments. Try to get a loan with an interest rate that is as low as possible. Again, be cautious and talk to a credit counselor before going into debt.

If you decide to get a credit card or buy something using credit, your bank will first look at your **credit score**. A credit score is a number that tells them whether they think you will repay a loan. If you have a good credit score, it will be easier to get loans and lower interest rates. If you were in debt before you went to prison, you will need to take steps to improve your credit score. Credit scores range from 300 (bad credit) to 850 (excellent credit).

Here are some guidelines for managing credit:

Get educated.
Being uninformed can lead to costly mistakes. For a good primer on your credit score, check out this website: consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/credit-reports-and-scores .

Be smart.
Avoid businesses (such as car dealerships and payday loan offices) that advertise directly to people with bad credit. They often have extremely high interest rates. Their business depends on your failure to pay your debts on time. Do not support any company whose business model depends on your lack of money.

Be cautious.
Read the fine print carefully and understand the rules before you sign anything. Remember, what counts is what is in the contract, not what the salesperson promised.

Pay your debts.
If you've gotten behind on any of your debts—or have had debts fall into collections—pay them, or make a plan for starting to pay them. For information about managing debt, see this website: consumer.ftc.gov/articles/coping-debt .

Pay your bills on time.
Paying on time is a good habit and can improve your credit score. The easiest way to do that is by setting up an automatic payment with your bank on your bills' due dates. Marking the dates on a calendar is fine, too.

Use credit cards wisely.
If you choose to have a credit card, don't charge what you can't pay back at the end of the month. If you must borrow money with a credit card to pay your credit card bills, it's time to talk with a credit counselor.

Filing Taxes

Once you start earning money, you will have to pay federal and state taxes. You must file your taxes every year. The amount you pay depends on how much you make and who lives with you. Things like childcare, disability, and healthcare costs will also change how much you pay.

Taxes are taken out of your paycheck. When you file taxes, you let the government know how much you have earned and how much tax you have already paid. You can also tell them things like if you have children, disability, or healthcare costs. The government decides whether you have paid too much or too little in taxes. In many cases, you will find that you have paid too much, and you will get a tax refund. If you have paid too little, you have to pay the amount you owe. If you do not file your taxes, you won't receive a refund, you will have to pay a fee, and you may owe back taxes. Depending on the amount, this may result in a parole violation.

W-4 Form

When you start a new job, you are asked to fill out a W-4 form for the IRS. This form helps your employer know how much of your paycheck should be withheld for taxes. It is important to fill out this form so that you can arrange to pay taxes month by month. If you don't fill it out, you'll have to pay them all at once at the end of the year. To learn how to fill out a W-4 form, visit the following website: wikihow.com/Fill-Out-a-W-4 .

Filing taxes

Every year, you will need to file both federal and state taxes for the previous year by April 15. Many people choose to file their taxes in January so that they can get their tax refund sooner. To file taxes, you will need a W-2 form from your employer(s). Employers will usually give you W-2 forms in January.

Do you work as an independent contractor or freelancer for different businesses or people? You may not be on a business's payroll, but you still do work for them. This is called "non-employment income." Usually, if a business pays you $600 or more in non-employment income, they should send you a 1099 form. Unlike a W-2 form, which reports the wages you have earned from an employer, the 1099 form records your "non-employment" income. Keep good track of the 1099 forms you get. If you haven't received a 1099, contact the employer or payer to request one. Whether you receive all of your 1099 forms or not, you must report any non-employment income when you file your taxes.

Next, you will need to decide which type of tax return to complete. Some of the more common forms are:

- Form 1040 (US Individual Income Tax Return)
- Form 1040A (US Individual Income Tax Return)
- Form 1040EZ (Income Tax Return for Single and Joint Filers with No Dependents)
- Form 1040NR (US Nonresident Alien Income Tax Return)
- Form 1040NR-EZ (US Income Tax Return for Certain Nonresident Aliens with No Dependents)

Because filing taxes can be confusing, many people get help from a tax professional called a certified public accountant, or CPA.

Simply bring your W-2s and any 1099 or other IRS forms to their office. For a fee, they will file your taxes for you. This means you won't have to worry about mistakes or spending a lot of time on your taxes. This is a good idea for people who have multiple jobs or other complicated tax situations. If you are looking for a CPA, ask someone you trust to recommend one.

There are also online websites that can help you file your taxes. These websites cost less than a tax professional. If you have a simple tax situation, you might want to use a website. The website will guide you through your return using a series of questions and automatic calculations. Remember to read all instructions and offers carefully. It should be free to file your federal tax return, but most online services charge to file your state tax return. Some of the most popular online tax-filing websites are:

- e-file.com
- turbotax.intuit.com
- freetaxusa.com
- hrblock.com
- taxact.com
- jacksonhewitt.com

Some places offer free tax help for people. See this government website to check if there is a program near you: tinyurl.com/freetaxreturnprep .



Voting

This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

In Illinois, you can vote if you are a US citizen aged 18 or older. While you lose your right to vote if you are convicted of a felony and are in prison or jail, you can vote once you are released. You can vote even if you are on parole, probation, mandatory supervised release, or electronic monitoring. You cannot vote. if you are released on furlough or living in an IDOC Adult Transition Center (ATC).

If you lost your right to vote because of a felony conviction, you must re-register to vote after release.

When you are released, IDOC should give you a "Civics in Prison" handout. It explains how to register to vote. If they did not give it to you or if you no longer have it, call the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights at (312) 630-9744 to get one.

Your vote matters. Fewer than two-thirds of the people in the US vote. This means that only a small number of people choose the leaders who make the laws that apply to all of us. Your vote can make a difference, especially at the local and state levels.

US federal elections (for US President, US Senators, and US House Representatives) happen every 2 or 4 years, on the first Tuesday in November. State and local elections can take place in any year, at any time. During any federal, state, or local elections, you may be voting for state leaders, county or state attorneys, local officials, and sometimes judges. There may be other important offices and issues on the ballot as well.

To vote, follow these three steps:



Step 1

Register to Vote.

This can sometimes be complicated. But please do not let that stop you! Volunteers at the non-partisan Election Protection hotline (866) 687-8683 [(866) OUR-VOTE] can help you for free. They work "to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to vote and have that vote count."

In Illinois, you need to show two forms of ID to register. Pick two:

- Illinois state ID or number
- Illinois driver's license or number
- Social Security card, or the last four numbers of your Social Security number
- Medicare or Medicaid card
- Birth certificate
- Mail that is addressed to you, at the address you wish to register under
- Credit or debit card in your name
- Military ID card
- Illinois vehicle registration or insurance card
- Illinois college or school ID
- Work ID
- LINK or public aid card
- Lease or mortgage in your name
- US passport or passcard

There are three ways you can register to vote.

- **Online:** ova.elections.il.gov .
- **Mail:** Go to elections.il.gov/Default.aspx then go to the tab that says "Information for Voters." Print out the form, fill it out, and mail it. A librarian can help you download or print the form.
- **Same day:** To register on election day, you must show two forms of ID. One of the IDs must show your current home address. People who are homeless or who recently moved can vote this way. Tell the poll workers that you wish to do "election-day registration."

After registering online or by mail, you should receive a voter card. It will have your name and will tell you where to vote, and when. If you don't receive this card or if you misplace it, contact the Illinois State Board of Elections online at elections.il.gov/Main/ContactUs.aspx , or via phone at (217) 782-4141, or (312) 814-6440. You can also call (866) 687-8683 [(866) OUR-VOTE].



Step 2

Learn About the Candidates and Issues.

This guide cannot tell you how to vote. But you can learn about candidates and issues by listening to the news, talking with people you trust, and looking up candidates and issues online. You can also find voter guides and ratings for judges online. To find a voter guide online, Google "voter guide," the name of your county or city, and the year of the election. Look carefully at who made the guide. Some guides aim to give unbiased information, while others represent the point of view of the organization that made it.



Step 3

Vote!

In Illinois, you are not required to show ID to vote. No one should ask you for an ID unless you are registering on election day. But it is a good idea to take your voter registration card and ID with you just in case. Normally, there are three ways that you can vote:

- In person on election day or during the early-voting period
- By mail-in ballot: Contact your election authority or call (866) 687-8683 [(866) OUR-VOTE] if you need help requesting a mail-in ballot.
- By provisional ballot, if there are serious problems at the voting location: Because these ballots are not counted unless voters come in later to verify their identity, this kind of voting is not the best option. Call (866) 687-8683 [(866) OUR-VOTE] if you run into this (or any) issue while voting.

You can bring notes, voter guides, and this voter information into the voting booth. It's a good idea to do this, because there can be a lot to remember.

Take your time. Do not let anyone rush you. If you need help, ask a poll worker. They cannot tell you who or what to vote for, but they can answer questions about the process. They can help you read and mark a ballot if you have difficulty reading or if your English is limited. You can also request a ballot in other languages.

For clear, accurate, and up-to-date information on voting rights in Illinois, visit the ACLU's Know Your Rights website: tinyurl.com/IL-voting-rights . If you run into any problems while voting, call (866) 687-8683 [(866) OUR-VOTE].

Veterans



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

If you served in the US military before you were locked up, there are special resources and opportunities available to you during your reentry. In this chapter, you can learn about the following benefits, services, opportunities, and resources:

- Benefits Before and After Your Release
- Filing Disability Claims
- Health
- Housing
- Employment
- Additional Resources

If you have questions we don't discuss here, or if you need help getting these VA (Veterans Affairs) benefits and services, you can speak to a VA representative by calling (800) 393-0865 or visit their website at veterans.illinois.gov . You can ask for their Reentry Specialist.

Benefits Before and After Your Release

Transferring Benefits to Your Family Before Release. In general, you will not be able to receive your VA pension while you are incarcerated. After you go to prison, you will still get your benefits for 60 days. After that time, you may still get the checks, but you will have to return the money to the VA.

If you have an injury or disability that is 80 to 100 percent related to your military service, you can receive 10 percent of your pension while incarcerated. You cannot receive any of your pension for injuries or disabilities that happened after your service. Veterans who are incarcerated can still get other benefits, including education, training, healthcare, insurance, and burial services.

While you are incarcerated, you can transfer your pension to your family (spouse, children, or parents who rely on you for money). They must have financial need to get the benefits. This is called "apportionment."

You or the person you're giving your benefits to (if they're an adult) should apply for apportionment within one year of the day you were incarcerated. To apply, mail a letter to the Chicago VA Regional Office (VARO) at 2122 W Taylor St., Chicago, IL 60612. Your letter should say who you are and who should get your benefits. You must also complete and mail VA Form 21-0788. To get the form, ask a counselor or family member to download the form from this website: tinyurl.com/VAform210788 . You can also tear out and use the form in the back of this book.

Once the VA gets your application, they will review it. They may ask your spouse or children's guardian to fill out the same form. They will let you know if the apportionment is approved, and your family will retroactively receive your benefits. That means that your benefits will be saved and given to your family, starting 60 days after your incarceration. In other words, if your application is accepted, you or your family will eventually receive all of the money you deserve.

Questions? Call the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) at (800) 827-1000.

For more information on how the VA serves system-impacted vets, call (877) 424-3838 (877-4AID-VET) or visit benefits.va.gov/PERSONA/veteran-incarcerated.asp or va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp .

Reinstating Benefits After Release. You can restart your benefits 30 days before your scheduled release. If you are in prison, ask your counselor or

someone on the outside to help you contact the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA). They can call (800) 393-0865 or go to www.state.il.us/agebncy/dva for help.

Female Veterans. VA Medical Centers have program managers who help female veterans with VA benefits and health care. Contact the closest VA Medical Center to find a program manager who specializes in helping female veterans.

Filing Disability Claims

Do you have a disability related to your military service? You can file a disability claim online or in-person. You can get disability benefits in prison and once you are released.

To file a claim online, visit the website ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/apply and create an eBenefits account. You will need your medical records and any other proof of disability. You can also apply by filling out a paper application at a VA facility or mailing the claim to a VA facility. You can find VA facilities in Illinois by visiting: va.gov/find-locations . Check out this website to learn how to file a claim: va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim .

The VA does not accept all claims the first time they're filed. Keep trying. The process can be complicated, so you may wish to get help from a Veterans Service Organization (this help is free). Some veterans hire a claims agent or an attorney. You can search for any of these options at this website: ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search .

Health

After you leave prison, you can get care at VA Medical Centers. You can enroll in their system by visiting a VA Medical Center, or by phone at (877) 222-8387 (877-222-VETS). You can only receive care if you were honorably (or generally) discharged. You can receive treatment for injuries unconnected to your military service.

Not all VA health care is free. Your insurance will be billed for care, but you will have to pay for part of your inpatient, outpatient, or extended (nursing home) care and medication costs. Some of these services may be free if your income is below a certain limit or if your illness is connected to your service. The VA also offers mental health and substance abuse treatment at VA Medical Centers or at Vet Centers (depending on the treatment).

VA Medical Centers vs. Vet Centers

VA Medical Centers	Vet Centers
• Look and feel like a large, traditional hospital (but one that serves veterans) • Offer surgery, critical care, mental health care, and physical therapy • Provide medical and surgical specialty services, like oncology (cancer care), geriatrics (elder care), and neurology (care for conditions of the brain and nervous system) • Accept most honorably discharged veterans. Details here: va.gov/health-care/eligibility	• Are smaller in size, but they take walk-ins and may be closer to you • Have a welcoming, non-clinical feel • Specialize in mental health services, including group and family therapy, PTSD treatment, and substance use programs • Staffed by mental health and family professionals like psychologists and social workers who have specialized combat-veteran training • Accept all veterans and families of veterans who were deployed to combat zones, and others as well. Details here: vetcenter.va.gov/Eligibility.asp

☆ **Find your nearest Vet Center or VA Medical Center here: va.gov/find-locations .**

Housing

The VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program provides help for veterans who are experiencing homelessness (as does the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project described in the next section). This includes help accessing your benefits and finding housing. Contact the closest VA Medical Center to get services, or learn more here: va.gov/homeless/hchv.asp .

For more information, Homeless Outreach Coordinators are ready to assist system-impacted veterans at every VA Regional Office. They can help you learn what benefits you qualify for, help you apply for those benefits, and refer you to other resources as needed. Call the VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 424-3838 (877-4AID-VET) to connect with a Coordinator in your area.

Employment

The VA also has employment help and job training for veterans who were honorably or generally discharged. Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Representatives (DVOP) help veterans find jobs. Call Illinois' employment office at (217) 782-7100. The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP) helps unhoused veterans with

- Access to housing
- Job searches
- Vocational counseling
- Occupational-skills training
- On-the-job training
- Trade skills certification and licensing
- Job placement assistance
- Referral to other supportive services

For more information, contact the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs: (800) 437-9824. If you're a veteran with a disability that's related to your military service, you can contact the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services for employment assistance. They offer help with job training, job placement, and employment advice. To connect with this program, call (800) 437-9824 or visit veterans.illinois.gov/serviceoffices.html .

If you're a veteran experiencing homelessness or near-homelessness and addiction and/or your physical or mental health is a challenge, a Compensated Work Therapy program can help you find work. Get more information at your local Vet Center, VA Medical Center, or by visiting va.gov/health/cwt .

Additional Resources

Legal services

If you need legal help, you can call the Illinois Armed Forces Legal Aid Network (IL-AFLAN) hotline at (855) 452-3526. IL-AFLAN is a network of more than 10 legal aid organizations and law school clinics. They provide legal information, advice, and referrals. They can also prepare and review legal documents. This service is for previous or current service members, with any discharge status, and their spouses and dependents.

If you're in Chicago, another resource is the Jesse Brown Veterans Legal Clinic. It happens on the first Wednesday of every month. The clinic offers free legal help with:

- VA benefits (including VA pension, MST, VA survivors' pension, and service-connected disability compensation)
- Social Security (disability and retirement)
- TANF and SNAP payments
- Discharge upgrades and reviews
- VA debt
- Evictions, foreclosures, and other housing problems
- Domestic violence
- Workplace disputes and employees' rights
- Criminal record expungement/sealing
- Other civil legal needs

The clinic is located on the eighth floor of the Damen Building (820 S Damen Ave). They accept walk-in visits, but it's better to make an appointment. To schedule, call (312) 347-8340 or email VeteransRightsProjectVM@legalaidchicago.org.

To speak with a lawyer immediately, or for free or affordable legal help for veterans outside of Chicago, call the IL-AFLAN hotline. Volunteers of America of Illinois, Legal Aid Chicago, the Center for Disability Elder Law, and Prairie State Legal Services are also ready to provide low- or no-cost legal aid to

incarcerated veterans and veterans who are reentering in Illinois. (For contact information see the Directory on p. 153.)

Reentry support

All major VA Medical Centers have reentry specialists. Contact the closest VA Medical Center to begin receiving services. Find your VA Medical Center here: **va.gov/find-locations** .

The VA's Veterans Justice Program is an important part of the VA services for reentering veterans. It includes:

- The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program. The VJO helps people who are in jail or still in court. Find contact information here: va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp .
- The Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) program. It helps people in state and federal prisons and people reentering from those prisons. Read on for contact information.

The HCRV does much more than just provide health care. They offer:

- Face-to-face assessment, both before and after your release
- Referrals to medical, psychiatric, and social services, including employment and housing services, based on your assessment
- Short-term reentry case management

If you're still incarcerated: Within six months of your release, the HCRV should send someone in to meet you. They will assess your needs, offer helpful classes, and set you up with the knowledge and resources you will need for a successful reentry.

If you're interested in these services, we recommend reaching out to make sure they know how to find you. You can have someone reach out on your behalf, or you can send them a letter.

If you're incarcerated in the Chicago area, you can get in touch with the HCRV team here:

Mailing Address:

VISN 12 HCRV Re-Entry Specialist
Jesse Brown VA Medical Center 537/122
820 S Damen
Chicago, IL. 60612

Email: CHSJBVeteransJusticeProgram@va.gov

For other Illinois locations, find contact information here: va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp, or you can request your local contact information from the Chicago program.

If you've been released: If you're reentering in the Chicago area and you'd like support from the HCRV, email them at CHSJBVeteransJusticeProgram@va.gov or call (224) 389-0497 (but emailing may work better). For contact information in other parts of Illinois, visit va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp .

Here are some other resources you may find helpful:

- **Safer Foundation** created the **Community Resource Guide** to help vets reentering in Illinois. Their goal is to provide you with a supportive network of services with vetted, up-to-date contact information. The guide includes housing, mental health, legal aid, and employment services. Find it here: tinyurl.com/IL-Vet-Resources .
- **Swords to Plowshares' "National Self-Help Guides"** offer general information for vets with a focus on the needs of system-impacted vets. Topics range from how incarceration may affect your benefits to upgrading your discharge and requesting copies of your military record. Access all of their guides here: https://tinyurl.com/S-to-P-Vets-Guides .

Thank Your for Your Service

There are currently over 180,000 veterans being held in US prisons and jails. That's around 8 percent of our entire prison and jail population, and more than half of those veterans are living with PTSD. Before their incarceration and after their release, many of those veterans experience homelessness, unemployment, and other hardships that make the usual challenges of reentry even worse.

This is not how things should be.

If you are a system-impacted veteran working hard at your reentry, please know you are not alone. We believe in you.

Please know that when we say, "Thank you for your service," we mean you. You have served your nation, you have served your time, and we support you in your reentry journey.

LGBTQ+ People



This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. For legal guidance, please consult a qualified attorney.

If you are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, you may face unique experiences and challenges as you leave prison, and certainly in prison as well. Remember that you're not alone! There are organizations that help LGBTQ+ people. This chapter covers the following topics:

- Housing
- Employment
- Healthcare and Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Resources for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People
- Other Resources

Housing

Finding a place to live is one of the most important parts of reentry. Organizations that work with the LGBTQ+ community can help you find safe housing that is respectful of your identity.

- **Center on Halsted** has a list of housing resources in the Chicagoland area: centeronhalsted.org/resource-directory/housing .
- **Chicago House** connects people impacted by HIV to housing in the Chicagoland area: chicagohouse.org .
- **WIN Recovery** in Champaign and Berwyn welcome LQBTQ+ individuals: win-recovery.org .
- **Town Hall Apartments** offers LGBTQ+-friendly affordable housing for seniors: heartlandalliance.org/program/housing/town-hall .

If you choose to seek private housing, there are housing laws that protect you from discrimination. In Illinois, a landlord can't refuse to rent to you because of your sexuality or gender identity. They also can't charge you higher rent or change the services they provide. Here are some resources to help you know your rights and protect yourself against discrimination:

- **The Illinois Department of Human Rights** has a web page with information about Fair Housing Rights for members of the LGBTQ+ community: tinyurl.com/fairhousinglgbtq .
- **Lambda Legal** provides legal services to the LGBTQ+ community. They also have a free virtual help desk: lambdalegal.org .
- **The US Department of Housing Discrimination** and Urban Development keeps a list of housing discrimination resources relating to the LGBTQ+ community: tinyurl.com/HUD-lgbtq-protection .

Find general information on your rights as a tenant in the Your Legal Rights section of the Housing After Release chapter (see p. 49).

Employment

Finding a job when you have a record can be hard, especially if you're facing discrimination for your sexuality or gender identity. There are organizations and resources that can help! In addition to the resources listed in our Employment chapter (see p. 54), some organizations provide employment services specifically for LGBTQ+ people:

- **Chicago House** provides services like resume review, career building workshops, and one-on-one sessions with a career specialist: chicagohouse.org/about .
- **Center on Halsted** offers computer access, classes and workshops, and career and job training: centeronhalsted.org .

Healthcare and Mental Health

If you're struggling with your mental health, always

remember you're not alone. If you're a transgender person or gender nonconforming, you can call the **Trans Lifeline** at (877) 565-8860. If you're 24 or younger, you can call the **Trevor Project** at (866) 488-7386. Both lifelines are designed to help members of the LGBTQ+ community. Suicide Helpline counselors are trained to help people of all orientations and gender identities. In emergencies, call them at 988.

- **The LGBTQ+ National Help Center** offers free and confidential peer support from volunteer members of the LGBTQ+ community. Reach them at (888) 843-4564 or by visiting lgbthotline.org .
- **The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)** has a directory of healthcare providers trained on the needs of the LGBTQ+ community. Search their directory here: www.wpath.org/member/search .
- **Howard Brown Health** offers care from pediatrics to geriatrics for the LGBTQ+ community. howardbrown.org .
- **The Test Positive Aware Network** offers support for individuals with HIV and more. tpan.com/ .
- **AIDS in Prison Project Hotline:** This hotline provides information on HIV and AIDS for people on the inside. They accept collect calls at (718) 378-7022.

Find more resources in the Health and Mental Health chapters (see p. 78 and p. 83), including information on HIV/AIDS, STDs, and sexual and reproductive health.

Substance Use

If you have trouble controlling your use of drugs or alcohol, we urge you to get help. These support groups welcome people from the LGBTQ+ community:

- **SMART Recovery** hosts support groups and sessions for LGBTQ+ people struggling with substance use. Find groups who meet online or in-person here: smartrecovery.org/lgbtq .
- **Gay & Sober** provides safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people recovering from addiction. Find meetings and additional resources here: gayandsober.org .
- **Recovering with Pride** is a Chicago-based service run by Howard Brown Health that offers group and one-on-one recovery coaching. Their staff has specialized training and experience in providing substance-use services to the LGBTQ+ community. Find them here: howardbrown.org/service/substance-use-recovery .
- LGBTQ+-focused **Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous** chapters often identify themselves as Lambda AA or Lambda NA. To find a Lambda group, start here: aa.org/find-aa . Searching for your city or county from that website will take you to a list of local AA networks. Select the network nearest to you, and then, to find your local LAMBDA chapter, select LGBTQ+ from the "meeting type" menu.

You can find more general resources in the Substance Use chapter (see p. 90).

Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming People

Changing Your Name

In Illinois, you have to live in the state for six months before you can change your name. There are additional restrictions for people with felony convictions. If you were convicted of a felony, you must wait 10 years from your release date to change your name. If you were convicted of identity theft or are on the sex offense registry, the restriction is permanent. You may be able to transfer to a different registry, which would lift the lifetime restriction. See the Parole: Mandatory Supervised Release section (on p. 27) for more information on how to transfer registries.

Even if you are unable to change your name, you may be able to change the gender marker on your identity documents. The **Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois** has resources for changing your name and your gender marker. They also host clinics where they can help you with the name-change process. You can find those resources here: tinyurl.com/transformativejusticeproject .

Hormone Therapy and Gender Affirming Surgery

Talk to your doctor (primary care provider) if you want to start hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or have gender affirming surgery. Sometimes your primary care provider can prescribe hormones, but they will often refer you to a specialist, like an endocrinologist. Some health centers specialize in healthcare for transgender people. **Howard Brown Health Center** provides access to HRT and gender-affirming surgery on a sliding scale payment

plan. They also offer support groups and counseling for LGBTQ+ people.

The **Prairie Pride Coalition** offers free gender-affirming undergarments to trans and non-binary people living in Central Illinois. If you live in McLean, Livingston, DeWitt, Peoria, Tazwell, or Marshall County, you can request binders, gaffs, and shapers here: ppc-il.org/gerc .

Other LGBTQ+ Resources	
Affinity 95	Black-led, queer-led organization on Chicago's South Side dedicated to social justice in Black LGBTQ+ communities: affinity95.org .
Black and Pink	Abolitionist reentry support and national advocacy for LGBTQ+ people and people with HIV or AIDS: blackandpink.org .
Howard Brown Health Broadway Youth Center	Healthcare and social services for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness: howardbrown.org/service/broadway-youth-center .
Advocates for Trans Equality	The National Center for Transgender Equality and Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund work together for trans rights and advocacy: transequality.org .
Prisoner Correspondence Project	Connects incarcerated LGBTQ+ people to people in the community outside of prison: prisonercorrespondenceproject.com .
Pushing Envelopes Chicago	LGBTQ+ reentry organization that provides legal aid and reentry support: pushingenvelopeschicago.org .
The List	Supportive resources for the LGBTQ+ community, including a list of 50 therapists in the Chicago area: thelistforus.com .
Transgender Law Center	National, trans-led organization working towards trans liberation focusing on people of color, disabled, and HIV positive communities: transgenderlawcenter.org .



Part 3:
Healing and Moving Forward

- Beginning to Heal
- Building Healthy Relationships
- Mindfulness
- Restorative Justice
- Connecting With Your Community

Beginning to Heal



Prison hurts in a lot of ways. People who are incarcerated sometimes push others away to protect themselves from that pain. Some people avoid relationships, grieving, and self-care because they don't want to feel helpless. They may become distant and isolated in order to feel safe.

> *My family thinks that because I'm free, all my problems are over, but really we carry all this baggage with us. The coping mechanisms we had on the inside are still with us, and they create barriers on the outside.*
>
> **—Pablo**

Healing is a part of moving forward and reconnecting the pieces of your life. It is a process, and it requires you to be both vulnerable and strong. Being vulnerable is hard. You need to let yourself feel the pain of incarceration. Opening up to yourself and being open to trusting others are big steps toward getting your life back.

Prison is often traumatic, and recovery will take time. Working toward recovery is a form of healing. Vulnerability is not weakness, and it is not weak to ask for help. Support groups and individual counseling can help you deal with trauma that may have happened while you were in prison. See the Trauma and Mental Health chapter (on p. 83) for information on finding support.

This section addresses several aspects of wellness. Understanding them can help you heal and move forward. It is based on suggestions given to us by the system-impacted people who have taken classes through our organization.

What is wellness? Wellness is a complicated subject. It means something different for everyone. After you leave prison, wellness is about making meaning out of your experiences. It also means making these experiences part of who you are and who you want to be in the world. It is about forgiveness, healing, caring for yourself, and reconnecting with others.

Emotional wellness means being respectful of yourself and others. It means you are aware of your good or bad feelings and accept them. You express your feelings to others in healthy and constructive ways. It also means you think about other people's feelings and perspectives. People may think differently than you. Knowing how to disagree respectfully is key to healthy relationships, and healthy relationships are key to emotional wellness. You may have other unresolved issues you're dealing with, such as grief, anger, or depression. Be patient and realize the path to emotional wellness can be a long one.

> *Reach out to somebody. One of our coping mechanisms that's prevalent with individuals who are incarcerated is that we retract ourselves, isolate ourselves to try to deal with it, with the psychological hurdles we're going through.*
>
> **—Pablo**

Physical wellness is taking care of your body. It is important to stay active and healthy. Consider finding a gym, jogging, walking, biking, practicing yoga, or looking up free at-home exercise videos online. Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water. Have a regular and restful sleep routine. Practice safe sex by using condoms. For those with addiction issues, getting help through counseling or recovery programs can be a really positive step. You can read more about healthcare in our Health chapter (see p. 78).

Social wellness means you form healthy relationships with many kinds of people. As we discuss in the Prepare for Reunification chapter (on p. 23) , reentry is a time when you will strengthen old relationships and build new ones. While it can be difficult to put yourself out there, it can also lead to meaningful, healthy relationships. We discuss this in the Building Healthy Relationships chapter (on p. 133).

> *When I first got out, what I felt was most difficult was figuring out how to relate to other people. You have both the lack of 'normal' experiences that most people have as late-teenagers and young adults. Plus you have the negative effects of long-term imprisonment.*
>
> **—Greg A.**

Spiritual wellness is thinking about a larger meaning or purpose to life. This might mean religion for you. You may decide to join a church, synagogue, or mosque. You may also decide to join a support group to find community and purpose or volunteer to help others through a nonprofit organization. Set aside some time each day to be open, listen, and think about what's going on inside of you. Practice mindfulness, meditation, or prayer. The Mindfulness chapter describes a few ways to do this (see p. 143). The Connecting With Your Community chapter (on p. 150) discusses ways to serve your community.

> *Take a breath. You're going to be in for a ride, and you better pack your patience.*
>
> **—Pablo**

Occupational wellness is contributing meaningfully and respectfully at your job. Your job may not be perfect, but how you do it is up to you. What are your strengths? Bring those to your work. Invest in yourself by investing in what you do. Find ways to do a little extra at work, and try new things when you can. Take the time to realize the value of the work you do, and honor that. Also, beware of toxic work environments. Some jobs can be unhealthy—physically, emotionally, or otherwise. If your job does more harm than good, leaving may be the right choice.

Environmental wellness means being aware of the Earth's resources and trying to create a healthy environment. There are many ways to contribute. You can grow vegetables in a community garden or volunteer to help with community clean up. Spend time in nature, even if it's at a local park, to help you feel healthy.

> *Advice for socializing outside? Learning coping skills and anger management. Being less abrasive and open-minded.*
>
> **—Earl W.**



Building Healthy Relationships

Prison makes it hard to stay connected with family, friends, and loved ones. Reentry removes some of these barriers, but it can be a hard time for both you and your loved ones. Rebuilding healthy, positive relationships requires time, patience, and openness. You've changed while in prison, and so have your loved ones. It's going to take time to get to know each other again.

Since you've been gone a long time, you may struggle to feel like you belong. You and your loved ones may feel uncertain about each other. You may wonder if you can trust each other.

Your relationship with loved ones may go through different stages when you return home. Things might start out great (the "honeymoon" stage) but get harder as you spend more time together. This is a common experience, and you're not alone.

Four Common Relationship Stages During Reentry			
Stage 1: Honeymoon You and your loved ones are excited to be back together. Everyone's at their best, but anxiety is under the surface.	**Stage 2: Uncertainty and suspicion** You and your loved ones might feel uncertain about your relationship and question motives. Are you going to stick around? Do you still want to be close?	**Stage 3: Testing and learning to share** You and your loved ones may test each other to see if it's OK to share feelings and be yourself. Can you trust each other?	**Stage 4: Belonging** You may struggle with how to get involved in family routines, but success at this stage can lead to stability. What roles will you play? How can you be part of family life again?

You don't have to face relationship challenges alone! You can go here for help:

- **Family-oriented reentry programs.** Phalanx Family Services, based in Chicago, is an example of such a program. They help people reunite with their families after prison. Learn more at phalanxgrpservices.org or call (773) 291-1086.
- **Classes.** Anger management, parenting, communication, or marriage and family classes can help you develop skills that will make your relationships stronger.
- **Counseling or therapy,** either alone or with your partner or family. See the Trauma and Mental Health chapter for more information (on p. 83).
- **Returning-resident support groups.** Organizations like Precious Blood Ministries and First Followers offer supportive circles where you can share your struggles with others who share a similar background. Local reentry organizations may be able to connect you with these groups for advice and support.
- If you are in an abusive relationship, **call the domestic violence hotline: (877) 863-6338.**

There is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to the challenges people face when reuniting with loved ones. Below, formerly incarcerated people share their advice about reconnecting with loved ones. This chapter covers the following topics:

- Self-Advocacy
- Sharing (Self-Disclosure)
- Parenting After Release
- Dealing with Difficult Emotions
- Anger Management
- Institutionalization
- Domestic Violence

Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself. It's being able to identify your needs, communicate them clearly, and help others understand how they can support you. People who have been in prison often have to work on this skill. When you stood up for yourself in prison, it may have led to fights or disciplinary consequences. Many formerly incarcerated people try to avoid conflict because they want to avoid violence. Or they have trouble communicating their needs calmly and kindly. The first step to developing healthy self-advocacy skills is to recognize that this may be a challenge for you. Practice expressing your needs in low-stakes situations with people you trust and who want to see you succeed. Then you'll be better at speaking up for yourself in all situations.

> *Learn to set boundaries.*
> **—Erick N.**

Sharing (Self-Disclosure)

Many people survive prison by becoming closed off and guarded. They seldom share their thoughts or feelings with others. But being closed off can hurt your relationships. Family members can also become closed off. They might only share positive things during their visits, or visit rarely because it's too painful to come more often.

Tony explains why many people in prison are closed off from their family:

> *You keep [your family] at an arm's length because you know you could lose them. A lot of us watched family members die. Family members get sick. Family members move away. You're watching the world go past you, and to keep that family interested in your life and to keep yourself interested in their life is really hard because you can't experience that life with them.*

As Pablo warns, isolation helps people cope in prison, but it's not always helpful on the outside.

> *The coping mechanisms we had on the inside are still with us, and they create barriers on the outside. When you retract and people are not knowing the reason for your isolation, they think it's having to do with them.*

So how do you open up when you're used to being closed off? How do you learn to share?

Self-disclosure is sharing meaningful information about ourselves. It is being honest with your loved ones about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It is one of the most important parts of a healthy relationship. It

- builds trust,
- provides emotional release, and
- encourages your loved ones to share, too.

There are risks to sharing. You may worry that your loved ones will reject you if they know how you feel. You may worry that you will hurt others if you share what you have experienced. You may feel embarrassed to admit that you need help. You may feel that your family members won't be able to understand what you have gone through. All of this can make you want to hold back.

Keep in mind that closeness doesn't happen overnight. You can choose what to share and when. When building relationships, most people share slowly. They take small steps and wait to see how people respond. Here are some tips for learning to open up to loved ones again:

- **Start with the easy stuff.** Share what you like to do for fun. Ask them what they like to do. What movies, music, or foods do they love? What do they do to relax?
- **Spend time together.** Take long walks. As you do, share some of your feelings, fears, and goals. Invite them to open up, too. Start small and see how they respond.
- **Share over text.** Send short, friendly messages about your day to your family and friends. Ask how they are doing.
- **Avoid criticizing or offering advice when your loved ones share with you.** Just listen. Be positive and supportive.
- **Be willing to talk about your relationship.** How has your relationship changed? How can you perform your share of the work?

Keke describes the small ways he shares his life with his children and invites them to share their lives with him:

> *I take time out of my day, even five minutes, to call them and see what's going on. I text them every day, every morning. I talk to them and get their point of view and see what's going on, try to spend time. I tell them I love them, how you are doing, how your day is going, what you got planned. Little simple stuff. I let them talk.*

David notes that if you want your children to open up to you, it helps to not be critical.

> *In prison I became more educated, more aware. My relationships with my children became complicated because I had the tendency to correct them in their behavior. I was bombarding them with advice, and the more I did this, the more they were pushing me away. I had to learn to relax, to not be overbearing.*

Pablo also notes the importance of listening:

> *Be ready to hear some truths. Listen attentively. There is a lot of lived life in your absence. Everybody was in a bad situation. As we were surviving, so were they. Don't approach it with judgment. Try to be understanding with your family and with yourself.*

Keke notes the importance of being open and honest with your partner:

> *The most challenging thing is [to] be honest with [your partner]. If she's taking time out of her life to stand by you, give her your life. [Don't] feed her a fairy tale. Don't come out trying to feed nobody no dream and definitely don't feed yourself a dream.*

Sharing Your Past With Others

If you are in the habit of closing yourself off, it can be hard to make new friends. There are a few methods for doing so below, and you can choose what you think would work best for you. Tony explains:

> *You spend so much time keeping people at arm's distance. You never let anybody get close. [When you go into prison,] you're so young, you're so vibrant, it's so easy to have friends, to have relationships, to have people that are close to you. But when you come home, you've gotten so used to keeping people at a distance that you just continue to do it. It's hard to make new friends.*

When meeting new people, it can be hard to know how much to share about your past. Not everyone will be accepting of who you are. Roberto talks about the challenge of getting to know people and deciding how much to share:

> *How do I get to know people? How do you create a personal brand so that all the good things you offer are not eclipsed by the fact that you spent a significant amount of time in prison? How do you open a conversation with someone when you're trying to remain private, and also take into account all of the negative stigma that's attached to being incarcerated? You're just meeting people and you don't want to share too much about yourself. There's so much negative stigma. You have to break through that wall. On the other hand, if you do, it's still no guarantee that they are going to relate to you and understand what you're going through.*

Keke prefers telling people right away about his past. "I tell them in the door," he says. He continues:

> *I learned from my experience that if you lay your cards out in the open, you get a better understanding. Nowadays, people google so much. Both of you have to be honest with each other. So that's what I do. I let them know right in the door. This is me. I've been to prison twice. I'm doing this, I'm doing that, trying to get myself together.*

Tony also prefers being open:

> *It's a little weird, a little awkward, to just come out and say, hey, I just spent ten years in prison. But I've never been one to be shy. I've always been real open about what I went through because it lets other people know that, look, just because I was in there doesn't mean I have to keep going back and forth, back and forth.*

Heather, on the other hand, is more reserved:

> *I don't really mention [that I was in prison] to people. But, I guess it helps to have moved away to a different state, so really not that many people know me. They just know what they see of me now. They don't know... I made mistakes in the past. And I'm kind of comfortable with it. So, if I was to meet a guy or something and start dating, I wouldn't just throw all my dirty laundry out front. I'd get to know him. But if things were working out really good, I'd tell*

him all about it, and if he didn't accept it, then he probably wouldn't be the guy for me anyway.

Tony concludes,

When you meet somebody, if it scares them that you've been to prison, then you know what? That's not the person that you need to be with.

When you are deciding how to share your past with people, consider these guidelines:

1. Is the other person important to you? If so, sharing may help you be closer.
2. What are the risks of sharing your past with them? Could they tell others or make it more difficult for you to get a job? Could they use this against you in other ways?
3. Is it appropriate to share? Sometimes it's wise to not share too much with strangers. What do they need to know about your past?
4. Will the other person be willing to share, too? Good relationships are built on reciprocity (a willingness to share on both sides).
5. Is sharing going to help or hurt? Think about the effect your sharing will have on the other person.

Asking for Help and Setting Boundaries

If you're used to being closed off, it may be especially hard to ask for help from loved ones. Pablo notes:

My family thinks that because I'm free, all my problems are over, but I need assistance with the most basic things. That does make me somewhat defensive, and I'll end up trying to do things on my own and then I crash and burn.

His advice? "Ditch that machismo and ask for help. It's not a bad thing."

It can be embarrassing to have to ask for help. As Joe Joe explains:

What we're competing with is not [wanting to] feel like a helpless infant all the time. We're so used to being rejected that we don't reach out much for help.

Lee, whose partner was incarcerated, says that "healthy adult relationships aren't about putting your needs in the back seat." She explains:

You want to be considerate and not wear out your welcome. The effect of that is that maybe you're not expressing the things that you need. It's OK to say, "Hey, I need you to do this thing for me." Learn to communicate what you need.

Joe Joe offers this final piece of advice regarding asking for help:

If you strive to lighten someone's load rather than adding to it, they are going to be more receptive to helping you. This is what really wins people over and will help get you where you need to go.

Some people going through reentry struggle to set boundaries with their loved ones. Your loved ones are happy to have you back. They may pressure you to get involved or do things you aren't ready for yet. They may ask you to do too many things at once.

It's OK to step back and take things slow. It's OK to say no to things and let them know that you aren't ready yet.

You have to take things slow. All these new experiences, it can be extremely overwhelming. All those people tugging at you – those are extra stressors. Listen, take care of yourself.
—Ricky

I love a good challenge. I was pulled into a monkey bar contest, into diving off the high board. But these old bones are not the same as they were. You don't want to injure yourself.
—Kilroy

Parenting After Release

If you are a parent, you may be nervous about reuniting with your kids. You may feel guilty for what your kids have gone through while you were locked up. Some parents need or want time to get their feet on the ground before getting their kids back. These feelings are normal.

You may feel pressure to make up for lost time with your kids or to be a super parent. No matter what, resist the urge to parent out of guilt.

Lots of people have unrealistic expectations of parents, especially of mothers. Here are some **myths** about parents:

- They are expected to spend lots of time and money on their kids.
- They should always be there emotionally for their kids.
- They should always place the needs of their children above their own needs.
- They should have a clean house and money to put their kids in good programs.

Parents who cannot or do not meet this ideal are often seen as bad.

These "super parent" ideals are impossible to live up to. And that's OK. Resist the urge to parent out of guilt.

Don't be too hard on yourself. You are going to make mistakes. We all do. See mistakes as an opportunity to learn. Be willing to learn from your children, too. Building a healthy relationship with your children will take hard work, love, and compassion. It will take time and patience, but it is worth it.

Some relationships may never entirely heal. Accept that your children and loved ones may not want the same kind of relationship you once had.

Here are a few things you can do to make reunifying easier:

- **Educate yourself.** Read books and attend classes about parenting. Raising a child is always hard, so get all the tools you can.
- **Get counseling or therapy.** It can help you heal and provide tools for you to be a better parent. See the Trauma and Mental Health chapter (on p. 83).
- **Do things you enjoy.** Meditate. Take some time to do things for yourself if you can. See the Mindfulness chapter (on p. 143).
- **Talk to other parents,** especially those who have spent time in prison. Join a moms group, a dads group, or a parents group. Share your experiences, fears, and dreams.

Recommended Books on Parenting

- *Raising Good Humans: A Mindful Guide to Breaking the Cycle of Reactive Parenting and Raising Kind, Confident Kids*, by Hunter Clarke-Fields
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen, and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- *Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids: How to Stop Yelling and Start Connecting*, by Laura Markham
- *Good Inside: A Guide to Becoming the Parent You Want to Be*, by Becky Kennedy

You can borrow these books from your library or buy audio versions or inexpensive used copies at Amazon.com. There are many other parenting resources available, too. Your local librarian will be able to help you find them.

You can't recapture time that has been lost. You have to start fresh. Don't be too gung-ho. Trust has to be reestablished. If they're angry, don't try to invalidate their anger. Talk about it. Don't pretend that the separation never happened, because it did. Try to seek counseling.

—Josephine

Always remember that reconciliation and restoration are two different things. You may reconcile, but the relationship may never be restored. Just grieve properly. Be OK with that. Don't walk around forever with the grief on your back. If you've done all you can, it will be OK.

—Josephine

There will be people in your life who will remain after such a long journey, and there will be some who fall to the wayside. Don't look back. Keep looking forward, looking inward. Seek inward happiness.

—Pablo



Reflect

1. What feelings do you have about reuniting with your family?

2. How can you practice self-care during this time?

3. Where can you go for help? Who is in your support network?

Dealing with Difficult Emotions

In prison, you may have bottled up difficult emotions instead of working through them. Maybe you pushed aside feelings of fear, guilt, or anger and instead told family members that everything was going to be OK. Your family members may have done the same.

Here are a few of the emotions you might feel as you reunite with your loved ones:

- **Fear** is your body's reaction to danger or uncertainty. You may fear that nobody will love you because of the things you've done. You may be afraid that your children won't accept you. This fear can cause you to withdraw from them even more.
- **Sadness** is feeling unhappy or discouraged. You might feel discouraged that your children don't know you or that your sibling doesn't want to talk to you.
- **Grief** is a profound feeling of loss. You might feel a sense of loss for the years you spent in prison, away from your family.
- **Guilt** is feeling bad about yourself, often for something you've done or haven't done that made others suffer. You might feel guilty for not being around for your family.
- **Anger** is something you feel when someone or something has done you wrong. You might feel angry about what prison has done to you, or angry about something a loved one has said.

People experience emotions through their mind and body. For instance, fear can tighten your chest. You might feel sick to your stomach or start sweating. Some emotions can help you change and grow. Others can keep you from growing and harm your relationships.

Expect some of your repressed emotions to surface. Sounds, tastes, and smells can trigger memories from the past. You may have lost partners, friends, and

parents. Expect to feel rage, sorrow, frustration, and grief.

> *If you have any emotions at all, you're going to have guilt about making your family suffer. They suffer with you while you're in there. To them, you're kind of dead because you're not around any longer. There is guilt. And we don't like to show it because, hey, we're tough guys.*
>
> **—Tony**

> *I was looking at videos with a friend and a song came on. I found myself crying for no apparent reason. I lost my father when I was locked up. That was one of his favorite songs. I had never had the opportunity to mourn. All of the pain came forward.*
>
> **—Pablo**

It's normal to feel these emotions. It's what you do with these emotions that matters. Pushing aside difficult emotions instead of feeling and understanding them can harm your relationships. Learning to recognize, express, and manage emotions can help you have healthier relationships.

Here are some tips for managing emotions in healthier ways:

- **Identify your feelings.** Let them wash over you. They won't last forever. Give yourself time to feel them. Don't bury them. Doing so can cause these feelings to build up even more.
- **Recognize the difference between feeling and acting.** Just because you feel a certain way doesn't mean you have to act on it.
- **Own your feelings.** Try not to blame others for the way you feel. Instead of saying, "You're making me angry," say "I'm feeling angry."
- **Express your feelings in helpful ways.** Separate people from their actions. Say, "I'm angry about something you have done," not "I'm angry at you."
- **Change your perception.** Think about what caused you to feel that way. Are there different ways to think about what happened that are more helpful?

Therapists or counselors can help you work through and manage your emotions. It may help to go to family or couples' therapy. Some organizations, such as Phalanx Family Services, offer support for families working through the challenges of reentry. Ask to be connected to these resources at a local reentry organization (see the Directory on p. 153).

In prison, you may have walked away from difficult emotions and conflicts. Perhaps you had space to think through difficult issues before facing them. On the outside, you may be expected to directly address issues with your loved ones rather than walking away. You may feel pressure to respond right away when you'd rather take your time.

Pablo explains what happens when you retreat instead of talking about how you are feeling with loved ones:

> *When you retreat, it telegraphs to the other person that you don't care. When you remain silent, people may think you're brushing them off.*

It's OK to take some time to think before talking through a problem. As Lee explains, "It's OK to say, 'I need time to think about this, I can't give you an answer right away.'"

But too often when people retreat, they never come back to it. If you need some space, commit to talking about it later.

Anger Management

As with other emotions, it's normal to feel and express anger. It gets to be a problem if your anger is out of control, aggressive, or constant. It's a problem if your anger hurts the people around you.

Anger is a secondary emotion. For example, "He embarrassed me, and then I got angry." Getting to the root of why you were embarrassed can help the anger subside.

You may have to take an anger management class as a condition of your parole. These classes can help you

learn some basic skills for managing your anger. A therapist or counselor can also help. Anger management classes or therapy may cover topics such as:

- Causes and triggers of your anger
- Better ways to express your anger
- Taking time out for reflection
- Understanding the effects of your anger

Need to find an anger management class?
If it's required for parole, you will need to make sure that it offers a certificate. Often there is a small fee for this certificate. Ask questions to make sure. You can usually take the class online or in person.

To find a low or no-cost anger management class, try the following resources:

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline, (800) 799-7233
- Emotions Anonymous, a national 12-step program with virtual and in-person meetings: emotionsanonymous.org
- The National Anger Management Association's directory of certified anger-management specialists: nama.memberclicks.net
- DHS Family Community Resource Centers may be able to recommend anger management classes. Locate one near you: tinyurl.com/IL-DHS-family-resources .
- Ask your parole officer or healthcare provider for suggestions.
- Community centers and local universities, colleges, and nonprofits sometimes offer anger management classes for the public.

Here are some anger management tips, modified from experts at the Mayo Clinic:

1. **Think before you speak.** In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a deep breath and collect your thoughts. Allow others to do the same.
2. **Once you're calm, express your anger.** As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your anger, concerns, and needs clearly and directly. Do so without trying to hurt or control others.
3. **Get some exercise.** Exercise can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger building, go for a walk or run.
4. **Take a timeout.** Give yourself a short break when things get stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you handle things better.
5. **Identify possible solutions.** Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue. Does your child's messy room drive you crazy? Close the door. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening- or agree to eat on your own sometimes.
6. **Stick with 'I' statements.** To avoid placing blame, use "I" statements. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes" instead of "You never do any housework."
7. **Use humor to release tension.** Humor can help you face what's making you angry without getting out of control.
8. **Relax.** When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Take deep breaths. Imagine a calm place or repeat a calming phrase, such as "Take it easy." Listen to music or go for a walk. Practice mindfulness (see the Mindfulness chapter on p. 143).
9. **Know when to seek help.** Learning to control anger is hard for everyone at times. Seek help if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret, or hurts those around you.



Reflect

1. Think about a time when you felt angry, and it got out of control. What happened? Why did it get out of control?

2. Now think about how you could have managed your anger better. What are some things you can try next time you get angry?

Institutionalization

Institutionalization is how your thoughts, speech, and actions are influenced by being locked up. Many people who have left prison continue to suffer the mental effects of being locked up long after they leave. You and your loved ones may not be aware of the many ways prison has impacted you. This can cause all sorts of conflicts and misunderstandings.

Some people who leave prison suffer from **Post-Incarceration Syndrome** (PIS), a syndrome similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Time in prison can make mental health problems worse. It can make people more isolated and more violent. It can lead some people to feel that they have no purpose. It can make people fearful and always on the lookout for danger.

Here are just a few of the many ways that time in prison may have impacted you and your relationships:

- *I closed myself off as a way of coping.* **—Anonymous**
- *I have these defense mechanisms. I've learned to telegraph assertiveness and square up when faced with conflict.* **—Pablo**
- *I had hangups about talking to regular, free people. I didn't feel comfortable.* **—Ricky**
- *When I get upset, my posture says I'm ready for a fight.* **—Pablo**
- *In prison, we got up early. I'm up in the middle of the night. Up early in the morning.* **—Anonymous**
- *In prison, you have to watch your back. Now on the outside, I can't sit with my back to people. I have to be at the back of the room so I can see everyone.* **—Kilroy**
- *I'm loud because in jail, people tend to scream. Everyone has to speak over each other if they want to be heard.* **—Antonio**

The tools you used to survive in prison were "blunt tools," as Pablo describes. You may have survived by being closed off, aggressive, and hypervigilant, or by being loud and watching your back. On the outside, these tactics can drive away your loved ones.

You will need to add new tools to your toolbox—tools that are more gentle and precise. They include listening, communicating, and being patient with yourself and other people. Have honest talks with loved ones. Invite them to help you recognize when you are acting in an aggressive way. Practice adjusting your body language.

It will take time for you and your loved ones to understand just how much your time in prison has impacted you. You may need counseling or help from a support group to work through these issues.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence isn't just an anger problem. It's about control. Domestic violence is defined as violent or aggressive behavior within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner.

Domestic violence can take many forms, including:

- Verbal abuse (threats, name-calling, intimidation)
- Physical abuse (pushing, slapping, choking)
- Controlling behavior (destroying property; keeping you from seeing people, going places, or spending money)
- Emotional abuse (making you feel like you are worthless)
- Sexual abuse (unwanted sexual activity, often using force)

In some families or cultures, these behaviors are not seen as wrong. It's hard to break away from domestic violence when the attitudes about relationships around you are not healthy. It may take some time to change your way of thinking. It may take some time to realize that what you are doing or experiencing is wrong.

If you are in an abusive relationship, seek help. Making the decision to leave is hard. It can be risky. It takes courage to leave, especially if you fear for your own safety or the safety of your children. It's hard to leave if you depend on the other person for money.

Begin by calling the Illinois Domestic Violence hotline: (877) 863-6338 or (877) TO-END-DV. This **confidential**, free 24-hour hotline provides support, information, and referrals. It can put you in touch with resources in your area. Even if you are not ready to leave the relationship, the hotline can help you get through hard times. It can help you take the next step.

The Illinois Department of Human Services website has a list of places where you can go for help: the-network.org .

If money is keeping you from leaving a partner who

is abusing you, there is an Emergency Crisis Fund for survivors of domestic violence. It is managed by The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence. For more information contact Emergency@The-Network.org or call the Domestic Violence hotline.

We have listed transitional housing and emergency shelter options in the directories at the end of this book (see p. 153). Many of these shelters serve people who are leaving an abusive relationship. Some provide protection if you fear for your safety. The directories also list counseling resources available to people who are facing domestic violence.

If you are the abusive partner

If you have been abusive to a partner or family member, reach out to get help. The first important step is to acknowledge you have a problem. You can change, but it will take work. You may be required to stay away from your partner until you are in a better place, or you may choose to stay away for a while to keep them safe and give them some space.

To get help, consider attending a Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP). Courts sometimes require abusive partners to attend PAIP programs. This program is for people who control their partners with physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or economic abuse (withholding money). The program can help you:

- see that it is NOT OK to abuse a partner,
- learn to take blame and credit for your actions, and
- learn nonviolent and non-controlling ways to communicate and behave

The program typically lasts 24–26 weeks. You'll get training from certified domestic violence professionals about how to stop abusing your partner. A counselor or therapist can also help you work through these issues.

To find a PAIP program, call the State of Illinois Domestic Violence Help Line at (877) TO END DV [(877) 863-6338] or (877) 863-6339 [TTY] or check out the Illinois DHS Office Locator: tinyurl.com/IDHSlocations .

> *We're coming out feeling beholden to people for what they've done for us while we're inside, or for our loved ones. That clouds our judgment, our best interest. Realize you can't help anybody if you're not helping yourself. Being selfish is not a bad thing. If love is directed inwards, it can radiate outwards. You can't help anybody if you're not helping yourself.*
>
> **—Pablo**



Reflect

1. What does a healthy relationship look like to you?

2. Think back on your relationships with your family or loved ones. In what ways were those relationships healthy? In what ways were they unhealthy?

3. Where are the places you can go for help if you are in an abusive relationship?



Mindfulness

If you've practiced mindfulness while in prison, you no doubt know how helpful it can be. You will find that mindfulness is helpful on the outside, too. If you're new to mindfulness, welcome! This chapter will introduce you to some simple but powerful practices you can begin today.

Mindfulness looks different for all of us. You'll see this in the stories we share from people who have practiced mindfulness in prison. The chapter covers these topics:

- What Is Mindfulness?
- What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness?
- How Do I Meditate?
- Meditation Scripts
- Meditation Resources
- Meditation Groups

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is about paying attention to the present. It is about noticing your thoughts, emotions, and how your body feels. The key is to not judge yourself or give yourself a hard time. When you are aware of your five senses and your mind, you are being mindful!

Mindfulness is not about fixing what is wrong with you. Instead, it is about accepting what is going on inside you. It's about being gentle and kind to yourself. It helps you stay connected to the moment. You can then respond in a non-reactive, caring way.

If you would have told me a year ago that prison meditation was a survival skill I might have chuckled. After one short year of mindfulness practice, I'm starting to realize it might be just that.

—Prison Mindfulness Program Participant

The value of mindfulness based meditation in prison is the equivalent of an oasis to a desert-beaten man

—Prison Mindfulness Program Participant

What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness?

Mindfulness has many benefits. It can help you manage stress and control your emotions. It can help you not get stuck in unhelpful thought patterns. It can help you be happier. It can even change how your brain works. Other benefits include:

- Better ability to fight disease
- Lower blood pressure and heart rate
- Better mental focus
- Better handling of emotions
- Lower anxiety and depression
- More growth after trauma
- More self-compassion
- Less burnout



I thought my troubles would be over if I could just get out. Freedom was the answer to all my problems. Little did I know that freedom was just the beginning of a whole host of new challenges. I experienced nausea every time I rode in a car and two months later I still do. . . . After a while, I questioned myself, "what is wrong with me?" I still don't have the answers to that question. All I can offer is the way in which I coped with the symptoms. I meditated. I simply concentrated on my breath. I followed my breath going in and followed it leaving my body. Each breath unique, each breath a momentary pause to reset myself.

—Prison Mindfulness Program Participant

Does your heart race every time you step out of your house or enter a public place? I found that my anxieties overwhelmed me to the point of confusion. Practicing mindfulness helped me be aware of physically overwhelming experiences at the onset. I could feel perspiration on my upper lip. My palms started getting sweaty. My body tenses up. These are the warning signs that remind me to just breathe. During these episodes I found that I was not breathing. Doing nothing else but concentrating on my breathing made this off-putting experience bearable. Soon thereafter, I was more and more in control.

—Prison Mindfulness Program Participant

How Do I Meditate?

Meditation is the most common way to practice mindfulness.

No formal training is required to meditate! There is no one right way to meditate, no "good" way, and certainly no "bad" way. If you can breathe, you can meditate.

Practice alone or with a group. You can meditate alone or with a group. Find someone who knows how to meditate to get you started. You may also be able to borrow a book about meditation from your library.

When to practice: In the beginning, try to meditate for 5 or 10 minutes. Increase the time bit by bit. Try different times of the day: morning, afternoon, or evening. Try to practice every day, but if something comes up, that's OK! Let go of what you think should happen, but return to your practice when you can.

How to sit: Many people meditate sitting down with their eyes closed or with their eyes open and looking down a few feet in front of them. Sit in a chair or cross-legged on a pillow, floor, or bed. Sit up straight, but be relaxed. Rest your hands in your lap or on your legs.

Common difficulties: It's common to feel restless, bored, and sleepy during meditation. Your mind may wander. That's totally okay. You don't need to get rid of thoughts when you are meditating. Do your best to notice and label your thoughts when they come: "thinking about the past," "restless," or "bored." Then see if you can return your attention to your breathing. Meditation takes practice. Do your best to be curious. No matter what happens, try not to judge yourself. And when you do judge yourself, just notice it (maybe say "judging" to yourself), and then go back to your breath.

☆ **Meditation and trauma:** When we practice meditation, sometimes our mind digs up memories that are traumatic. This may create anxiety and stress. Meditation can be a tool to process these emotions, but it is not a cure-all. If focusing on the body brings up traumatic memories, try focusing on a safe image or sound. If difficult memories keep coming, talk with a mental health professional. Look for a meditation group for people who have experienced trauma.

Have you felt alone, out of place? You are not alone. I experience that regularly. Things have changed since I last experienced freedom. Life has passed me by, and I'm lost among new technology and infinite variety. No one seems to understand what I am experiencing. I can't help but feel broken. Is something wrong with me? The answer to this question is an emphatic 'No.' What I was experiencing was a reaction to the trauma of isolation for so many years. I rely on mindfulness to assist me in channeling my focus. Mindfulness assists me in ignoring the peripheral that excites my anxieties and allows me to center my focus. I do so by simply concentrating on the breath. This simple act is what grounds me and allows me to function normally.

—Anonymous

Meditation Scripts

Many begin their meditation journey by using meditation scripts, or words they can read or listen to while meditating. Read each script slowly to get used to it. After a while, you can say the words silently to yourself. Give each step about 1 minute, but feel free to go at your own pace.

***A Seated Breath and Body Meditation Practice* | Abbreviated from Mindful Magazine**

1. Begin by getting comfortable, sitting up straight but not rigid, in a position of ease. Close your eyes or lower your gaze toward the floor.
2. Take a few deep breaths. Get a sense of how you're doing at this moment physically, emotionally, and mentally. Is there tension or tightness anywhere? Is your mind busy or calm?
3. As you breathe in, bring a beginner's mind, noticing things for the first time. As you breathe out, bring the same sense. Rest your awareness on the breath.
4. Begin to sense your body sitting here. Feel into your whole body. What are your senses telling you? You may feel warm or cold. You may be itchy. Perhaps some areas don't have any feeling at all—a blank. Spend the next minute feeling these sensations. Allow them to come and go.
5. If your mind wanders, where is it wandering to? Are you remembering something? Are you feeling anger or regret? Are you practicing what you will say to someone? Notice your thoughts as if you were sitting in a movie theater, watching images come and go on the screen. Notice the thought or emotion as if it were someone else's thought, not yours. Notice an opening up in yourself as you become more aware, more accepting.
6. Come back to the breath. Breathe in and out. Notice how the whole body expands when you inhale, and contracts when you exhale. The whole body is breathing.
7. As you end, congratulate yourself for taking time to meditate. Notice if you feel any different than you did when you began. Realize that you can take a few minutes to meditate whenever you wish.

I don't always follow a specific regimen other than just to breathe in times of stress. This sounds simple enough but it can be very difficult, especially when you are not practicing regularly.

—Anonymous



Our thoughts are just thoughts, not the truth of things, and certainly not accurate representations of who we are. In being seen and known, they cannot but self-liberate, and we are, in that moment, liberated from them.

—Jon Kabat-Zinn

Have you experienced disappointment with freedom? I have, and that is not something to be ashamed of. This is more common than you think. My life after release is nothing like I envisioned it. I romanticized freedom, and for some reason I feel more locked up out here. I constantly ruminate on these disappointments. Rumination occurs naturally when you allow your mind to take control. Mindfulness has taught me how to take control of my thought process. This has allowed me the freedom to take life as it comes and adjust as needed.

—Prison Mindfulness Program Participant

Gratitude Meditations

A gratitude practice can help us tap into hope. It can help us boost our mood and be strong when things are hard. Try this basic gratitude meditation (adapted from the 10% Happier app). Give it 5 to 15 minutes. If it helps you, return to it when you need a lift:

1. Take some time to get comfortable. Sit or stand, with your back upright but relaxed. Take a few deep breaths. Let your chest rise and your belly fill with each breath. Each time you exhale, let go of any tension in your face, your shoulders, your neck, your belly, your legs.
2. When you feel ready, let your eyes drift closed and your breathing return to normal. Gently rest your attention on your breath. Stay here for a little while, allowing thoughts to come and go like clouds through an open sky. Each time you become distracted, let your attention return to your breath.
3. After your mind has calmed, one at a time, focus on three things you are grateful for, each one in the here-and-now: You woke up this morning. You can breathe fresh air to fill your lungs. Your heart is sending oxygen to your fingertips. You can feel the air all around you. Keep this simple, happy, and in the present.
4. Next, think of three things that you are grateful for that will happen in the next hour: Making your breakfast, seeing a familiar face, the smell or taste of your coffee. Stay with each one, think about their goodness, and focus on how it feels to feel grateful for these things. Where in your body do you feel gratefulness? How do you recognize that feeling?
5. Finally, think of three bigger things that you're grateful for: a pet or loved one, someone who loves you or has shown you love, or perhaps a community or even a job or a thing that brings you happiness. If you become distracted, let your attention return to your breath, and then return to these things you feel grateful for in the world around you.
6. Focus again on the feeling of gratitude, if you have it. If you don't, that's OK. Sometimes we don't feel gratitude. If you do feel it, where in your body does it live? How does it feel? Stay here for a little while and feel the gratitude in your body as you continue to breathe. Allow this feeling to warm and fill you with each inhale. Know that you can draw on this feeling as a source of strength and resilience in the rest of your life.
7. After some time here, release your focus and relax. Open your eyes. Notice if you feel any different now than you did when you began this meditation.

Here's a second gratitude meditation (adapted from Mindvalley Institute) specifically aimed at helping you change an attitude that's working against you. It's not easy to focus on the positive when you feel stressed, so be patient with yourself as you try this meditation. You can always return to the breath, if it feels too stressful.

1. As you did above, sit in a comfortable position. Take a few deep and slow breaths.
2. Think about something that's troubling you. It's best to start small. Name something that annoys you. Perhaps the room you're in is cold and drafty.
3. Now see if you can flip it to something positive. For example, perhaps the room is cold and drafty, but it's

raining and you're able to stay dry.

4. Continue to think of things or experiences that you don't like. Do your best to find something positive about each thing or experience. Challenge yourself. Maybe they are helping you learn or grow. Perhaps you notice how you have kept going even when things are hard. Maybe you have found new ideas you didn't have before.
5. You can also simply repeat, "I am grateful for _____" and notice what comes up.

Meditation Resources

Need more meditations? Check out this website for dozens more meditation scripts! mindfulnessexercises.com/free-guided-meditation-scripts .

If you would like to learn about meditation from people of color, check out this resource guide: tinyurl.com/2ta4kw77 .

Phone Apps

There are a lot of free mindfulness phone apps. These apps offer guided meditations, timers, calming sounds, soothing voices, tips, and more. Some provide tips on how to sleep better or be less anxious. They can be used on the bus or train, at work, or before bed. You can choose long or short meditations. Want to learn how to download a Phone App? The Technology chapter can help (see p. 100).

Meditation Groups

Meditation groups are a great way to connect with others and practice. If you are a beginner, they can help you learn. They can provide support to help you keep going when you feel like quitting. These groups come in many forms. Some are face-to-face while others are online. Many groups begin with a few friends meeting in one person's home. Some groups have met for many years. See our online directory (reentryillinois.net) for a few meditation groups in Illinois.

Some meditation groups may describe themselves as Buddhist, using words like "Sangha" (community), "Zen" (meditative state), or "Vipassana" (insight). Many groups are open to anyone joining their group.

You may be able to find a mental health mindfulness group. These groups are more structured. Here are two mental health mindfulness programs that may be helpful:

- **Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction** (MBSR) is an eight-week-long group program offered by meditation and wellness centers and many hospitals across the country. It helps people develop the skills to deal with chronic pain and cope with stress of all kinds. Search for "MBSR near me" to find local programs.
- **Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy** (MBCT) is like MBSR, but with more focus on the skills needed to deal with anxiety and depression. It explores patterns of thinking and helps people shift to more helpful attitudes. Search for "MBCT near me" to find local programs.

Remind yourself that the deepest stillness and peace does not arise because the world is still or the mind is quiet. Stillness is nourished when we allow the world, the mind and the body to be just as they are for now, moment by moment, and breath by breath.

—Williams & Penman, Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World

It is common to question your purpose. I do so repeatedly. My relationships aren't exactly as I had envisioned. Mindfulness meditation provided me the space and compassion to accept people as they come. I learned to let the little things go and focus on what makes that person special to me.

—Prison Mindfulness Program Participant

Restorative Justice



If you caused someone harm in the past, you may be carrying guilt or shame. Reentry can be a long and challenging journey even without these feelings. Restorative justice practices could help.

What is restorative justice?
Restorative justice is a way of dealing with conflict. People who practice restorative justice aim to repair harm that has been done. More than half of the countries in the world practice some kind of restorative justice. It isn't new, but it is gaining new attention.

It is different from punitive justice, where you get punished for breaking a rule or law. Restorative justice considers the harms done to a community or to people, and it tries to make things right without the use of punishment. It encourages everyone involved in a conflict to come together to understand everyone's needs. Then it helps those people agree on how those needs can be met and how the harms can be repaired.

To help this happen, the person who has caused harm is encouraged to make amends. Other community members may be involved in this process. Punitive justice is different because it involves someone in a position of power, like a judge or a DA, deciding on punishments. Restorative justice lets communities work together to find solutions.

What is the main purpose of restorative justice?
Restorative justice aims to create justice by recognizing and repairing harm. To do this, restorative justice focuses on the needs of the people who were harmed, but it doesn't stop there. It also focuses on the situation that created the problem. It considers the needs of everyone involved, including the community and the person who caused the harm.

Who is included in a restorative justice process?
Each time it's a little different. The people invited to participate usually include

- Those responsible for the harm (the offenders).
- Those who were harmed (the victims or survivors).
- Those who felt impacts but weren't directly involved (the community). This may include family members, neighbors, or friends.

Sometimes counselors or probation officers are invited, too. Restorative justice is a voluntary process, so people should not be required or pressured to participate.

Why would each person included in the process want to participate?
People choose to participate in restorative justice for different reasons. The process is meant to support the wellbeing of the person who was harmed. It can also provide a path of redemption and a way for the community to heal and grow.

- **People who experienced harm** may see this as a chance to ask questions of the person who did them harm. It can help them face their fears and try to understand what happened.
- **People who caused harm** may see this as an opportunity to repair the harm they have done. It can help them work through any feelings of shame and take responsibility for their actions.
- **Community members** can use this as a chance to reflect on their role in what happened. What did they do to create the conditions that led to the harm? What can they do to change these conditions?

> *For me, being part of the circle group was my first step forward. It was the process that provided me with a pathway for healing.*
> **—Steve S.**

Some say that "hurt people hurt people." Restorative justice can break this cycle. It can rebuild trust, prevent future harm, and help everyone to heal.

What are the challenges of restorative justice?
Restorative justice facilitators are sometimes called "circle keepers." They are often community volunteers with training and experience in assisting in the restorative justice process. Circle keepers will do their best to prepare and support everyone involved. Even so, sitting across from the person you harmed, or the person who harmed you, can be hard. Everyone involved will have strong emotions, and talking about what happened can be challenging.

Also, even though restorative justice is becoming more popular, it's not mainstream yet. The idea of creating justice by repairing harm (instead of just giving punishments) is new to many. Because of this, it may be hard for everyone to trust the process. It may also be hard to find an experienced circle keeper. And it may take experienced circle keepers some time to explain how everything works.

When and how can I use restorative justice?
The restorative justice process can be used in interpersonal relationships. It can also be used as a response to harm that resulted in criminal charges. Communities are starting to use restorative justice for some crimes more often than they use punitive justice.

Cook County's Restorative Justice Community Courts (RJCC) work with young adults charged with non-violent felonies or misdemeanors. RJCC aims to end the harmful cycle of revenge and re-incarceration. They resolve conflict through restorative conferences and peace circles that include people who caused harm, people who have been harmed, family members, friends, others affected by the crime, and the community. Find more information at tinyurl.com/Chicago-RJCC or by emailing OCJ.chief@cookcountyil.gov .

Some community organizations will support you in repairing the harm related to a criminal charge, even if you've already served time for that charge. The Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation's Just Peace program is a community effort based in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood. They want to build a community that is engaged in restorative justice. They envision a healing community that includes people who have been harmed, people who have caused harm, and all of the people connected to them. You can find them at pbmr.org/project-page or by calling (773) 952-6643.

Is anything off limits for restorative justice?
There is no kind of harm that is off limits for restorative justice. It is a community process, and for this reason, the communities and individual people involved in each conflict will decide how and when to use it. It has worked well for everything from murder and sexual violence to non-criminal harms that happened in families or personal relationships.

The restorative justice process is powerful, but doing it without experienced help could get very messy. It needs to be done with experienced circle keepers who can prepare and support everyone involved.

To learn more,
Read the *Little Book of Restorative Justice* at tinyurl.com/LittleBookofRJ .
Watch

- *Why Do We Need Restorative Justice* at tinyurl.com/RJ-video1 . This video introduces restorative justice. It is narrated by Danielle Sered of Common Justice, who wrote *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair.*
- *Step Inside the Circle* at tinyurl.com/RJ-video3 . This video shows a group of incarcerated men using restorative justice practices to understand the impacts of their childhood traumas.

Find regional and national groups who can help you begin your journey. See our directory on p. 153.
Browse Mikhail Lyubanski's vast list of restorative justice resources: tinyurl.com/RJ-resource-list . Dr. Lyubanski is a professor of psychology at the University of Illinois who focuses on restorative justice. He provided the research and most of the writing for this chapter.

And, if you feel you could benefit from participating in a restorative justice process, **contact Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation's Just Peace program** at pbmr.org/project-page or by calling (773) 952-6643.

Connecting with Your Community



After being released from prison, many people find it hard to connect with others. You were separated from your family and friends. Now you may feel loneliness and isolation, especially if the people you were close to are no longer around.

Getting involved in your community and making new friends might help you begin to heal. This may mean working to make a difference through politics, organizing, and volunteering. This may mean writing letters to elected officials, campaigning, voting, participating in government events, talking to people in your community, serving others who need help, and volunteering your time.

Community Organizing and Advocacy

A community can be made of people who live in the same area, or it can be made of people who have something in common. Community organizing is when community members join together and push for their needs and rights. Community organizing is a tool for making your voice heard and creating positive change. You would be surprised by what you can do when you join together with others to make sure your community's voice is heard.

Community organizing can include:

- Gathering information about your community's needs
- Going door-to-door to share information
- Giving public speeches
- Setting up meetings
- Sharing information about your community with the public
- Developing community leadership
- Coordinating fundraisers

There are many organizations that do community organizing online and on the ground. Now that you are out of prison, you can help them in important ways. You can help change the laws that affect people who have been in prison—and the people who might end up there. Unless we create these changes, the same societal problems that may have tripped you up could trip up future generations, too. These problems aren't only around law enforcement and prison. This is also about education, housing, employment, physical and mental health, and more. It's about advocating for your community's right to the resources that are the foundation for wellness. The best place to start is by hooking up with the organizations already doing good work in your community.

The next section lists some good places to meet people and learn more about getting active in your community.

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

Getting Involved in Your Community

Find local organizations, community activities, and ways to get involved at the centers and services listed here:

Religious Organizations

Churches, synagogues, mosques, or other religious communities can help you find meaning, purpose, and fellowship. Many religious organizations have classes, support groups, and volunteer opportunities. Don't worry if it takes a while for you to find the place that feels right for you.

Libraries
Public libraries organize events and classes. They have book clubs, social gatherings, and concerts. Many also have a space where people can post information about community events, group meetings, and even job openings. Visit your local library's website or stop by in-person to see what's happening in your community.

Reentry Programs
If you live in a town with a reentry program, consider volunteering your time there. Even if you didn't use this program, you could help people who are getting out of prison now. Let them know you are happy to help. With some luck, you may even be able to turn your volunteer work into a paid job. You can start your search for local programs with the resources in the directory (see p. 153).

City and County Park Districts and Forest Preserves
Your town or city probably has a park district, and its website will include information about the parks in your area. Take time to visit these parks and spend time in nature. Many park districts offer sports programs and leagues, as well as other recreational programs.

Free City Papers
In many cities you can get free alternative newspapers weekly. They usually have local reporting on community issues and information on concerts, local events, and classes. The same information should also be on the paper's website.

Serving Your Community

Volunteer work gives you the chance to make friends, solve problems, and do some good for your community. It is also good for your health. Making new friends can prevent feelings of sadness and make you feel less alone. Watching your community improve—through the work that you've done—can give you a sense of pride and fulfillment.

If you are out of work, volunteering can also help you get new skills to add to your resume. You may also meet new people who can help you network and find new job opportunities. Volunteering expands your life in ways that may surprise you. You may discover new abilities or find new interests.

Some places you can volunteer:

- Senior living centers and nursing homes
- Humane societies
- Homeless shelters
- Food banks
- Local places of worship

Call or visit to ask how you can help out. You can also google volunteer opportunities in your community.

The Importance of Community

The Education Justice Project (EJP) is a college-in-prison program that offers classes at Danville Correctional Center. For EJP students who've reentered, like Angel Pantoja, community is key. Angel reentered after serving 23 years in Illinois prisons. He currently serves as Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton's Reentry Policy Coordinator. Several of his EJP classmates in the program helped him when he got out. Angel talked about his reentry in a speech he gave at a reception for EJP at the University of Illinois President's House on April 15, 2024. He describes this community:

> *We came out here and we understood that we needed each other. [...] The reentry process is a frustrating one. It's a lonely one. It's a confusing one. I am where I am because of the brothers that I had around me. Joseph Mapp, because he became the director of reentry services for Precious Blood Ministry [a reentry center in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood], he opened up his doors and allowed me an opportunity to stay there because I had nowhere else to stay.*
>
> *There were many others, who were EJP alums, who continued to follow up on me. Mike H. constantly used to call me—and he used to chastise me because I didn't call him back—but he did so because he understood that we needed each other. Again, I'm not where I'm at, if I don't have this family around me.*

Get involved in advocacy work. If we want to change the process, we have to lead the process.

—Marlon C.

Don't give up. Do what you can to promote change. Take the time out to try to mentor some of these young people that are out here in the hopes that, one day, we can bring about changes. Instead of wondering when somebody else is gonna do something about it, I need to remember that I'm somebody and try to do what I can.

—Anonymous

Connecting with your community is a win-win. It helps you on your reentry journey while it strengthens your community and lifts up those around you. EJP alumni have volunteered with, coordinated, and been employed by groups including:

Organization name	Website
Beyond the Walls Movement	facebook.com/BTWTheMovement
Challenge II Challenge	challengeiichange.org
Chicago 400 Alliance	chicago400.net
Coalition to Decarcerate IL	coalitiontodecarcerateil.com/general-7
Collective Liberation Coalition	collectiveliberationcoalition.org
Community Support Advisory Council	idoc.illinois.gov/communityresources/csac.html
Edovo (Education Over Obstacles)	edovo.com
Empire 13	facebook.com/p/Empire-13-100066760807169
First Followers	firstfollowersreentry.com
Give up the Streets (GUTS)	facebook.com/GiveUpTheStreets
House of Hope Peoria, INC.	facebook.com/houseofhopepeoria
IL Alliance for Reentry & Justice	ilarj.org
IL Coalition to End Permanent Punishments	endpermanentpunishments.org
Justice 20/20	justice2020.org
Restore Justice	restorejustice.org/our-work/advocacy/advocacy-team
Walls Turned Sideways	wallsturnedsideways.org
WIN (Women in Need) Recovery	win-recovery.org
The Women's Justice Institute: Reclamation Project	womensjusticeinstitute.org/reclamation-project

You can contact these groups and many others to find out how you can get involved in your community. See the Advocacy Resources in the directory (on p. 169) for more ideas.

Part 4: Directory

- Housing Resources
- Getting Your ID Resources
- Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources
- Health Resources
- Resources to Meet Basic Needs
- Restorative Justice Resources
- Employment Resources
- Legal Resources
- Family and Children Resources

1. Housing Resources

National Directories and Resources			
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Description**
Homeless Shelters Directory	homelessshelterdirectory.org		Directory of homeless shelters in US
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)	dceo.illinois.gov/communityservices/homeweatherization/communityactionagencies/helpillinoisfamilies.html		Government program that helps with home energy bills and minor home repairs, multiple locations
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans	nchv.org	(202) 546-1969	Veteran homelessness, housing, services
National Council on Independent Living	ncil.org	(202) 207-0334	Trainings and conferences, independent living resources, peer support, and advocacy for people with disabilities
Oxford House	oxfordvacancies.com		Online, national directory of transitional housing
Public Housing Authority Directory	hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts		Directory of Public Housing Authorities in the US
Salvation Army: Shelter Locator	salvationarmyusa.org/usn/provide-shelter		Faith-based emergency housing, shelters
Shelter Listings	shelterlistings.org		Online directory of homeless shelters, transitional housing, halfway houses in US
Substance Rehab Center Directory	substancerehabcenter.com/halfway-house		Online directory of substance use rehabilitation centers and programs
Transitional Housing Directory	transitionalhousing.org		Directory of transitional housing in US
Statewide Directories and Resources			
IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services	dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29764	(877) 581-3690	Serves individuals with disabilities and their families to meet employment and housing needs, apply online
Illinois Food Banks	illinoisfoodbanks.org/sites.asp		Directory of food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters
Illinois Housing Development Authority	ihda.org/about-ihda/cbrap	(312) 836-5200	Resource for rental assistance in Illinois
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois	lssi.org/services/affordable-housing-services/affordable-housing-developments/		Faith-based affordable housing program
Rosecrance Behavioral Health	rosecrance.org	(866) 784-3021	Subsidized housing, transitional housing, substance use treatment, women's and children's services, veterans services, mental health services
Chicago Citywide Resources			
Bridge to Freedom	bridge2freedom.org	(877) 359-1735	Faith-based residential reentry program, no cost

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Chicago	catholiccharities.net	(312) 655-7700	Rent and utility assistance, housing, domestic violence counseling and case management, immigration services, food, counseling and financial assistance
Chicago City Services Number	311.chicago.gov	311	Call for city services in Chicago: homeless shelters, food pantries, health clinics, employment opportunities, and more
Chicago Coordinated Entry System	csh.org/chicagoces	(312) 379-0301	Emergency housing, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing
Chicago Eviction Resource	chicago.gov/city/en/depts/doh/provdrs/renters/svcs/eviction-and-lockout-resources.html	(312) 744-3653	Eviction resources for Chicago residents, legal aid and rentervention hotlines
Chicago Housing Authority	thecha.org	(312) 742-8500	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Future Foundations	fufoinc.org	(773) 392-5905	Housing for people living with mental or physical disabilities
Heartland Human Care Services	heartlandhumancareservices.org	(773) 433-1200	Supportive transitional and permanent housing, veteran's services, reentry help program, employment development
Housing Authority of Cook County	thehacc.org	(312) 663-5447	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Justice Advisory Council Reentry Services	cookcountyil.gov/JACReentry		Rental housing support, rent assistance, utilities stipends, legal aid, health services, employment support
Mercy Housing	mercyhousing.org	(312) 447-4500	Housing for low-income families, seniors, individuals, and people with special needs
YMCA of Metro Chicago	ymcachicago.org/programs/housing	(312) 932-1200	Subsidized housing, rental assistance, resume writing assistance

Chicago Loop & West Side Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
Chicago House	chicagohouse.org	(773) 248-5200	2229 S Michigan Ave #304, Chicago, IL 60616	Transitional housing for those impacted by HIV
Inner Voice	innervoicechicago.org	(312) 994-5830	567 W Lake St #1150, Chicago, IL 60661	Transitional housing, workforce development, veteran services
Breakthrough Men's Center	breakthrough.org/locations/mens-center	(773) 346-1785	402 N St Louis Ave, Chicago, IL 60624	Faith-based housing, permanent supportive housing
Breakthrough Women's Center	breakthrough.org/locations/womens-center	(773) 722-0179	3330 W Carroll Ave, Chicago, IL 60624	Faith-based permanent housing for women, legal aid, food stamps, employment help, financial management, family workshops

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Daughter of Destiny Outreach Inc	facebook.com/groups/361273755048221	(312) 256-5285	929 S Independence Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624	Case management, anger-management, addiction counseling, domestic violence education/workshops, emergency shelter, food
Deborah's Place	deborahsplace.org	(773) 722-5080	2822 W Jackson Blvd, Chicago, IL 60612	Permanent supportive and transitional housing
Habilitative Systems Inc	habilitative.org/index.php	(773) 745-2620		Mental health, housing, child welfare, substance use services, 24-hour crisis line
Hand-N-Hand Outreach NFP	handnhandoutreachnfp.com	(773) 722-1312	4207 W Carroll Ave #100, Chicago, IL 60624	Transitional housing for men that are homeless, indigent, HIV/AIDS impacted, and/or mentally ill
Haymarket Center	hcenter.org	(312) 226-4357	120 N Sangamon St, Chicago, IL 60607	Substance use and mental health treatment centers
Hope House	transitionalhousing.com/hope-house	(773) 521-8442	3551 W Roosevelt Rd, Chicago, IL 60624	Transitional housing for men, reentry resource program, job readiness
Lawndale Community Church	online.lawndalechurch.org/recovery-ministry	(773) 762-6389	3827 W Ogden Ave, Chicago, IL 60623	Faith-based transitional housing
New Moms	newmoms.org	(773) 252-3253	5317 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60651	Housing for young mothers, job training, family support
Pacific Garden Mission	pgm.org	(312) 492-9410	1458 S Canal St, Chicago, IL 60607	Faith-based emergency and transitional housing programs
ReVive Center for Housing and Healing	revivecenter.org	(312) 997-2222	1668 W Ogden Ave, Chicago, IL 60612	Permanent supportive housing for homeless and those with disabilities
Salvation Army: Booth Manor Chicago	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/northcentralillinois/booth-manor-senior-residences/	(312) 243-1271	1500 W Madison St, Chicago, IL 60607	Permanent supportive housing for seniors
Salvation Army: Harbor Light Center Chicago	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/freedom/treatment-services	(312) 667-2200	825 N Christiana, Chicago, IL 60651	Faith-based recovery housing, supportive housing, substance use treatment
The Barnabas Project	barnabasproject.net/index.html		810 E Marshall Ct, Palatine IL 60074	Transitional housing for formerly incarcerated women, family and children services
Willis House of Refuge	facebook.com/willishouseofrefuge	(773) 287-3997	942 N Waller Ave, Chicago, IL 60651	Transitional housing for men, people experiencing homelessness, and veterans
Chicago North Side Resources				
Access Living	accessliving.org	(312) 640-2100	115 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60654	Housing, advocacy, and legal representation for people with disabilities

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Ascension Illinois Health Housing and Health Alliance	healthcare.ascension.org/specialty-care/behavioral-mental-health/why-ascension/ilchi-chicago-il-housing-and-health-alliance	(773) 327-9921	825 W Wellington Ave, Chicago, IL 60657	18-month sober living for those living with a chronic illnesses in a drug treatment program, including HIV/AIDS
Bridges Sober Living	bridgessoberliving.com	(312) 868-0626	2606 N California Ave, Chicago, IL 60647	Sober living house
Center for Changing Lives	cclconnect.org	(773) 342-6210	1955 N St Louis Ave, Chicago, IL 60647	Free employment services, job readiness, financial literacy, computer classes, referrals, housing search aid
Cornerstone Community Outreach	ccolife.org	(773) 271-8163	4628 N Clifton Ave, Chicago, IL 60640	Free transitional housing, food, casework help, clothes
Fresh Start Sober Living Environments	afreshstartsoberliving.com	(312) 238-8647	2310 W Belmont Ave, Chicago, IL 60618	Sober living house
Healthcare Alternative Systems	hascares.org	(312) 850-0050	4734 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60651	Transitional housing program, employment, long-term substance use recovery
Inspiration Corporation	inspirationcorp.org	(773) 878-0981	4554 N Broadway #207, Chicago, IL 60640	Housing, social services, job training, and food for people in need
Lincoln Park Community Shelter	lpcschicago.org	(773) 549-6111	600 W Fullerton Pkwy, Chicago, IL 60614	Transitional housing
Organizing Neighborhoods for Equality Northside	onenorthside.org	(773) 769-3232	4648 N Racine Ave, Chicago, IL 60640	Affordable housing, education, mental health help, healthcare, violence prevention
Salvation Army: Evangeline Booth Lodge Chicago	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/metro/boothlodge	(773) 275-9383	800 W Lawrence Ave, Chicago, IL 60640	Faith-based family emergency housing, children and family services, computer lab, food distribution
The Ark	arkchicago.org	(773) 973-1000	6450 N California Ave, Chicago, IL 60645	Free clinic for Jewish Chicagoans: healthcare, pharmacy, food pantry, transitional housing
Way Back Inn	waybackinn.org	(708) 345-8422	Multiple locations, IL	Transitional housing, substance use recovery, recovery home for veterans
Chicago South Side Resources				
Amer Living LLC	amerliving.com	(773) 968-4222 (708) 949-2022	Multiple locations, Chicago Southside	Transitional housing, reentry resources, life skills
Brighter, Behavior, Choices Inc	bbchoicesinc.wixsite.com/women	(773) 434-5526	6525 S Campbell Ave, Chicago, IL 60629	Substance use recovery home for women
Claretian Associates	claretianassociates.org	(773) 734-9181	3039 E 91st St, Chicago, IL 60617	Affordable housing services
Elite Houses of Sober Living	elitehousesofsoberliving.com	(773) 994-8353	1236 W 72nd Pl, Chicago, IL 60636	Transitional housing, substance use recovery

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Featherfist	featherfist.org	(773) 721-7088	2255 E 75th St, Chicago, IL 60649	Outreach, case management, housing, contractual services, veteran services
Franciscan Outreach	franoutreach.org	(773) 278-6724	1101 W Adams St #A, Chicago, IL 60607	Transitional housing, subsidized housing vouchers, emergency shelter, food
Hardin House	hardinhouseinc.org	(773) 874-3774	7249 S St Lawrence Ave, Chicago, IL 60619	Reentry services, temporary housing
Henry's Sober Living House	henryshouse.org	(773) 752-1300	Multiple locations, IL	Four sober living homes
Matthew House	matthewhousechicago.org	(773) 536-6628	3728 S Indiana Ave, Chicago, IL 60653	Employment help, day shelter, veteran services, permanent housing
More Chances Holistic Living House	facebook.com/people/More-Chances-Holistic-Living-House/61580217395427	(773) 940-6147	912 E 76th, Chicago, IL, 60619	Housing program, welcomes people with sex offenses
New Hope Recovery Center	new-hope-recovery.com	(773) 883-3916	2451 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago, IL 60614	Alcohol and drug treatment center, transitional housing, counseling
Olive Branch Mission	obmission.org	(773) 476-6200	6310 S Claremont Ave, Chicago, IL 60636	Faith-based emergency housing
Teamwork Englewood	teamworkenglewood.org	(773) 488-6600	815 W 63rd St #2, Chicago, IL 60621	Education, training, support groups, counseling, housing, food, family reunification, child support assistance, sealing/expunging
Northwest Suburbs Resources				
Aunt Martha's Aurora Health and Outreach Center	auntmarthas.org/location/aurora-health-and-outreach-center	(877) 692-8686	680 S River St, Aurora, IL 60506	Primary care, support for homelessness, sliding scale
Aurora Housing Authority	auroraha.com	(630) 701-9977	1449 Jericho Cir, Aurora, IL 60506	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Center of Concern	centerofconcern.org	(847) 823-0453	1665 Elk Blvd, Des Plaines, IL 60016	Housing support
Connections for the Homeless	cfthinc.org	(847) 475-7070	2121 Dewey Ave, Evanston, IL 60201	Emergency shelter, rent assistance, advocacy
Constitution House	mercyhousing.org/lakefront/constitution-house	(630) 896-2100	401 N Constitution Dr, Aurora, IL 60506	Affordable, subsidized housing for seniors
DuPage Housing Authority	dupagehousing.org	(630) 690-3555	711 E Roosevelt Rd, Wheaton, IL 60187	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
DuPage Pads	dupagepads.org	(630) 682-3846	601 W Liberty, Wheaton, IL 60187	Emergency housing, supportive subsidized housing
Eddie Washington Center	waukegantownship.com/174/Eddie-Washington-Center	(847) 244-0805	424 South Ave, Waukegan, IL 60085	Transitional housing for men

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Hesed House Shelter Programs	hesedhouse.org	(630) 897–2156	659 S River St, Aurora, IL 60506	Emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, job guidance
Home of the Sparrow	hosparrow.org	(815) 271-5444	1991 Duncan Pl, Woodstock, IL 60098	Short-term transitional housing, rapid rehousing program
Housing Authority of Elgin	haelgin.org	(847) 742-3853	130 S State St, Elgin, IL 60123	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Forward	housingforward.org	(708) 338-1724	1851 S 9th Ave, Maywood, IL 60153	Emergency housing, supportive housing
Lake County Housing Authority	lakecountyha.org	(847) 223-1170	33928 N Rte 45, Grayslake, IL 60030	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Lazarus House	lazarushouse.net	(630) 587-2144	214 Walnut St, Saint Charles, IL 60174	Shelter, food, rental assistance
McHenry County Housing Authority	mchenrycountyhousing.org	(815) 338-7752	1125 Mitchell Ct, Crystal Lake, IL 60014	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
McHenry County Service Directory	mchenrycountyil.gov/county-government/advance-components/staff-directory-list			Online directory for services in McHenry County
NewDay Apartments	newdayapartments.com	(847) 628-7999	25 Telser Rd #56, Lake Zurich, IL 60047	Affordable apartments for people with sex offense convictions
North Chicago Housing Authority	northchicagohousing.org	(847) 785-4300	1440 Jackson St, North Chicago, IL 60064	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Oak Park Housing Authority	oakparkha.org	(708) 386-9322	21 S Blvd, Oak Park, IL 60302	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
San Michels Sober Living	sanmichelsoberliving.com	(224) 517-6658	1101 Tower Rd, Schaumburg, Illinois, 60173	Recovery housing, reentry support
Staben House	waukegantownship.com/176/Staben-House	(847) 244-9944	149 S Genesee St, Waukegan, IL 60085	Transitional housing for women and children
Waukegan Housing Authority	waukeganhousing.com	(847) 244-8500	1707 N McAree Rd, Waukegan, IL 60085	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Wayside Cross Ministries	waysidecross.org	(630) 892-4239	215 E New York St, Aurora, IL 60505	Free residential work program, daytime shelter for homeless
YWCA Evanston/ North Shore Bridges	ywca-ens.org/bridges	(847) 864-8445	1215 Church St, Evanston, IL 60201	Re-housing system intended for use by former victims of violence in the Chicago area
Wings	wingsprogram.com	(847) 519-7820	Multiple locations, IL	Emergency shelter/ transitional housing for victims of domestic violence, 24-hour crisis line

1. Housing Resources

Southwest Suburbs Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
DuPage/ Kendall Housing Authority	dupagehousing.org	(630) 690-3555	811 John St, Yorkville, IL 60560	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Guardian Angel Community Services	gacsprograms.org	(815) 729-0930	168 N Ottawa St, Joliet, IL 60432	Emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour domestic violence and sexual assault hotlines
Housing Authority of Joliet	hajoliet.org	(815) 727-0611	6 S Broadway St, Joliet, IL 60436	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Morning Star Mission	morningstarmission.org	(815) 722-5780	350 E Washington St, Joliet, IL 60432	Faith-based recovery program, housing, counseling, food pantry
Safe Journeys	safejourneysillinois.org	(815) 673-1555	LaSalle and Livingston counties, IL	Counseling, shelter, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour crisis line
Town of Cicero Housing Department	thetownofcicero.com/departments/housing-department	(708) 656-8223	1634 S Laramie Ave, Cicero, IL 60804	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Village of Park Forest Housing Authority	villageofparkforest.com/263/Housing-Authority	(708) 748-1112	350 Victory Dr, Park Forest, IL 60466	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Northwest Illinois Resources				
Boone County Housing Authority	nireach.org/about-nireach/boone-county-housing-authority-board	(815) 544-0084	2036 N State St, Belvidere, IL 61008	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Carpenter's Place	carpentersplace.org	(815) 964-4105	1149 Railroad Ave, Rockford, IL 61104	Faith-based transitional housing, recovery housing, permanent supportive housing
Carroll County Housing Authority	carrollcountyha.com	(815) 273-7081	525 3rd St, Savanna, IL 61074	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Grundy County Housing Authority	morrisil.org/business_directory/grundy-county-housing-authority	(815) 942-6198	1802 N Division St #507, Morris, IL 60450	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of Henry County	henrycountyhousing.us	(309) 852-2801	125 N Chestnut St, Kewanee, IL 61443	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of the City of Freeport	freeporthousing.org	(815) 232-4171	1052 W Galena Ave, Freeport, IL 61032	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of the County of DeKalb	dekcohousing.com	(815) 758-2692	310 N 6th St, DeKalb, IL 60115	Public housing and/or housing vouchers

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Jo Daviess County Housing Authority	jdcha.org	(815) 777-0782	347 Franklin St, Galena, IL 61036	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Mother House Crisis Nursery	cap4kids.org/rockford/651875924/?doing_wp_cron=1698464706.1195530891418457031250	(815) 962-4858	1603 S 4th St, Rockford, IL 61104	Crisis care for homelessness, domestic violence, joblessness, substance use, parental support
Ogle County Housing Authority	oglecountyhousing.org	(815) 732-1301	1001 Pines Rd A, Oregon, IL 61061	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Rockford Housing Authority	rockfordha.org	(815) 489-8500	223 S Winnebago St, Rockford, IL 61102	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Shelter Care	shelter-care.org	(815) 964-5520	218 7th St, Rockford, IL 61104	Emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing
Twin Cities Homeless Shelter	twincitiespads.org	(815) 626-2210	111 Wahl Rd, Sterling, IL 61081	Emergency shelter for up to 25 guests a night
Whiteside County Housing Authority	wcopha.org	(815) 625-0581	401 W 18th St, Rock Falls, IL 61071	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Winnebago County Housing Authority	nireach.org/about-nireach/ni-reach-board	(815) 963-2133	3617 Delaware St, Rockford, IL 61102	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Zion Development Corporation	ziondevelopment.org	(815) 964-8280	910 5th Ave #1E, Rockford, IL 61104	Affordable, subsidized housing
West Central Illinois Resources				
Adams County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/clayton-county-housing-authority	(217) 894-7022	104 N Adams St, Clayton, IL 62324	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Beerlahai Roi Women's Ministry	beerlahairoi.com/home	(217) 698-4194	PO Box 4351, Springfield, IL 62708	Shelter, food, clothing, and care for pregnant women
Brown County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/mount-sterling-county-housing-authority/	(217) 773-2731	400 N Maple St, Mt Sterling, IL 62353	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Bureau County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/princeton-county-housing-authority	(815) 879-8106	444 S Church St, Princeton, IL 61356	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Contact Ministries	shelterlistings.org/details/38810	(217) 753-3939	1100 E Adams, Springfield, IL 62703	Shelter for women with children, food, clothing, and employment assistance
Dream Center Peoria	dreamcenterpeoria.org	(309) 676-3000	714 Hamilton Blvd, Peoria, IL 61603	The Village: supportive housing program for women, children and families. The Shelter: 24/7 emergency shelter for women, children and families

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
East Peoria Housing Authority	eastpeoriahousingauthority.com	(309) 698-4718	139 Cole St, East Peoria, IL 61611	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Fulton County Housing Authority	fultoncountyhousingauthority.org	(309) 647-4120	Multiple locations, Fulton County, IL	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Galesburg Rescue Mission & Women's Shelter	galesburgrescuemission.org	(309) 343-4151	547 N Farnham St, Galesburg, IL 61401	Emergency shelter, food distribution with peer support specialist on site
Hancock County Housing Authority	hancockcountyhousing.org	(217) 852-3482	625 W 3rd St PO Box 472, Dallas City, IL 62330	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of Cass County	beardstownil.org/housing-authority-of-the-county-of-cass	(217) 323-2303	9 Otto Turner Dr, Beardstown, IL 62618	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of LaSalle County	halc.org	(815) 434-0380	526 E Norris Dr, Ottawa, IL 61350	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of McDonough County	mcdonoughcountyhousing.org	(309) 837-2363	322 W Piper St, Macomb, IL 61455	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of the City of Pekin	pekinhousingauthority.com	(309) 346-7996	1901 Broadway, Pekin, IL 61554	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Inner City Mission	innercitymission.net	(217) 525-3940	726 N 7th St, Springfield, IL 62702	Faith-based shelter, education, counseling for homeless population
Knox County Housing Authority	knoxcountyhousing.org	(309) 342-8129	216 W Simmons St, Galesburg, IL 61401	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Logan County Housing Authority	logancountyhousingauthority.org	(217) 732-7776	1028 N College St, Lincoln, IL 62656	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Mason County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/havana-county-housing-authority	(309) 210-0111	201 E Hurst St, Havana, IL 62644	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Menard County Housing Authority	menardcha.org	(217) 632-7723	117 N 7th St, Petersburg, IL 62675	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Mercer County Housing Authority	mercercountyha.org	(309) 582-5410	609 NW 4th Ave, Aledo, IL 61231	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
MERCY Communities	mercycommunities.org	(217) 753-1358	1344 N 5th St, Springfield, IL 62702	Transitional housing and support for homeless and at-risk women with children
Moline Housing Authority	molinehousing.com	(309) 764-1819	4141 11th Ave A, Moline, IL 61265	Public housing and/or housing vouchers

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
One Body One Purpose	onebodyonepurposeministries.org	(309) 242-9785	2524 Martin Luther King Jr Dr, Peoria, IL 61604	Faith-based transitional housing for women, substance use treatment, family and children services
Pathway Ministries	pathwaypeoria.org	(309) 676-6416	601 SW Adams, Peoria, IL 61602	Faith-based emergency shelter, counseling, advocacy
Pathways Ministries Esther House	peoriarescue.org/index.php/residential/emergency-services/women-s-emergency-shelter	(309) 689-0915	6847 N Allen Rd, Peoria, IL 61614	Faith-based transitional housing and crisis relief services for women
Peoria Housing Authority	peoriahousing.org	(309) 676-8736	100 S Richard Pryor Pl, Peoria, IL 61605	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Peoria Salvation Army	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/peoria	(309) 655-7220	401 NE Adams St, Peoria, IL 61603	Housing, veteran services, family services, food distribution
Salvation Army Quincy Area Command	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/midland/quincy	(217) 222-2087	501 Broadway St, Quincy, IL 62301	Faith-based emergency shelter, children and family services, food pantry
Salvation Army: Pekin	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/pekin	(309) 346-3010	243 Derby St, Pekin, IL 61554	Faith-based transitional housing, emergency shelter, food, rent assistance
Salvation Army: Peoria Family Shelter	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/peoria/equip-families	(309) 655-7272	417 NE Adams St, Peoria, IL 61629	Faith-based emergency shelter, food distribution
Samaritan Well Inc	thesamaritanwellinc.org	(309) 837-3357	1306 Maple Ave, Macomb, IL 61455	Emergency shelter, food, educational and vocational supports, employment
Sojourn Shelter and Services, Inc	help4dv.org	(217) 726-5100	1800 Westchester Blvd, Springfield, IL 62704	Domestic violence emergency housing, court advocacy, children's program
South Side Mission	southsidemission.org	(309) 676-4604	1127 S Laramie St, Peoria, IL 61605	Faith-based emergency shelter
Springfield Housing Authority	springfieldhousingauthority.org	(217) 753-5757	200 N 11th St, Springfield, IL 62703	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Warren County Housing Authority	facebook.com/warrencountyhousingauthority	(309) 734-2080	200 E Harlem Ave, Monmouth, IL 61462	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Woodford County Housing Authority	woodfordcountyhousingauthority.com	(309) 467-4623	410 E Eureka Ave, Eureka, IL 61530	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
East Central Illinois Resources				
Bloomington Housing Authority	bloomingtonha.com	(309) 829-3360	104 E Wood St, Bloomington, IL 61701	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Christian County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/pana-county-housing-authority	(217) 562-3742	101 E 2nd St PO BOX 86, Pana, IL 62557	Public housing and/or housing vouchers

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Clark County Housing Department	clarkcountyil.org	(217) 826-5541	208 Maple St, Marshall, IL 62441	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Coles County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/mattoon-county-housing-authority	(217) 235-4175	109 Prairie Ave, Mattoon, IL 61938	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Cumberland County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/toledo-county-housing-authority	(217) 849-2071	206 E Washington St, Toledo, IL 62468	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Danville Rescue Mission	drm3150.wixsite.com/danvillerescue	(217) 446-7223	834 N Bowman Ave, Danville, IL 61832	Faith-based substance use recovery residence, shelter, food distribution
Decatur Housing Authority	decaturhousing.com	(217) 423-7711	1808 E Locust St, Decatur, IL 62521	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
DeWitt County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/clinton-county-housing-authority-2	(217) 935-8804	100 S Railroad St, Clinton, IL	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Dove Shelter	doveinc.org/programs/domestic-violence-program	(217) 423-2238	302 S Union, Decatur, IL 62522	Emergency shelter for adults and children experiencing domestic violence
Edgar County Housing Authority	findhelp.org/edgar-county-housing-authority--paris-il--hud-public-housing-program/6219275209015296?postal=61944	(217) 465-8458	604 Highland Dr, Paris, IL 61944	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
First Followers	firstfollowersreentry.com	(217) 607-1131	314 Cottage Ct, Champaign, IL 61820	Mentoring, employment services, family reunification, referrals, transitional housing including for people on the sex offense registry
Ford County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/gibson-city-county-housing-authority/	(217) 784-5488	214 E 7th St, Gibson City, IL 60936	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Greater Metropolitan Area Housing Authority of Rock Island County	gmaharic.org	(309) 755-4527	621 17th Ave, East Moline, IL 61244	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Home Sweet Home Ministries	hshministries.org	(309) 828-7356	303 E Oakland Ave, Bloomington, IL 61701	Faith-based emergency shelter
Housing Authority of Champaign County	hacc.net	(217) 378-7100	2008 N Market St, Champaign, IL 61822	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of the City of Bloomington	bloomingtonha.com	(309) 829-3360	104 E Wood St, Bloomington, IL 61701	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Jesus is the Way Ministries	jitwministries.aplos.org	(217) 892-4044	602 W Liberty Ave #98, Rantoul, IL 61866	Housing, food, clothing, spiritual guidance, drug and alcohol recovery, job training

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Kankakee County Housing Authority	kchail.com	(815) 939-7125	185 Saint Joseph Ave, Kankakee, IL 60901	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Livingston County Housing Authority	facebook.com/Livingstoncountyhousingauthority	(815) 844-6013	903 W North St, Pontiac, IL 61764	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Piatt County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/hammond-county-housing-authority	(217) 262-3231	103 W 1st St, Hammond, IL 61929	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
RiZe Abve		(618) 554-9726		Supportive housing, call for screening
Salvation Army: Bloomington	salvationarmyusa.org/il/bloomington/w-washington-street-corps/	(309) 829-9476	611 W Washington St, Bloomington, IL 61701	Faith-based emergency shelter, veteran services, food distribution
Shelby County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/shelbyville-county-housing-authority	(217) 774-2167	414 S Morgan, Shelbyville, IL 62565	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Vermilion Housing Authority	vermilionhousing.com	(217) 443-0621	1607 Clyman Ln, Danville, IL 61832	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
WIN Recovery	win-recovery.org	(872) 283-1305	720 Devonshire Dr #B1, Champaign IL 61821	Wraparound support services: housing and recovery-based programming for women and LGBTQ+ clients, legal assistance
Southwest Illinois Resources				
Alcoholic Rehabilitation Community Home	archhouse.org/4701.html	(618) 877-4987	1313 21st St, Granite City, IL 62040	Residential substance use treatment center, individual and group therapy, recreational activities
Alton Housing Authority	altonhousing.com	(618) 465-4269	2406 Crawford St, Alton, IL 62002	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Bond County Housing Authority	bondcountyhousing.com/home	(618) 664-2321	220 E Winter St, Greenville, IL 62246	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Calhoun County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/hardin-county-housing-authority	(618) 576-2236	2 Herron St, Hardin, IL 62047	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
East St Louis Housing Authority	eslha.org	(618) 646-7100	700 N 20th St, East St Louis, IL 62205	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Evolve Housing	evolve-support.com	(888)-807-5520	10606 W Main Belleville IL, 62223	Affordable, parole-compliant housing for people 55+, access to resources
Granite City Housing Authority	granitecityha.org	(618) 876-0975	2517 Nameoki Rd, Granite City, IL 62040	Public housing and/or housing vouchers

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Housing Authority of Greene County	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/white-hall-county-housing-authority	(217) 374-2128	325 N Carr St, White Hall, IL 62092	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of Wabash County	wabashcountychamber.com/chamber_members/housing	(618) 262-5518	330 W 10th St, Mt Carmel, IL 62863	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Jersey County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/jerseyville-county-housing-authority	(618) 498-9516	505 Horn Dr, Jerseyville, IL 62052	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Macoupin County Housing Authority	teamhousingcenter.com	(217) 854-8606	PO Box 226, 760 Anderson St, Carlinville, IL 62626	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Madison County Housing Authority	mchail.org	(618) 345-5142	2 Eastport Plaza Dr, Collinsville, IL 62234	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Marion County Housing Authority	mchahomes.org	(618) 532-1894	719 Howard St, Centralia, IL 62801	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Montgomery County Housing Authority	montgomeryhousing.org	(217) 532-3672	216 Shelbyville Rd, Hillsboro, IL 62049	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Morgan County Housing Authority	morgancountyhousing.org	(217) 243-3338	211 S Fayette St, Jacksonville, IL 62650	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Perry County Housing Authority	perrycountyhousing.org	(618) 542-5409	Multiple locations, Du Quoin, IL	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Pike County Housing Authority	pikehousing.com	(217) 407-0707	838 Mason St, Barry, IL 62312	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Quincy Housing Authority	quincyhousing.org	(217) 222-0720	540 Harrison St, Quincy, IL 62301	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Randolph County Housing Authority		(618) 826-4314	916 George St, Chester, IL 62233	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Scott County Housing Authority		(217) 742-3174	143 S Walnut St, Winchester, IL 62694	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Southern Illinois Reentry	southernillinoisreentry.org	(618) 771-7828		Residential reentry facility to help returning residents successfully reunite with their home communities
St Claire County Housing Authority	sccha.org/home.html	(618) 277-3290	1790 S 74th St, Belleville, IL 62223	Public housing and/or housing vouchers

1. Housing Resources

Southeast Illinois Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
Alexander County Housing Authority	acha734.org/default.aspx	(618) 734-1910	1100 Halliday Ave #191, Cairo, IL 62914	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
City of Marion Housing Authority	marionhousing.org	(618) 997-1258	501 N Market St, Marion, IL 62959	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Clay County Housing Authority		(618) 662-5311	201 S Locust St, Flora, IL 62839	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Effingham County Housing Authority		(217) 342-3520	215 N Banker St, Effingham, IL 62401	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Franklin County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/west-frankfort-county-housing-authority/	(618) 932-2124	302 E Elm St, West Frankfort, IL 62896	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Good Samaritan Carbondale	goodsamcarbondale.org	(618) 457-5794	701 S Marion St, Carbondale, IL 62901	Emergency shelter, transitional housing, food, emergency assistance
Hamilton County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/mc-leansboro-county-housing-authority	(618) 643-3265	606 S Marshall Ave, McLeansboro, IL 62859	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Hardin County Housing Authority	facebook.com/HCHAIL066	(618) 287-2786	355 Walnut St, Elizabethtown, IL 62931	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Hopes Corner		(618) 439-6537	1600 N Main St, Benton, IL 62812	Affordable housing
Housing Authority of Gallatin County	affordablehousing.com/housing-authority-il/housing-authority-of-gallatin-county-1590/	(618) 269-3080	117 W Wilson Ave, Shawneetown, IL 62984	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of Jefferson County	apps.hajc.org	(618) 244-5910	109 Shiloh Dr, Mt Vernon, IL 62864	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Housing Authority of Pulaski County	hapulaskico.org	(618) 745-6330	130 Richland Tce PO Box 246, Mounds, IL 62964	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Jackson County Housing Authority	jacksoncountyhousingauthority.org	(618) 684-3183	300 N 7th St, Murphysboro, IL 62966	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Johnson County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/vienna-county-housing-authority	(618) 658-5811	501 N 4th St, Vienna, IL 62995	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Massac County Housing Authority	facebook.com/MASSACCOUNTYHOUSINGAUTHORITY	(618) 524-8411	1209 E 5th St, Metropolis, IL 62960	Public housing and/or housing vouchers

1. Housing Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Pope County Housing Authority	popeco-il.com	(618) 683-4791	802 Franklin St, Golconda, IL 62938	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Richland County Housing Authority	rcha1.com/home.html	(618) 395-2571	129 E Scott St, Olney, IL 62450	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Saline County Housing Authority	facebook.com/SalineCountyHousingAuthority	(618) 252-6381	918 W Barnett St, Harrisburg, IL 62946	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Union County Housing Authority	www.myucha.com	(618) 833-5129	PO Box 317, Anna, IL 62906	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Wayne County Housing Authority	officialhousingauthority.com/illinois/fairfield-county-housing-authority	(618) 842-9008	303 N 1st St, Fairfield, IL 62837	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
White County Housing Authority	whitecountyhousing.com	(618) 966-3868	500 4th St, Crossville, IL 62827	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
Williamson County Housing Authority	ilwcha.com	(618) 985-2422	300 Hickory, Carterville, IL 62918	Public housing and/or housing vouchers
St Louis, Missouri Resources				
Catholic Charities of St Louis	archstl.org/agencies/catholic-charities-of-st-louis	(314) 367-5500	4445 Lindell Blvd, St Louis, MO 63108	Rent and utility assistance, housing, domestic violence counseling/case management, immigration, food, financial assistance
Epworth Children and Family Services	epworth.org	(314) 961-5718	110 N Elm Ave, Webster Groves, MO 63119	Weekly in-home counseling, parenting skill-building and support, help for children with behavioral issues, housing support
New Life Evangelistic Center	newlifeevangelisticcenter.org	(314) 421-3020	Multiple locations, St Louis, MO	Faith-based emergency shelters
Peter and Paul Community Services	ppcsinc.org	(314) 588-7111	2612 Wyoming St, St Louis, MO 63118	Emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing
Salvation Army: Greater St Louis Metropolitan Area	centralusa.salvationarmy.org/midland		Multiple locations, St Louis, MO	List of Salvation Army faith-based emergency shelters and senior housing options, family and children services, veteran services, substance use treatment, LGBTQ+ support

2. Getting Your ID Resources

National and Statewide Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
CityKey ID	chicityclerk.com/about-citykey/how-apply			A government-issued ID, Chicago Public Library Card, Chicago Transit Authority Ventra Card, and Chicago Rx prescription drug discount card. Find the application and schedule your appointment online
Illinois Secretary of State Office Locator	ilsos.gov/facilities/facilitylist.html	(800) 252-8980		Provides state IDs, drivers' license, license plate renewal, title and registration and more. Some services available online. Provides list of Secretary of State offices throughout state
Selective Service Registration	sss.gov/register	(847) 688-6888	PO Box 94739 Palatine, IL 60094	Information about registering for selective service
Social Security Office Locator	ssa.gov/locator			Search engine to find local social security offices

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Illinois IDOC and Parole Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
IDOC Chicago Office	idoc.illinois.gov/contactus.html		555 W Monroe #600-S, Chicago, IL 60661	Supervision of parolees and people on electronic monitoring, programming for parolees, drug and mental health treatment programs, emergency housing, educational and vocational programs
IDOC Parolee Assistance Office	idoc.illinois.gov/parole/offenderassistance.html	(800) 666-6744		Call if you have questions about parole
IDOC Springfield Office	idoc.illinois.gov/contactus.html	(217) 558-2200	1301 Concordia Ct, PO Box 19277, Springfield, IL 62794	Supervision of parolees and people on electronic monitoring, programming for parolees, drug and mental health treatment, emergency housing, educational and vocational programs
Illinois Bureau of Identification	isp.illinois.gov/BureauOfIdentification			State resource on expungement, rap sheet collection, background checks
Illinois Prison Talk	illinoisprisontalk.org/index.php			Find criminal records
Illinois State Police Murderer and Violent Offender Against Youth Registry FAQs	isp.illinois.gov/MVOAY/FAQs			Information about registration requirements

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Illinois State Police Sex Offender Registry FAQs	isp.illinois.gov/Sor/FAQs			Information about registration requirements
I-SORT Hotline		(888) 414-7678		Call if you have questions about the Illinois Sex Offense Registry
Reentry Organizations | Statewide				
Community Support Advisory Council	idoc.illinois.gov/communityresources/csac.html	(773) 786-0226	Multiple locations, IL	IDOC program to "help individuals to become productive members of their communities and to lead crime-free, drug-free lives, and prevent recidivism"
Education Justice Project	educationjustice.net	(217) 300-5150	1001 S Wright St, Champaign, IL 61820	College in prison program, creator of the reentry guide. Write to request reentry guides
IDES Reentry Employment Service Program	ides.illinois.gov/jobs-workforce/programs/re-entry.html	(800) 244-5631		Job readiness workshops, employment assistance
ILARJ Success Plan Resource Guide	ilarj.org/success-plan-resources		3015 E New York St, #A2-163, Aurora, IL 60504	Comprehensive reentry resource directory
Inside Out Network	insideoutnetwork.net			Connects people to reentry services: shelters and housing, substance use treatment, education, employment
Winners' Circles (TASC)	tasc.org	(855) 827-2444	Multiple locations, IL	Support group for reentry, substance use, mental health conditions. Some online, some in person
Reentry Organizations | Chicago and Chicago Loop				
Alliance of Local Service Organizations	also-chicago.org	(773) 235-5705	2519 W North Ave, Chicago, IL 60647	Violence prevention serving Chicago's northwest side
Chicago Returning Residents	chicago.gov/city/en/ofinterest/res/reentry.html			Website that connects people to reentry services in Chicago
Giving Others Dreams	givingothersdreams.online	(773) 437-4157	8832 S Commercial Ave, Chicago, IL 60617	Healing and empowerment of system-impacted women and their families, job readiness, entrepreneurship training, leadership development
Helping Our People Everyday (HOPE) Coalition	hopecoalitionchicago.org	(773) 580-4865	4912 W Madison, Chicago, IL 60644	Alliance of 13 organizations that provide services and resources to low-income communities
Heartland Human Care Services	heartlandhumancareservices.org	(773) 433-1200	4822 N Broadway, Chicago, IL 60640	Supportive transitional and permanent housing, veteran's services, reentry help program, employment development
Justice Advisory Council Reentry Services	cookcountyil.gov/JACReentry			Rental housing support, rent assistance, utilities stipends, legal aid, health services, employment support

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
National Alliance for the Empowerment of the Formerly Incarcerated	naefimentor.wixsite.com/naefi	(773) 593-2540	5820 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60651	Leadership development, conflict resolution, reentry support, community projects, legal support
PHIMC Community Reentry Events	phimc.org/events/category/community-reentry			Hosts events focused on reentry: Illinois Reentry Statewide and Taskforce meetings, Corrections Discharge Planning Trainings, Chicago Reentry Taskforce meetings, and more
Pushing Envelopes Chicago	pushingenvelopeschicago.org		PO Box 577942, Chicago, IL 60657	Reentry support and advocacy focusing on the LGBTQ+ community
Roosevelt University Life Skills Re-entry Program	englewoodportal.org/directory/3978	(312) 281-3370	18 S Michigan Ave #314, Chicago, IL 60603	Life skills instruction, case management services, employment help, education advice, bus vouchers
WIN Recovery	win-recovery.org	(872) 283-1305	621 S Plymouth Ct, Chicago, IL 60605	Wraparound support services: housing and recovery-based programming for women and LGBTQ+ clients, legal assistance, mental health support, substance use recovery, employment help, family services
Reentry Organizations | Chicago West Side				
Chicago Workforce Development Services for Returning Residents	chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fss/provdrs/workforce_development.html	(312) 743-0300	1615 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60622	Job training and placement for returning residents, low-income Chicagoans, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals experiencing homelessness, and individuals with limited English proficiency
CSAC West: Westside Health Authority	idoc.illinois.gov/communityresources/csac.html	(773) 786-0226	5816 W Division St, Chicago, IL 60651	IDOC program to "help individuals to become productive members of their communities and to lead crime-free, drug-free lives, and prevent recidivism"
Daughter of Destiny Outreach Inc	facebook.com/groups/361273755048221	(312) 256-5285	929 S Independence Blvd, Chicago, IL 60624	Case management, anger-management, addiction counseling, domestic violence education/workshops, recovery coaching, emergency shelter, food distribution
Greencorps Chicago	greencorpschicago.org	(312) 746-9777		Green industry job training program
Safer Foundation	saferfoundation.org	(312) 922-2200	571 W Jackson Blvd, Chicago, IL 60661	Employment, education, and support services, job training and job placement support
Sistas of the Hood	sistasofthehood.com	(773) 858-4453		Employment help, case management support, HIV assistance, support and advocacy
St Leonard's Ministries	slministries.org	(312) 738-1414	2100 W Warren Blvd, Chicago, IL 60612	Reentry services, education, training, job placement services

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Reentry Organizations | Chicago North and South Side				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
CSAC North: Howard Area Community Center	idoc.illinois.gov/communityresources/csac.html	(773) 262-6622	7648 N Paulina St, Chicago, IL 60626	IDOC program to "help individuals to become productive members of their communities and to lead crime-free, drug-free lives, and prevent recidivism"
CSAC South: Target Area Development Corp	targetarea.org	(773) 651-6470	1542 W 79th St, Chicago, IL 60620	IDOC program to "help individuals to become productive members of their communities and to lead crime-free, drug-free lives, and prevent recidivism"
Growing Home Inc	growinghomeinc.org	(773) 549-1336	5814 S Wood St, Chicago, IL 60636	Community farm business training, help to create stability
Phalanx Family Services	facebook.com/PhalanxFamilyServices	(773) 291-1086	837 W 119th St, Chicago, IL 60643	Education, training, mentoring, support groups, counseling, help with housing and food, family reunification and child support assistance, sealing/expunging
Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation	pbmr.org	(773) 952-6643	5114 S Elizabeth St, Chicago, IL 60609	Serves youth, families, and community members impacted by incarceration through community building and restorative justice approaches
Project H.O.O.D.	projecthood.org	(773) 923-8270	6620 S King Dr, Chicago, IL 60637	Reentry services, mentorship, training, and community building
Teamwork Englewood	teamworkenglewood.org	(773) 488-6600	815 W 63rd St #2, Chicago, IL 60621	Reentry services: education, training, mentoring, support groups, counseling assistance, connection to housing and food assistance, family reunification and child support assistance, information on sealing or expunging criminal records
Transforming Reentry Services	transformingreentry.org	(312) 328-9610	10 W 35th St, Chicago, IL 60616	Case management, support groups, family and parenting support services, telephone counseling, prison advocacy, health services
Woodlawn Community Reentry Program		(773) 301-0291		Reentry support, education and training
Reentry Organizations | Chicago Suburbs				
Challenge II Challenge	challengeiichange.org	(630) 907-7321	31 Downer Pl, Aurora, IL 60506	Education, empowerment, and behavior modification in and out of prison
DeKalb County Resource Guide	tinyurl.com/DeKalb-Resources			Comprehensive directory of reentry resources/services
JUST of DuPage	justofdupage.org	(630) 407-2201	501 N County Farm Rd, Wheaton, IL 60187	Reentry help, vocational and life skills training, education, addiction recovery within DuPage County Correctional Facility
Ink 180	facebook.com/Ink180	(630) 554-1404	27 Stone Hill Rd, D, Oswego, IL 60543	Free tattoo coverups and removals

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Legacy Reentry Foundation	legacyreentryfoundation.org	(800) 573-8538	420 W Clayton St, Waukegan, IL 60085	Employment and expungement services, clothing
NIRCO Recovery Support for Justice-Involved Individuals	nircolakecounty.org	(847) 662-3205	202 S Genesee St, Waukegan, IL 60085	RSJII provides services and resources to individuals to help navigate the barriers from engagement with the criminal legal system
Rebuilding Lives Inc	rebuildinglives28@gmail.com	(224) 395-8000	1551 Algonquin Rd, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008	Wraparound services for reentering men: emergency housing, education, job training
The Hinda Institute	hindahelps.com	(847) 296-1770	9401 Margail Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60016	Faith-based reentry program, counseling, advocacy
Reentry Organizations | East and West Central Illinois				
Elite Community Outreach	eliteoutreach.org	(309) 248-0211	3100 N Dries Ln #203, Peoria, IL 61604	Offers reentry classes to help prepare people for employment, high-school outreach programs
First Followers	firstfollowersreentry.com	(217) 607-1131	314 Cottage Ct, Champaign, IL 61820	Peer mentoring, employment services, advocacy, family reunification, service referrals, transitional housing including for people on the sex offense registry
House of Hope, Peoria	facebook.com/houseofhopepeoria	(309) 922-9390	514 Shelley St, Peoria, IL 61605	Outreach, mentorship, workforce development, case management, victim support, reentry services, violence prevention training
Jesus is the Way Ministries	jitwministries.aplos.org	(217) 892-4044	602 W Liberty Ave #98, Rantoul, IL 61866	Housing, food, clothing, spiritual guidance and counseling, substance recovery, job training
WIN Recovery	win-recovery.org	(872) 283-1305	701 Devonshire Dr, Champaign, IL 61820	Wraparound support services: housing and recovery-based programming for women and LGBTQ+ clients, legal assistance, mental health support, substance use recovery, employment help, family services
Reentry Organizations | Southwest and Southeast Illinois				
Abundant Life in Christ II	reentryprograms.com/go/abundant-life-in-christ-ii-inc	(217) 552-1177	911 W Bradley Ave, Champaign, IL 61821	Transitional housing for women on parole, reentry support, life skills classes
Our Brothers' Keepers of Southern Illinois	obkministry.org	(618) 271-7821	614 N 7th St, East St Louis, IL 62201	Faith-based reentry organization: peer counseling, employment and training, referrals
Southern Illinois Reentry	southernillinoisreentry.org	(618) 771-7828		Residential reentry facility to help returning residents successfully reunite with their home communities
Advocacy Resources | National				
Illinois Prison Fellowship	prisonfellowship.org/about/justicereform/legislation/state-issues/illinois	(800) 206-9764	PO Box 1550, Merrifield, VA 22116	Advocacy for justice reform and the use of restorative justice practices

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
National Council on Independent Living	ncil.org	(202) 207-0334		Trainings and conferences, independent living resources, peer support, and advocacy for people with disabilities
Prison Library Project	claremontforum.org/prisonlibraryproject	(909) 626-3066	586 W 1st St, Claremont, CA 91711	Free books to people in prison, gas cards for family visits, family support groups, events
Advocacy Resources | Statewide				
A Safe Place	asafeplaceforhelp.org	(800) 600-7233	2710 17th St #100, Zion, IL 60099	Domestic violence and human trafficking support and advocacy, 24-hour anonymous crisis line
Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition	cannabisequityil.org			Advocacy to ensure the legalization of cannabis in Illinois reinvests in the communities most impacted by the War on Drugs
Coalition to Decarcerate IL	coalitiontodecarcerateil.com/general-7			Advocacy related to the No New Prisons Illinois Campaign
Collective Liberation Coalition	collectiveliberationcoalition.org			Advocacy related to decarceration and restorative justice
Illinois Alliance for Reentry & Justice	ilarj.org		3015 E New York St #A2-163, Aurora, IL 60504	An alliance of impacted individuals, advocates, and service providers working on reentry in Illinois
Illinois Campaign for Prison Phone Justice	nationinside.org/campaign/illinois-for-prison-phone-justice			Advocacy and policy work to challenge mass incarceration
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority	icjia.illinois.gov	(312) 793-8550	60 E Van Buren St, #650, Chicago, IL 60605	A state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice
Illinois Online Voter Application	ova.elections.il.gov			Website to register to vote
Illinois Prison Project	illinoisprisonproject.org	(312) 324-4463	53 W Jackson #452, Chicago, IL 60604	Advocacy, public education, and direct representation of incarcerated people
Illinois Prisoner Rights Coalition	illinois-prc.com			Advocacy for incarcerated individuals experiencing rights violations from jails and prisons
Justice 20/20	justice2020.org			Community for system-impacted individuals and policy advocates looking to make a difference
NAMI	namiillinois.org	(217) 522-1403	Multiple locations, IL	Mental illness support, resources, advocacy. Find a support group
Restore Justice	restorejustice.org/our-work/advocacy/advocacy-team		PO Box 101099, Chicago, IL 60610	Illinois advocacy group fighting for criminal legal change, support groups for returning residents
Target Area	targetarea.org	(773) 651-6470	1542 W 79th St, Chicago, IL 60620	Advocacy related to social justice reform and systemic change in Illinois

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Women's Justice Institute	womensjusticeinstitute.org		2150 S Canalport #4A-1, Chicago, IL 60608	Advocacy for system-impacted women
Advocacy Resources | Chicago and Chicago Loop				
Alliance of Local Service Organizations	also-chicago.org	(773) 235-5705	2519 W North Ave, Chicago, IL 60647	Violence prevention serving Chicago's northwest side
Center for Conflict Resolution	ccrchicago.org	(312) 922-6464	11 E Adams St #500, Chicago, IL 60603	Free mediation services
Chicago 400	chicago400.net			Campaign for Chicagoans with past convictions who are listed on public registries and experiencing homelessness and therefore must register weekly with the Chicago Police Department
Chicago Coalition to End Homelessness	chicagohomeless.org	(312) 641-4140	70 E Lake St #720, Chicago, IL 60601	Legal representation, bilingual attorneys, advocacy
Community Renewal Society	communityrenewalsociety.org	(312) 427-4830	111 W Jackson Blvd #820, Chicago, IL 60604	Advocates for social and economic justice through training communities and individuals
Equity and Transformation	eatchicago.org			Advocacy, policy, and research focused on social and economic equity for Black workers
Institute for Nonviolence Chicago	nonviolencechicago.org	(773) 417-7421	1856 N LeClaire Ave, Chicago, IL 60639	Advocacy organization fighting to end the cycle of violence in Chicago
Lawndale Christian Legal Center	lclc.net	(773) 762-6381		Advocacy to end the cycle of violence in Chicago and cultivate restorative justice
Mayor's Office of Reentry	chicago.gov/reentry			Advocacy and communications on reentry in Chicago
Roseland Ceasefire	roselandceasefire.com	(708) 577-4533	12549 S Ashland Ave, Calumet Park, IL 60827	Gun violence prevention, domestic violence survivor support, counseling, youth mentorship programs
Shriver Center on Poverty Law	povertylaw.org	(312) 263-3830	67 E Madison St #2000, Chicago, IL 60603	Works with community organizations, service providers, legislators, and other allies to pursue justice for low-income clients
UCAN	ucanchicago.org	(773) 588-0180	3605 W Fillmore St, Chicago, IL 60624	Preventing violence, healing trauma, building strong families, educating and empowering youth
WJI Reclamation Project	womensjusticeinstitute.org/reclamation-project		2150 S Canalport #4A-1, Chicago, IL 60608	Transformative advocacy group for system-impacted women
Advocacy Resources | Chicago West Side				
Communities United	communitiesunited.org	(773) 583-1387	4600 W Palmer St, Chicago, IL 60639	Advocacy, housing support, violence prevention programs, health, education, immigration, police accountability, and more

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Enlace Chicago	enlacechicago.org	(773) 943-7570	2759 S Harding Ave, Chicago, IL 60623	Programs and advocacy that address education, health, immigration and violence prevention. Free legal clinic, education, community capacity building
Westside Justice Center	westsidejustice.org	(773) 940-2213	601 S California St, Chicago, IL 60612	Legal services and organizers for community building
Advocacy Resources | Chicago North and South Side				
Centers for New Horizons	cnh.org	(773) 373-5700	4150 S King Dr, Chicago, IL 60653	Community advocacy, clothes and food
Good Kids Mad City Englewood	gkmcenglewood.com	(773) 992-1837	2050 W 59th St, Chicago, IL 60636	Youth-based organization to lead events, volunteer, and career build with a focus on ending gun violence
John Howard Association	thejha.org	(312) 291-9183	70 E Lake St, #410, Chicago, IL 60601	Evaluate conditions for incarcerated people and staff
MacArthur Justice Center	macarthurjusticecenter.org	(312) 503-8576	375 E Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60611	Civil rights law firm
Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation	pbmr.org	(773) 952-6643	5114 S Elizabeth St, Chicago, IL 60609	Serves youth, families, and community members impacted by incarceration through community building and restorative justice approaches
Southwest Organizing Project	swopchicago.org	(773) 471-8208	2558 W 63rd St, Chicago, IL 60629	Advocacy and community building, family services
Transforming Reentry Services	transformingreentry.org	(312) 328-9610	10 W 35th St, Chicago, IL 60616	Case management, support groups, family and parenting support services, telephone counseling, prison advocacy, health services
Advocacy Resources | Chicago Suburbs				
A Safe Place	asafeplaceforhelp.org	(800) 600-7233	2710 17th St #100, Zion, IL 60099	Domestic violence and human trafficking support and advocacy, 24-hour anonymous crisis line
Connections for the Homeless	cfthinc.org	(847) 475-7070	2121 Dewey Ave, Evanston, IL 60201	Emergency shelter, rent assistance, advocacy
Juvenile Justice Initiative	jjustice.org	(847) 894-4206	518 Davis St #211, Evanston, IL 60201	Advocacy to reduce reliance on incarceration, enhance fairness for all youth. Offers community-based resources
Northwest Center Against Sexual Assault	nwcasa.org	(847) 806-6526	415 W Golf Rd #47, Arlington Heights, IL 60005	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy for sexual violence survivors, 24-hour crisis line
Advocacy Resources | East and West Central Illinois				
Build Programs Not Jails	programsnotjails.com		202 S Broadway Ave, Urbana, IL 61801	Advocacy, research to end mass incarceration

3. Parole, Reentry, and Advocacy Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Pathway Ministries	pathwaypeoria.org	(309) 676-6416	601 SW Adams, Peoria, IL 61602	Faith-based emergency shelter, counseling, advocacy, community building
Peoria County Family Justice Center	peoriacounty.org/408/Family-Justice-Center	(309) 676-4280	324 Main St #G13, Peoria, IL 61602	Support for victims of domestic violence, no appointment needed
Peoria Friendship House of Christian Service	friendship.house	(309) 671-5200	800 NE Madison Ave, Peoria, IL 61603	Advocacy, coaching, education, family resources
Advocacy Resources | Southeast and Southwest Illinois				
Beyond the Walls Movement	btwthemovementnfp.org		1740 Innovation Dr, Carbondale, IL 62903	Non-profit focusing on advocacy, education, and entrepreneurship
Empire 13	facebook.com/p/Empire-13-100066760807169	(618) 304-2107		Pro-abolitionist advocacy

4. Health Resources

Hotlines and Warmlines			
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Description**
CARES Line		(800) 345-9049	24-hour Crisis and Referral Entry Services (CARES) line for children, youth, and families having a mental health crisis
Chicago City Services Number	311.chicago.gov	311	Call for city services in Chicago: homeless shelters, food pantries, health clinics, employment opportunities, and more
Crisis Text Line	crisistextline.org	Text HOME to 741741	Receive help for any type of crisis. Trained crisis counselors will respond
Domestic Violence Hotline	thehotline.org	(800) 799-7233	24-hour anonymous domestic violence hotline, call or text START to 88788
HIV/AIDS State Hotlines	ryanwhite.hrsa.gov/hiv-care/hotlines	(800) 243-2437	Anonymous hotlines for HIV/AIDS treatment and clinical trial information
Illinois Helpline for Opioids & Alcohol Use	ilhelpline.thesmartice.com/findhelp	(833) 234-6343 or text "HELP" to 833234	Get immediate help for overdose and other substance use support
Illinois Warm Line		(866) 359-7953	Receive support by phone for mental health and/or substance use challenges. Open 8am-8pm Monday through Saturday.
SAMHSA Alcohol and Drug Use Helpline	samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline	(800) 662-4357	Referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations for substance use treatment
Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	988lifeline.org	988	Call if you or someone you know is thinking about suicide. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Veteran Crisis Line	veteranscrisisline.net	988 press 1	If you're a Veteran in crisis or a service member in crisis, or if you are concerned about one, call or text to get help. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Can also text 838255
WIRC-CAA Victims Services	wirpc.org/victim-services	(309) 837-5555	Domestic violence program, sexual assault program, medical advocacy, 24-hour anonymous crisis line

4. Health Resources

Medical Insurance Resources			
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Description**
ABE: Illinois Application for Benefits Eligibility	abe.illinois.gov	(800) 843-6154	Apply for benefits: healthcare coverage, SNAP (formerly food stamps), cash assistance, community supports, or Medicare Savings Program
IDHS: Office Locator	dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12	(800) 843-6154	Directory of Illinois Department of Human Services locations where you can get help applying for benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid, family services, community resources, and more
IHFS FamilyCare All Kids	hfs.illinois.gov/medicalprograms/allkids/familycare.html	(877) 204-1012	Healthcare coverage to parents living with children 18 years old or younger. Must meet income requirements
US Department of Veterans Affairs- Benefits	benefits.va.gov/benefits	(800) 698-2411	Assistance with accessing veteran benefits, medical centers
US Health Insurance Marketplace	healthcare.gov	(800) 318-2596	National website to sign up for health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare services
Health, Mental Health, and Substance Use Directories and Resources			
Center for Disease Control STI Index	cdc.gov/sti/index.html		Resources for those with STDs, HIV, or AIDS
Celebrate Recovery Locator	crlocator.com		Searchable directory of faith-based substance-use recovery groups
Chicago Mental Health Centers	chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/supp_info/behavioral-health/mental_health_centers.html		Services for adults with serious mental health difficulties, substance use difficulties, and PTSD
COVID-19 Resources	dph.illinois.gov/covid19/testing.html		Prevention, treatment, and testing for COVID-19
Directory of Dental Schools for Low-Cost Dental Care	coda.ada.org/en/find-a-program		Directory of dental schools that offer low-cost dental care
Esperanza Health Centers	esperanzachicago.org	(773) 584-6200	Bilingual primary care, health services regardless of immigration status, insurance, or ability to pay
Freedom Child Foundation	freedomchildfoundation.org		Resources and therapy for children and spouses of incarcerated people, helps families stay in touch
Free Clinic Directory	freeclinicdirectory.org/illinois_care.html		Directory of community health centers and resources
Illinois Association of Free & Charitable Clinics	illinoisfreeclinics.org	(630) 755-1215	Resource to find health resources
Low-Cost Dental Care Directory	nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/finding-dental-care		Directory of low-cost dental clinics
NAMI	namiillinois.org	(217) 522-1403	Mental illness support, resources, advocacy. Find a support group
Planned Parenthood Office Locator	plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-illinois/locations	(877) 200-7745	Directory of offices where you can get birth control counseling, reproductive healthcare, STD testing, and more

4. Health Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
Sober House Directory	soberhousedirectory.com		Online directory to find sober houses
Substance Rehab Center Directory	substancerehabcenter.com/halfway-house		Online directory of substance use rehabilitation centers and programs
Winners' Circles (TASC)	tasc.org	(855) 827-2444	Support groups for reentry, substance use, mental health conditions. Some online, some in person
Medication and Pharmacy Resources			
GoodRx	goodrx.com		Sign up to save up to 80% on prescriptions with coupons you can bring to pharmacies
Illinois RX Card	illinoisrxcard.com		Statewide prescription drug discount program
Professional Prescription Assistance	pparx.org		Medicine cost assistance
Rx Assist	rxassist.org		Free and low-cost medication resource
Substance Use Resources			
Alcoholics Anonymous	aa.org		Find a support group near you. Online support groups also available
Chestnut Health Systems	chestnut.org	(888) 924-3786	Substance use treatment, mental health, assists with applying for financial assistance for treatment
Chicago Recovery Alliance	anypositivechange.org	(773) 367-3771	Services for people living with substance use difficulties and/or HIV: injecting equipment, Naloxone (for opioid overdose), overdose training, harm reduction counseling
Gateway Foundation	gatewayfoundation.org	(877) 505-4673	Statewide substance use recovery, residential treatment centers
LifeRing Secular Recovery	lifering.org	(800) 811-4142	Resource to find secular sobriety meetings
Narcotics Anonymous	na.org		Find a support group near you
Rosecrance Behavioral Health	rosecrance.org	(866) 784-3021	Subsidized housing, transitional housing, substance use treatment, women's and children's services, veterans services, counseling and mental health services
WIN Recovery	win-recovery.org	(872) 283-1305	Wraparound support services: housing and recovery-based programming for women and LGBTQ+ clients, legal assistance, mental health support, substance use recovery, employment help, family services
Chicago Area Health Resources			
Cook County Health	cookcountyhealth.org		Health services for all Cook County residents, regardless of their ability to pay
Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago	phimc.org	(312) 629-2988	Substance use services, HIV care, opioid-impacted family support program, and more
Mindfulness Resources			
Mindfulness Coach	mobile.va.gov/app/mindfulness-coach		Free app to learn mindfulness, self-guided training program, resource library, exercises, goal-setting and tracking, assessment, access to support, and crisis resources
Palouse Mindfulness	palousemindfulness.com		Free online mental health mindfulness group
UCLA Mindful App	uclahealth.org/ulcamindful/ucla-mindful-app		Mindfulness phone app

4. Health Resources

Illinois Mental Health Resources			
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Description**
Bridgeway Inc	bway.org	(309) 344-2323	Mental health and human services
Centerstone	centerstone.org/locations/illinois/		24-7 crisis line, psychiatric care, substance use recovery, family services, military services, vocational support
Ecker Center for Behavioral Health	eckercenter.org	(847) 695-0484	Crisis services, therapy, psychiatric services, community support
Heritage Behavioral Health	heritagenet.org	(217) 362-6262	Counseling, crisis services, substance use recovery
Human Resources Development Institute	hrdi.org	(773) 291-2500	Crisis care, assessment and diagnosis, substance use treatment, primary care, counseling, family support, support for veterans
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois	lssi.org		Care for seniors, disability programs, crisis services, system-impacted and family care
Mutual Ground	mutualgroundinc.com	(630) 897-8383	Emergency shelter, counseling for domestic violence and substance use, advocacy, 24-hour anonymous crisis lines
OSF Behavioral & Mental Health	osfhealthcare.org/locations	(309) 624-9522	Mental and behavioral health counseling
Remedies Renewing Lives	remediesrenewinglives.org		Domestic violence services, substance use treatment, gambling addiction services, human trafficking services, 24-hour hotlines, mental health care
Resilience Counseling	resiliencecounselingrockford.com	(779) 970-8372	Family, individual, and couples therapy
Sinnissippi Centers	sinnissippi.org	(800) 242-7642	Trauma care, counseling, substance use treatment, crisis services, child services
Thresholds Center for Mental Wellbeing	thresholds.org	(773) 572-5500	Substance use services, mental health care, sliding scale, primary care, peer support services, counseling, crisis services, vocational services, residential services
Transitions of Western Illinois	twi.org	(217) 223-0413	Crisis services, vocational services, substance use treatment, residential services, counseling
Trilogy Mental Health	trilogyinc.org	(773) 382-4060	24-hour crisis hotline, counseling, residential programs, programs for the homeless, occupational therapy
Eyecare Resources			
EyeCare America	aao.org/eyecare-america	(877) 887-6327	Medical eye exams, often at no cost
Goggles 4 U	goggles4u.com	(888) 972-9060	Low-cost glasses resource
AIDS/HIV Resources			
HIV.gov	hiv.gov/hiv-basics		Online government resource about HIV and AIDS
Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program	ryanwhite.hrsa.gov		HIV/AIDS medical care, medications, and essential support
Resources for People with Disabilities			
Americans with Disabilities Act National Network	adata.org	(800) 949-4232	Information on the ADA, regional contacts, employment resource hub, healthcare assistance
National Council on Independent Living	ncil.org	(202) 207-0334	Trainings and conferences, independent living resources, peer support, and advocacy for people with disabilities

For more resources, see our online directory at reentryillinois.net

5. Resources to Meet Basic Needs

Food | National and Statewide Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
Central Illinois Foodbank	centralilfoodbank.org	(217) 522-4022	1937 E Cook St, Springfield, IL 62703	Food bank with a statewide food locator
Feeding America	feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank	(800) 771-2303	161 N Clark St #700, Chicago, IL 60601	Directory of food banks throughout the country
Find Food Pantries	foodpantries.org			National directory of food pantries or soup kitchens
Illinois Food Banks	illinoisfoodbanks.org/sites.asp			Directory of food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30357			Apply for SNAP benefits (Illinois Link Card to buy groceries)
Food | Chicago				
Greater Chicago Food Depository	chicagosfoodbank.org	(773) 247-3663	4100 W Ann Lurie Pl, Chicago, IL 60632	Supplies food to pantries and soup kitchens in Chicago. Call to find a food pantry

Apply for Benefits | National and Statewide Resources			
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Description**
ABE: Illinois Application for Benefits Eligibility	abe.illinois.gov	(800) 843-6154	Apply for benefits: healthcare coverage, SNAP (formerly food stamps), cash assistance, community supports, or Medicare Savings Program
IDHS: Office Locator	dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12	(800) 843-6154	Directory of Illinois Department of Human Services locations where you can get help applying for benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid, family services, community resources, and more
Social Security Office Locator	ssa.gov/locator		Locate an Illinois Secretary of State facility by zip code or use online services to get State IDs and Driver's Licenses
Veteran | National and Statewide Resources			
American Legion	legion.org	(800) 433-3318	Health, education, employment, suicide prevention, and other benefits for veterans
IL Department of Veteran Affairs	veterans.illinois.gov	(800) 437-9824	Veteran services, offices in Chicago and Springfield
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans	nchv.org	(202) 546-1969	Veteran homelessness, housing, services
US DVA-Benefits	benefits.va.gov/benefits	(800) 698-2411	Assistance with accessing veteran benefits, medical centers
Veteran Crisis Line	veteranscrisisline.net	Call 988 press 1 TEXT: 838255	24-7 helpline for veterans in crisis, or people worried about a veteran that may be in crisis
VA Disability Claims	va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim		Instructions on filing a disability claim for a veteran
Veteran Readiness & Employment Services	benefits.va.gov/vocrehab	(800) 437-9824	Helps veterans with disabilities related to military service. They offer help finding a job, job training, and advice

6. Restorative Justice Resources

National Resources			
Name	**Website**	**Contact**	**Description**
Amplify Restorative Justice	amplifyrj.com	amplifyrj@gmail.com	Teaches restorative justice philosophy, practices, and values through a lens of abolition, anti-racism, and decolonization
Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking	rjp.d.umn.edu	(218) 726-7094	Trainings, workshops, consults, and resources on restorative justice
Common Justice	commonjustice.org		Seeks to advance solutions to violence that transform the lives of those harmed without relying on incarceration
Impact Justice	impactjustice.org	(510) 899-5010	Advances new ideas and solutions for justice reform
National Association of Community and Restorative Justice	nacrj.org	info@nacrj.org	Advances community and restorative justice as a social movement by serving people and organizations committed to building community and addressing harm
Restorative Justice Exchange	restorativejustice.org	(703) 481-0000	Restorative programs for victims and system-impacted people and their families
Ways of Council	waysofcouncil.net		Trainings and online resource on how to communicate as a council based on the ways of the Ojai people

Illinois Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Contact**	**Address**	**Description**
Chicago Freedom School	chicagofreedomschool.org	(312) 435-1201	719 S State St, Chicago, 60605	Supports young people to take action for justice in their personal lives and communities
Circles and Ciphers	circlesandciphers.org	circles.ciphers@gmail.com	1545 W Morse Ave, Chicago, 60626	Hip-hop infused restorative justice organization led by and for young people impacted by violence
Dispute Resolution Institution	dri-inc.org	(618) 549-1200	PO Box 1136, Carbondale, IL 62903	Provides mediation training and volunteer mediation services to Champaign and nearby counties
Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice	adler.edu/institute-on-public-safety-and-social-justice			Works with community groups, peer institutions, and systems partners to address public safety challenges through restorative justice and related practices
Just Peace	pbmr.org/project-page	(773) 952-6643	5114 S Elizabeth St, Chicago, IL 60609	Promotes restorative justice among youth and families impacted by violence or conflict
Nehemiah Trinity Rising	nehemiahtrinityrising.org	(312) 852-8520	9315 S Longwood Dr, Chicago, 60643	Faith-based organization providing skill-building and other restorative justice-related education
Reimagine Justice Illinois	rjillinois.org			Challenges the narrative of justice and transforms conventional practices through restorative justice, social and emotional learning, and system transformation
Restorative Justice Community Courts	cookcountycourt.org/division/restorative-justice-community-courts	OCJ.chief@cookcountyil.gov	50 W Washington St, Chicago, 60602	Cook County courts offering restorative option to eligible individuals charged with non-violent felonies and misdemeanors

7. Employment Resources

National and State Resources			
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Description**
Career One Stop	careeronestop.org	(877) 872-5627	Online tool for finding jobs, trainings, and local employment services
Central States SER	centralstatesser.org	(708) 222-3100	Employment and training services for youth and adults
IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services	dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=29737	(877) 581-3690	Serves individuals with disabilities and their families to meet employment and housing needs, apply online
Honest Jobs	honestjobs.com		Job search website for returning residents
How to Earn Your Degree and Get Hired After Incarceration	study.com/resources/formerly-incarcerated-education-career-guide		Helpful information about earning your degree and getting hired after incarceration
IDES Reentry Employment Service Program	ides.illinois.gov/jobs-workforce/programs/re-entry.html	(800) 244-5631	Job readiness workshops, employment assistance
Illinois Job Link	illinoisJobLink.com	(877) 342-7533	Online job finding tool
Illinois WorkNet	illinoisworknet.com		Online job finding tool
Jails to Jobs	jailstojobs.org		Online resource to help with employment (tattoo removal, free interview clothes, job search resources)
JAN Disabilities and Accomodations	askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm	(800) 526-7234	Directory of job accommodations for people with disabilities, ADA information, or disability employment
Jobs for Felons Hub	felonyrecordhub.com/jobs-for-felons		Online job finding tool for people with a felony record
Jobs That Hire Felons	jobsthathirefelons.org		Online job finding tool for people with a felony record
Justice Through Code	centerforjustice.columbia.edu/justicethroughcode		Online, free coding program for formerly incarcerated people. Helps with job placement
My Next Move	mynextmove.org		Government-sponsored online employment resource. Browse careers and industries
National Able Network	nationalable.org	(855) 994-8300	Employment and training services
People Ready	peopleready.com/cities		Employment help, job search engine
Small Business Assistance (ILDCEO)	www2.illinois.gov/dceo/businesshelp/Pages/SmallBusinessAssistance.aspx		Resources for small business owners, directory of small business development centers in IL
US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	eeoc.gov	(800) 669-4000	Resource to report to if there is a violation by an employer
Chicago Resources			
City Colleges of Chicago	ccc.edu	(773) 265-5343	Access for formerly incarcerated individuals to college education, vocational training, GED, ESL, career services
Defy Ventures Illinois	defyventures.org/our-community/defy-illinois		In-prison entrepreneurial programs, post-release job training
Edovo (Education Over Obstacles)	edovo.org		Education programs for system-impacted people
Entrepreneurs Academy	entrepreneursacademy.net	(773) 295-5365	Training, workshops, access to resources, tools, and training for aspiring entrepreneurs, mental health services

7. Employment Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Description
Heartland Human Care Services	heartlandhumancareservices.org	(773) 433-1200	Supportive transitional and permanent housing, veteran's services, reentry help program, employment development
JVS Career & Employment	jvschicago.org	(855) 275-5237	Job training, direct job placement, disability programs, computer training
Community Assistance Programs	capsinc.org	(773) 568-1782	Job readiness training, evaluation, temp job placement
Greater Chicago Food Depository Workforce Development	chicagosfoodbank.org/cck	(773) 247-3663	Free 14-week job training program that prepares people for careers in food service
Northern Illinois Resources			
Barbara Olson Center of Hope	b-olsoncenterofhope.org	(815) 964-9275	Training and support for people with disabilities. Job seeking and interviewing skills classes
BEST, Inc	best-inc.org	(815) 224-0370	Employment and training services
The Workforce Connection	theworkforceconnection.org	(815) 847-7574	Employment and training services
YWCA La Voz Latina	ywcanwil.org/la-voz-latina	(815) 968-9681	Adult education, advocacy services, assistance with obtaining public benefits, case management, welcome center for Latinx/Hispanic families
YWCA of Sauk Valley	ywsauk.org	(815) 625-0333	Counseling, sexual assault services, domestic violence services, medical advocacy, employment assistance, career assistance
Central and Southern Illinois Resources			
American Job Center Southern Illinois	americanjobcentersi.org	(618) 998-9570	Help finding employment
Career Link	careerlinkil.com	(309) 321-0260	Job search and education assistance, training, and additional resources for job seekers and employers
Elite Community Outreach	eliteoutreach.org	(309) 248-0211	Offers reentry classes to help prepare people for employment, high-school outreach programs
Goodwill Career Center Springfield	llgi.org/programs-services/career-development-services	(217) 789-0400	Help with job placement
House of Hope Peoria, Inc	facebook.com/houseofhopepeoria	(309) 922-9390	Outreach, mentorship, workforce development, case management, victim support, reentry services, violence prevention training
Land of Lincoln Goodwill Industries Quincy	llgi.org	(217) 789-0400	Help finding jobs, receive job readiness training
Manpower Staffing Agency	manpowerillinois.com/locations/peoria	(309) 674-4163	Recruitment and assessment, training and development, workforce consulting
Southtown Construction Training Center	southtownconstruct.wixsite.com/southtown	(217) 679-5632	Construction training and job readiness program for formerly incarcerated individuals
Urbana Adult Education Center	urbanaadulteducation.org	(217) 384-3530	Free GED, CNA, English, and college courses. Available in Spanish
Workforce Investment Solutions	worknetdecatur.org/job-seekers	(217) 875-8751	Support with interviewing, resume writing, job search techniques

8. Legal Resources

National and State Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
ADA Disability Related Access for Inmates and Visitors	southwestada.org/html/publications/Title2/ADA-access-inmates-visitors.pdf			Guide of civil rights responsibilities that people working in prisons must use towards incarcerated individuals and visitors with disabilities
Americans with Disabilities Act National Network	adata.org	(800) 949-4232		Information on the ADA, regional contacts, employment resource hub, healthcare assistance
FEDECMI/Casa Michoacán	facebook.com/Fedecmi	(312) 491-9317	Multiple locations, IL	Services for Michoacan, Mexican, and immigrant community living in Illinois
Illinois Drug Crimes Attorney Finder (FindLaw)	lawyers.findlaw.com/lawyer/practicestate/drug-crime/illinois?fli=dcta			Resource to find drug crime lawyers
Illinois Legal Aid Online	illinoislegalaid.org			Important legal information and referrals on many topics (family law, expungement, immigration, etc.) for residents of Illinois
Illinois State Police Bureau of Identification	isp.illinois.gov/BureaOfIdentification/MyRecord			View your record, request rap sheet
Legal Action Center	clearinghouse.lac.org/public			Job and legal resources for people with criminal record
National Immigrant Justice Center	immigrantjustice.org	(312) 660-1370	111 W Jackson Blvd #800, Chicago, IL 60604	Immigration legal services to low-income individuals in the Latino community
National Immigration Legal Services Directory	www.immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory/			Directory to search for legal services by state, county, or detention facility
New Leaf Cannabis Expungement Illinois	newleafillinois.org	(872) 639-5323		Network of nonprofits helping those impacted by a cannabis arrest expunge/seal their eligible criminal records
Office of the State Appellate Defender	osad.illinois.gov	(217) 782-7203	Multiple locations, IL	Information about sealing and expunging records, criminal record relief
Prairie State Legal Services	pslegal.org/#prj5	(815) 965-2134	303 N Main St #600, Rockford, IL 61101	Free legal services for housing, safety, health, stability
US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	eeoc.gov	(800) 669-4000		Resource to report to if there is a violation by an employer
Chicago and Chicago Loop Resources				
Between Friends	betweenfriendschicago.org	(800) 603-4357	PO Box 608548, Chicago, IL 60660	Counseling and legal assistance for people who are experiencing domestic violence and seeking orders of protection
Beyond Legal Aid	beyondlegalaid.org	(312) 999-0056	17 N State St #1380, Chicago, IL 60602	Legal services and activism support, 24-hour immigration helpline, workshops

8. Legal Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Cabrini Green Legal Aid	cgla.net	(312) 738-2452	6 S Clark St, Chicago, IL 60603	Legal services for Chicagoans: max convictions, income restrictions
CARPLS	carpls.org	(312) 738-9200		Legal aid hotline for Cook County residents or cases in Cook County
Center of Disability & Elder Law	cdelaw.org	(312) 376-1880	205 W Randolph #1610, Chicago, IL 60606	Legal services to low-income older adults with disabilities in Cook County
Chicago Coalition to End Homelessness	chicagohomeless.org	(312) 641-4140	70 E Lake St #720, Chicago, IL 60601	Legal representation, bilingual attorneys, advocacy
Chicago Eviction Resource	chicago.gov/city/en/depts/doh/provdrs/renters/svcs/eviction-and-lockout-resources.html	(312) 744-3653	121 N LaSalle St, Room 1000, Chicago, IL 60602	Eviction resources for Chicago residents, legal aid and rentervention hotlines
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights	clccrul.org	(312) 630-9744	100 N LaSalle St #600, Chicago, IL 60602	Legal assistance for civil rights, people buying homes or starting small businesses, education equity, fair housing, and more
Chicago Volunteer Legal Services	cvls.org	(312) 332-1624	33 N Dearborn St #400, Chicago, IL 60602	Free legal representation
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights	icirr.org	(312) 332-7360	228 S Wabash #800, Chicago, IL 60604	Services for immigrants and refugees, healthcare access, family support, case management, education
Justice Advisory Council Reentry Services	cookcountyil.gov/JACReentry			Rental housing support, rent assistance, utilities stipends, legal aid, health services, employment support
Lambda Legal	lambdalegal.org	(312) 663-4413	3656 N Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60613	Legal, education, advocacy work helping people living with HIV
Law Center for Better Housing	lcbh.org	(312) 347-7600	100 N LaSalle #2500, Chicago, IL 60602	Free legal help with housing
Legal Aid Chicago	lafchicago.org	(312) 341-1070		Provides free legal services for non-criminal cases
Legal Council for Health Justice	legalcouncil.org	(312) 427-8990	17 N State St #900, Chicago, IL 60602	Helps victims of HIV/AIDS discrimination, insurance disputes, return-to-work questions, and confidentiality issues
Metropolitan Family Services	metrofamily.org		Multiple locations, IL	Legal aid, economic stability, education, emotional wellness
Shriver Center on Poverty Law	povertylaw.org	(312) 263-3830	67 E Madison St #2000, Chicago, IL 60603	Works with communities, service providers, legislators, and other allies for justice for low-income clients
Chicago West Side Resources				
Ascend Justice	ascendjustice.org	(312) 971-5932	177 N State St #500, Chicago, IL 60601	Legal assistance and services for survivors of domestic violence and the child welfare system
Enlace Chicago	enlacechicago.org	(773) 943-7570	2759 S Harding Ave, Chicago, IL 60623	Advocacy for education, health, immigration, violence prevention. Free legal clinic, education, community building

8. Legal Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
First Defense Legal Aid	first-defense.org	(800) 529-7374	601 S California Ave, Chicago, IL 60612	24-hour legal representation for people in custody of Chicago PD
Instituto del Progreso Latino	www.institutochicago.org	(773) 890-0055	2520 S Western Ave, Chicago, IL 60608	Services for Latino immigrants and their families: legal aid, education, training, employment, COVID relief
Latinos Progresando	latinospro.org	(773) 542-7077	2724 W Cermak Rd, Chicago, IL 60608	Immigration legal services to families, education, culture, community
Westside Justice Center	westsidejustice.org	(773) 940-2213	601 S California St, Chicago, IL 60612	Legal services and organizers for community building
Chicago North and South Side Resources				
Access Living	accessliving.org	(312) 640-2100	115 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60654	Housing, advocacy, and legal representation for people with disabilities
Centro Romero	centroromero.org	(773) 508-5300	6216 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60660	Services for immigrants, refugees: family support, adult education, youth programs, legal services
Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (CLAIM)	chicagobarfoundation.org/pro-bono-spotlight/chicago-legal-advocacy-for-incarcerated-mothers-2	(312) 554-1204	321 S Plymouth Crt #3B, Chicago, IL 60604	Supports incarcerated mothers, caregivers of incarcerated children and caregivers of children whose mothers are incarcerated. Help for custody, foster care, adoption
Greater Chicago Legal Clinic	gclclaw.org	(312) 726-2938	17 N State St #1710, Chicago, IL 60602	Low-cost legal representation
Indo-American Center	indoamerican.org	(773) 973-4444	6328 N California Ave, Chicago, IL 60659	Legal services for immigrants, education, culture, community
Uptown People's Law Center	uplcchicago.org	(773) 769-1411	4413 N Sheridan, Chicago, IL 60640	Fighting for the rights of system-impacted communities, tenants, and disabled people in Illinois
Northwest and Southwest Suburbs Resources				
Guardian Angel Community Services	gacsprograms.org	(815) 729-0930	168 N Ottawa St, Joliet, IL 60432	Emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour domestic violence and sexual assault hotlines
Hispanic American Community Education and Services	haces.org	(847) 244-0300	820 W Greenwood Ave, Waukegan, IL 60087	Immigration legal services, family reunification, waiver preparation
Moran Center for Youth Advocacy	moran-center.org	(847) 492-1410	1900A Dempster St, Evanston, IL 60202	Free legal and social work services for youth and families
Northern Illinois Justice for our Neighbors	nijfon.org	(773) 609-4401		Legal services for immigrants

8. Legal Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
South Suburban Bar Association	southsuburbanbar.org	(708) 633-9700	PO Box 726, Homewood, IL 60430	Landlord/tenant disputes, contract problems, small claims, wills, orders of protection, and expungement
Willow Creek Care Center	willowcreekcarecenter.org	(224) 512-2600	67 Algonquin Rd, South Barrington, IL 60010	Employment help, a computer lab, food assistance, legal aid, and eye care
YWCA Evanston/North Shore Bridges	ywca-ens.org/bridges	(847) 864-8445	1215 Church St, Evanston, IL 60201	Re-housing system intended for use by former victims of violence in the Chicago area
Northwest Illinois Resources				
Riverview Center Galena & Mt Carroll	riverviewcenter.org	(815) 777-8167	11358 Industrial Dr #2, Galena, IL 61036	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, and 24-hour crisis line for those affected by sexual and domestic violence
Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling	rockfordsexualassaultcounseling.org	(815) 732-0000 (815) 636-9811 (815) 544-6821	Multiple locations	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour crisis line
Safe Passage	safepassagedv.org	(815) 756-5228	DeKalb, IL	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, and 24-hour anonymous crisis line for those affected by sexual and domestic violence
Zeke Giorgi Legal Clinic	niu.edu/law/academics/experiential-learning/clinical/civil%20-justice-clinic.shtml	(815) 962-9980	401 W State St #600, Rockford, IL 61101	NIU clinical program, clinic prioritizes the needs of low-income senior citizens and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking
East Central and Southwest Illinois Resources				
Jackson County Circuit Clerk	circuitclerk.co.jackson.il.us	(618) 687-7300	1001 Walnut St, Murphysboro, IL 62966	Access to case information
Land of Lincoln Legal Aid	lincolnlegal.org	(618) 398-0574	8787 State St, #201, East St Louis, IL 62203	Family, bankruptcy, divorce, and estate planning
Prevail Illinois	prevailil.org	(888) 345-5033	Multiple locations	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour crisis line
Sexual Assault and Family Emergencies	safecrisiscenter.org	(800) 625-1414	1410 Sunset Dr Ste G, Vandalia, IL 62471	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour crisis line
Stepping Stones	ywcamclean.org/stepping-stones	(309) 662-0461	1201 N Hershey Rd, Bloomington, IL 61704	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour crisis line for survivors of domestic and sexual violence
Survivor Resource Center	survivorresourcecenter.org	(217) 446-1337	27 N Vermilion St, Danville, IL 61832	Counseling, legal advocacy, medical advocacy, 24-hour crisis line
The Immigration Project	immigrationproject.org	(309) 829-8703	Multiple locations	Legal consultation, referral, application support services for immigrants and refugees

9. Family and Children Resources

National and Statewide Resources			
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Description**
CARES Line		(800) 345-9049	24-hour Crisis and Referral Entry Services (CARES) line for children, youth, and families having a mental health crisis
Companions Journeying Together	cjtinc.org	(630) 481-6231	Letter-writing, recordings of incarcerated parents reading, and more to help connect incarcerated people and their families
Domestic Violence Hotline	thehotline.org	(800) 799-7233	24-hour anonymous domestic violence hotline, call or text START to 88788
IHFS FamilyCare	illinois.gov/hfs/MedicalPrograms/AllKids/Pages/FamilyCare.aspx	(877) 204-1012	Healthcare coverage to parents living with children 18 years old or younger. Must meet income requirements
IDHS: Child Care Assistance Program	dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30355	(800) 843-6154	Find child care assistance
Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services	illinois.gov/hfs/ChildSupport		Child support resources, apply for child support services or make a payment
Lutheran Social Services of IL: Prisoner and Family Ministry	lssi.org/services/prisoner-and-family-ministry		Family support, foster care, behavioral health services, senior services, affordable housing, services for returned citizens and those on the inside. Free transportation from Chicago to Decatur Correctional Center for children whose mothers are incarcerated
Metropolitan Family Services	metrofamily.org		Legal aid, economic stability, education, emotional wellness, empowerment
NAMI	namiillinois.org	(217) 522-1403	Mental illness support, resources, advocacy. Find a support group
WIRC-CAA Victims Services	wirpc.org/victim-services	(309) 837-5555	Domestic violence program, sexual assault program, medical advocacy, 24-hour anonymous crisis line

Chicago and Wider Illinois Resources				
Name	**Website**	**Phone**	**Address**	**Description**
Ascend Justice	ascendjustice.org	(312) 971-5932	177 N State St #500, Chicago, IL 60601	Legal assistance and services for survivors of domestic violence and the child welfare system
Center for Conflict Resolution	ccrchicago.org	(312) 922-6464	11 E Adams St #500, Chicago, IL 60603	Free mediation services
Centro Romero	centroromero.org	(773) 508-5300	6216 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60660	Services for immigrants, refugees: family support, adult education, youth programs, legal services
Family Core	familycore.org	(309) 676-2400	330 SW Washington St, Peoria, IL 61602	Counseling, intervention, preventative education, adoption, single parent support, foster care

9. Family and Children Resources

Name	Website	Phone	Address	Description
Family Focus	family-focus.org	(312) 421-5200	Multiple locations, IL	Helps caretakers gain confidence and competence as the primary educators of their children
Fathers, Families in Transition	fathersfamiliesintransition.org	(312) 658-0166	120 W Madison St #200-2, Chicago, IL 60602	Lifestyle coaching, mentoring, parenting classes, referrals, and more support for families
Jail Brakers	treeoflifeuu.org/justice/social-justice/jail-brakers	(815) 354-2579	5603 Bull Valley Rd, McHenry, IL 60050	Support for families impacted by incarceration, support groups, gas cards for family visits, community events
Mano a Mano	mamfrc.org	(847) 201-1521	Multiple locations, IL	Family support services, health, workshops for immigrant families
Moran Center for Youth Advocacy	moran-center.org	(847) 492-1410	1900A Dempster St, Evanston, IL 60202	Free legal and social work services for youth and families
Mother House Crisis Nursery	cap4kids.org/rockford/651875924/?doing_wp_cron=1698464706.1195530891418457031250	(815) 962-4858	1603 S 4th St, Rockford, IL 61104	Crisis care for homelessness, domestic violence, substance use. Parent education classes, parent support groups, counseling
Nurses for Newborns	nursesfornewborns.org/missouri	(314) 544-3433	3 Sunnen Dr, St Louis, MO 63143	Free help with parenting for children 0-2 years old, baby supplies
Outreach House	theoutreachhouse.org	(630) 693-0185	700 Springer Dr, Lombard, IL 60148	Family financial assistance, basic care items for young children
Phalanx Family Services	facebook.com/PhalanxFamilyServices	(773) 291-1086	837 W 119th St, Chicago, IL 60643	Education, mentoring, support groups, counseling, help with housing and food, family reunification and child support assistance
Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation	pbmr.org	(773) 952-6643	5114 S Elizabeth St, Chicago, IL 60609	Serves youth, families, and community members impacted by incarceration through community building and restorative justice
UCAN	ucanchicago.org	(773) 588-0180	3605 W Fillmore St, Chicago, IL 60624	Preventing violence, healing trauma, building strong families, educating and empowering youth
UIUC Child Care Resource Services	ccrs.illinois.edu	(800) 325-5516	905 S Goodwin Ave #314, Urbana, IL 61801	Referrals for childcare, nurseries, in-home care providers, summer activity programs, and more
YWCA Child Care Assistance Program	ywcanwil.org/childcare-home/child-care-assistance-program	(815) 484-9448	4990 E State St, Rockford, IL 61108	Child care referrals, consumer education to parents, training opportunities, financial assistance for child care providers
YWCA McLean County: Labyrinth	ywcamclean.org/labyrinth-reentry	(309) 434-0772	616 W Monroe St, Bloomington, IL 61701	Reentry services for women, employment services, transitional living program, case management, counseling, sexual violence hotline
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago	ywcachicago.org	(312) 372-6600	1 N LaSalle St #1700, Chicago, IL 60602	Child care, economic empowerment, family support, sexual violence support, mental health services

For more resources, see our online directory at reentryillinois.net

Part 5: Forms

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

State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Public Health

Application for Illinois Birth Record

Birth Certificate - Long Form Accepted for all legal use, passport and other governmental agencies (contains the most available information) **$15.00 first copy $2.00 each additional copy** **Amount enclosed $_____ for _____ total copies**	**Birth Certificate - Short Form** Basic birth record information, **may not** be accepted by all governmental agencies **$10.00 first copy $2.00 each additional copy** **Amount enclosed $_____ for _____ total copies**
Foreign Birth / Administrative Foreign Birth Record Birth record of adopted person born outside of the United States who were re-adopted in Illinois **$5.00 each copy** **Amount enclosed $_____ for _____ total copies**	**Genealogical** Uncertified records for a birth 75 years and older (not for legal use) **$10.00 first copy $2.00 each additional copy** **Amount enclosed $_____ for _____ total copies**

DO NOT SEND CASH — Make check or money order payable to I**LLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH (IDPH).**

For records prior to 1916, contact the County Clerk in the County where the birth took place

BLANK SPACE FOR OFFICE USE	**BIRTH CERTIFICATE NUMBER IF KNOWN** (Not Required)	
FULL NAME ON BIRTH RECORD (First, Middle, Last) As listed on Birth Record		
DATE OF ILLINOIS BIRTH (Month, Day, Year)	**PLACE OF ILLINOIS BIRTH** (City and or County)	**SEX**
MOTHER / CO-PARENT'S NAME (Maiden Name Before First Marriage Required) As listed on Birth Record		
FATHER / CO-PARENT'S NAME As listed on Birth Record		

NOTE: Birth Certificates are confidential records and copies can only be issued to a person entitled to receive them. The application must indicate the requestor's relationship to the person listed on the record and indicate the intended use of the document. For additional information please see reverse side or visit our website at www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/birth-death-other-records.

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL REQUESTING COPIES:		**REQUESTER RELATIONSHIP** (Mother, Father, Legal Guardian etc.)	
REQUESTER ADDRESS		**CITY** **STATE**	**ZIP CODE**
INTENDED USE	**REQUESTER PHONE NUMBER**	**REQUESTER EMAIL ADDRESS**	
MAIL TO ADDRESS IF DIFFERENT THAN ABOVE		**CITY** **STATE**	**ZIP CODE**
SIGNATURE REQUIRED		**DATE**	

IF THE BIRTH DID NOT OCCUR IN ILLINOIS YOU MUST CONTACT THE STATE WHERE THE BIRTH TOOK PLACE

MAIL TO: **Complete Form IN FULL, Sign, Include Copy of Identification & Proper Fee**
IDPH Vital Records, 925 E. Ridgely Avenue, Springfield, IL 62702-2737
For additional information - www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/birth-death-other-records

State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Public Health

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to process your request through this office we require identification to be provided

A photo copy of a NON-EXPIRED, GOVERNMENT ISSUED PHOTO IDENTIFICATION. Such as a Driver's License, Passport, FOID card, Active Duty Military ID, Veterans Administration Issued Photo Medical Card, or a Federally issued Tribal ID card. ALL identification MUST have a photo, identifying information such as name, date of birth and an issue and expiration date. If any information is contained on both sides of the ID, ensure a copy of both sides is made.

If your ID has expired and has an extension sticker, ensure a copy of the sticker is also made.

If your ID has expired LESS THAN 6 MONTHS, please include one additional document showing your name and current address created within the last 6 months. Examples include legal mail such as a bill or financial statement sent to your current legal address.

If your ID has expired MORE THAN 6 MONTHS or you DO NOT HAVE VALID ID, you will be required to submit TWO forms of documentation with your name and current legal address listed. Documentation in lieu of an ID must be dated within the last 6 months.

First Item – You must provide one or more of the following; Medical Card, Auto Insurance Card, Voter's Registration Card, Paycheck Stub with Imprinted FULL information, Bank, Financial, or a Credit Card Statement.

Second Item - You must provide a piece of current mail you have received showing your full name and current legal mailing address. Examples include current utility bill, phone bill or bill for services you have received. You may submit multiple pieces of mail however ensure they are from different Agencies or businesses.

If you are currently incarcerated in a State or Federal facility, you will need to submit a dated copy of your prison intake or offender summary sheet containing your photo, name, date of birth and facility information.

If you have been RELEASED from prison WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS, you may provide a copy of your release papers along with a copy of your prison photo ID. Please note that the release papers MUST show an address that you have been released to that matches the address you are using with this office.

If you are a State, Federal Agency or a Hospital, you may submit a copy of your work photo ID badge. The badge MUST have a photo, name, name of the Agency and an issue and expiration date along with any supportive paperwork required for the request. If your work ID does not meet the requirements, a copy of your government issued photo ID, Drivers License or Passport must also be included.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARDS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE

ELIGIBILITY TO OBTAIN AN ILLINOIS BIRTH RECORD

Before a request for a copy of a birth record can be considered you must specify your eligibility to obtain it. ILCS410/535/25(4) states that copies of birth records may only be issued upon; The order of a court of competent jurisdiction; The specific written request by the person listed on the record if of legal age (18 or older) or by a parent or other legal representative* of the person to whom the record of birth relates; The specific written request by a Department of State, Municipal Corporation or the Federal Government

*77 Illinois AdmCode 500.10 refers to "Legal Representative" as either an attorney acting on behalf of a person named on the birth record; An agent authorized by power of attorney; A Court-appointed representative; An agent with written, notarized authorization from a person named on the birth record for the purpose of obtaining a copy for that person; Any other agent, approved by the State Registrar as a legal representative.

NOTE: *Any person who, willfully and knowingly uses or attempts to use, or furnishes to another for use, for any purpose of deception, any certificate, record, report, certification or certified copy thereof so made, altered, amended, or mutilated; or, Any person who with the intention to deceive, willfully uses or attempts to use any certification or certified copy of a record of birth knowing that such certification or certified copy was issued upon a record that is false in whole or in part or that relates to the birth of another person is guilty of a Class 4 felony in the State of Illinois (ILCS 410/535/27 (f)).*

Illinois Law (ILCS 410/535/25 (1)) requires advanced payment for the search of death record files.

Fees are subject to current Illinois Statute and administrative policy and may be non-refundable.

KAREN A. YARBROUGH I COOK COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE
VITAL RECORDS DIVISION | P.O. BOX 641070, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60664-1070
Telephone: 312.603.7788 I Web Address: cookcountyclerk.com

BIRTH RECORD REQUEST FORM

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY TO ENSURE ACCURATE FULFILLMENT OF YOUR REQUEST

Number of Copies (Above)

First Name (At Birth) Above | Middle Name (At Birth) Above | Last Name (At Birth) Above

Date of Birth (Include Month, Day & Year) Above | Place of Birth (City, Town or Village in Cook County) Above

First Name of Parent 1 (At Birth) Above | Last Name Parent 1 (At Birth) Above

First Name of Parent 2 (At Birth) Above [Optional] | Last Name of Parent 2 (At Birth) Above [Optional]

SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE SUBMITTER OF THIS BIRTH RECORD REQUEST FORM

Pursuant to §410 ILCS 535/25(4)(b), "a certified copy of a birth record is ONLY available to persons with a direct and tangible interest in the record, such as one's self, parent, guardian or legal representative. Anyone who willfully and knowingly uses or attempts to use any certificate and/or certification for the purposes of deception is guilty of a Class 4 Felony, as outlined in §410 ILCS 535/27(c)(f), which is punishable by up to three years in prison.

First Name of Submitter Above | Last Name of Submitter Above

Mailing Address of the Submitter (Street Number & Name) Above

Mailing City, Town or Village of Submitter Above | Mailing State and Zip Code of Submitter Above

Submitter Phone Number Above | Submitter's Relationship to the Person/Birth Certificate Requested

Please indicate below how you would like to receive the requested Birth Certificate. If requesting the document be mailed please include 1) A Check or Money Order; 2) A Photocopy of YOUR Photo ID; and 3) A Self-Addressed Envelope.

I would like the requested Birth Certificate to be:

☐ Mailed to me at the above address ☐ Filled while I wait ☐ Filled and ready when I return later

By submitting the above request for a Birth Certificate, I do hereby understand and acknowledge that I have a "direct and tangible interest" in the above record, and if and when received, I will NOT use that record for the purposes of willfully or knowingly deceiving anyone.

Signature of Submitter Above | Date This Form was Executed and Submitted Above

Please see the back of this form for further details

KAREN A. YARBROUGH I COOK COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

VITAL RECORDS DIVISION | P.O. BOX 641070, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60664-1070

Telephone: 312.603.7788 I Web Address: cookcountyclerk.com

BIRTH RECORD REQUEST FORM INSTRUCTIONS

To obtain a copy of a birth record from the Cook County Clerk's Office, please read the following: Certified Copies of Birth Records cost **$15** for the **FIRST** copy, and **$4** for **EACH ADDITIONAL COPY** of the **SAME RECORD**. The cost is **NON-REFUNDABLE** if **NO RECORD IS FOUND**, and/or, a **CERTIFICATION THAT NO RECORD WAS FOUND** is issued.

THERE ARE 4 CONVENIENT & EASY WAYS TO OBTAIN A BIRTH RECORD

1. By Mail

Fill out this form and mail your request to:

Bureau of Vital Records
P.O. BOX 641070
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60664-1070

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN MAILING

- Complete form on the reverse side and include:
- ☒ A Check or Money Order payable to Cook County Clerk
- ☒ Temporary or Starter Checks are NOT ACCEPTED
- ☒ Name on check MUST be the same person who is entitled and legally-authorized to the Birth Record
- ☒ Photocopy of government-issued photo identification (ex. Driver's License, Passport, or State Issued ID)
- ☒ A Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope

2. By Phone

Call our Vital Check Hotline at (866) 252-8974
Please note that a processing fee of $12.45 MAY apply for phone orders.

3. By Visiting a Local Currency Exchange $

Call (847) 759-8905 for Currency Exchange locations and hours.
Please note that a processing fee of $5 applies to Currency Exchange orders.

4. By Visiting your Local Cook County Clerk's Office

118 N. Clark St., Room 120
Or visit one our FIVE Suburban Satellite Offices (which are located as follows):

Bridgeview	Markham	Maywood	Rolling Meadows	Skokie
Southwest Suburbs Bridgeview Courthouse 10220 S. 76th Ave, Room 238 Bridgeview, Illinois 60455	**South Suburbs** Markham Courthouse 16501 S. Kedzie, Room 238 Markham, Illinois 60426	**West Suburbs** Maywood Courthouse 1311 Maybrook Sq., Rm 104 Maywood, Illinois 60153	**Northwest Suburbs** Rolling Meadows Courthouse 2121 Euclid Ave., Room 238 Rolling Meadows, Il 60008	**North Suburbs** Skokie Courthouse 5600 W. Old Orchard Rm. 149 Skokie, Illinois 60077
(708) 974-6150 (main)	(708) 232-4150 (main)	(708) 865-6010 (main)	(847) 818-2850 (main)	(847) 470-7233 (main)

Thank you for your interest in the requested Birth Record. We look forward to servicing your request as accurately and efficiently as possible. We greatly appreciate your business. **Cook County Clerk, Karen A. Yarbrough**

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
Application for a Social Security Card

Form Approved
OMB No. 0960-0066

1 NAME TO BE SHOWN ON CARD — First | Full Middle Name | Last

FULL NAME AT BIRTH IF OTHER THAN ABOVE — First | Full Middle Name | Last

OTHER NAMES USED

2 Social Security number previously assigned to the person listed in item 1 — ☐☐☐ - ☐☐ - ☐☐☐☐

3 PLACE OF BIRTH (Do Not Abbreviate) City | State or Foreign Country

Office Use Only — FCI

4 DATE OF BIRTH MM/DD/YYYY

5 CITIZENSHIP (Check One)
☐ U.S. Citizen ☐ Legal Alien Allowed To Work ☐ Legal Alien **Not** Allowed To Work (See Instructions On Page 3) ☐ Other (See Instructions On Page 3)

6 ETHNICITY
Are You Hispanic or Latino? (Your Response is Voluntary)
☐ Yes ☐ No

7 RACE
Select One or More (Your Response is Voluntary)
☐ Native Hawaiian ☐ American Indian ☐ Other Pacific Islander
☐ Alaska Native ☐ Black/African American ☐ White
☐ Asian

8 SEX ☐ Male ☐ Female

9 A. PARENT/ MOTHER'S NAME AT HER BIRTH First | Full Middle Name | Last

B. PARENT/ MOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (See instructions for 9 B on Page 3) ☐☐☐ - ☐☐ - ☐☐☐☐ ☐ Unknown

10 A. PARENT/ FATHER'S NAME First | Full Middle Name | Last

B. PARENT/ FATHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (See instructions for 10B on Page 3) ☐☐☐ - ☐☐ - ☐☐☐☐ ☐ Unknown

11 Has the person listed in item 1 or anyone acting on his/her behalf ever filed for or received a Social Security number card before?
☐ Yes (If "yes" answer questions 12-13) ☐ No ☐ Don't Know (If "don't know," skip to question 14.)

12 Name shown on the most recent Social Security card issued for the person listed in item 1 — First | Full Middle Name | Last

13 Enter any different date of birth if used on an earlier application for a card — MM/DD/YYYY

14 TODAY'S DATE MM/DD/YYYY

15 DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER ( ) - Area Code | Number

16 MAILING ADDRESS (Do Not Abbreviate)
Street Address, Apt. No., PO Box, Rural Route No.
City | State/Foreign Country | ZIP Code

17 **I declare under penalty of perjury that I have examined all the information on this form, and on any accompanying statements or forms, and it is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.**
YOUR SIGNATURE

18 YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON IN ITEM 1 IS:
☐ Self ☐ Natural Or Adoptive Parent ☐ Legal Guardian ☐ Other (Specify) _____

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE (FOR SSA USE ONLY)

NPN		DOC	NTI	CAN		ITV
PBC	EVI	EVA	EVC	PRA	NWR	DNR	UNIT

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED

SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EMPLOYEE(S) REVIEWING EVIDENCE AND/OR CONDUCTING INTERVIEW — DATE

DCL — DATE

Form **SS-5-FS** (08-2011) ef (08-2011) Destroy Prior Editions Page 5

Forms

JOHN SMITH

123 W Main St. #5, Peoria, IL, 60000 | (300) 600-1234 | J.smith22@gmail.com | linkedin.com/in/john-smith-123

SKILLS SUMMARY

Organized and adaptable professional with strong time-management abilities, clear communication and relationship-building skills, and a track record of meeting changing needs in dynamic settings.

PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PROBLEM-SOLVING AND ADAPTABILITY

Able to develop effective solutions with strong problem-solving skills and adaptability.

- Resolved various technical support challenges while adjusting for student needs.
- Adapted meal plans for varied dietary restrictions in a high-capacity environment.
- Curated individualized lesson plans to suit students' dynamic learning styles.

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Proficient at streamlining workflows in management settings.

- Maintained well-organized physical and digital resources for a productive learning environment.
- Planned and prepared meals with specific dietary restrictions while ensuring timely delivery.
- Assisted instructors with lesson planning, grading, classroom management, and student support.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Clear communicator and active listener able to tailor messages to diverse audiences.

- Fostered a cooperative environment that ensured accurate meal planning and distribution.
- Supported students, staff, and tutors to facilitate access to library resources.
- Provided students with individualized tutoring and academic guidance.

WORK HISTORY

EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, Champaign, IL

- Resource Room Worker — Feb. 2024 – Present

STATE OF ILLINOIS, Danville, IL

- Teaching Assistant, Adult Basic Education — Dec. 2022 – Dec. 2023
- Special Diet Cook — April 2014 – June 2021

EDUCATION

DANVILLE AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE — December 2023

- *Associate Degree in General Studies*
- *Certification in Peer Counseling*

NORTHERN ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE — December 2013

- *Certification in Business Management*

Alexis Williams

123 Main St., Chicago, IL 60000 | 312-555-5555 | petersmith@gmail.com

Experience

University of Illinois

ESL INSTRUCTOR **2011-2014**

- Served as a volunteer ESL instructor in Danville, IL to provide a much needed ESL class in the community
- Developed and taught lesson plans and activities in a multi-instructor class.
- Shared instructor responsibilities with 7 other instructors in a class of 10-12 students twice a week for a total of six hours with beginner-intermediate students
- Taught reading and writing for communicating effectively in personal and workplace settings.
- Provided corrective language feedback on oral and written production.

University of Illinois

CHICAGO/COMMUNITY ANTI-VIOLENCE EDUCATION (CAVE) **2011-2014**

- Helped design and implement a peer driven anti-violence program that empowers incarcerated men through mentoring, education and character building to return to their communities as peace makers.

Danville Correctional Center (Clinical Services)

GUEST SPEAKER/SUBSTANCE ABUSE INSTRUCTOR **2011-2014**

- Designed and presented lessons relating to substance abuse prevention to students at Danville Correctional Center

PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS EDUCATOR **2010-2011**

- Designed and presented lessons focused on peaceful solutions for conflict resolution

Education

GOVERNOR'S STATE UNIVERSITY **JUNE 2016**

- Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies

CARL SANDBERG COLLEGE, GALESBURG IL **2000-2001**

- Associate's Degree in General Education
- Business Management Certificate
- GPA: 3.38

CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE'S ADDICTION PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION **2012**

Skills

- Fluent in Spanish and English
- Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint

OMB Approved No. 2900-0666
Respondent Burden: 30 minutes
Expiration Date: 11/30/2017

Department of Veterans Affairs

INFORMATION REGARDING APPORTIONMENT OF BENEFICIARY'S AWARD

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

INSTRUCTIONS: All or part of a veteran's disability award may be apportioned (paid) to the veteran's spouse, child, or dependent parent. A surviving spouse's award may also be apportioned for the veteran's child or children. Print all answers clearly. If an answer is "none" or "0," write that or line through the space provided. For additional space, attach a separate sheet, indicating the item number to which the answers apply. Make sure to write the veteran's name and VA claim number on any attachments to the form.

IMPORTANT: If you are certifying that you are married for the purpose of VA benefits, your marriage must be recognized by the place where you and/or your spouse resided at the time of marriage, or where you and/or your spouse resided when you filed your claim (or a later date when you became eligible for benefits) (38 U.S.C. § 103(c)). Additional guidance on when VA recognizes marriages is available at http://www.va.gov/opa/marriage/.

1. FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST NAME OF VETERAN	2. VA FILE NUMBER C/CSS-
3A. FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST NAME OF PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM *(If other than veteran)*	3B. MAILING ADDRESS *(Number and street or rural route, city or P.O., State and ZIP Code)*
3C. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(Include Area Code)* Daytime / Evening	3D. E-MAIL ADDRESS *(If applicable)*

4A. WHO ARE YOU REQUESTING AN APPORTIONMENT FOR? *(List first, middle, and last names)*	4B. WHAT IS HIS/HER RELATIONSHIP TO THE VETERAN?
5A. HOW MUCH IS THE VETERAN OR VETERAN'S SURVIVING SPOUSE CONTRIBUTING TO THE PERSON(S) FOR WHOM AN APPORTIONMENT IS BEING CLAIMED? $	5B. HOW OFTEN ARE THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE?
6. IF THE SPOUSE IS CLAIMING AN APPORTIONMENT, IS HE/SHE LIVING WITH ANOTHER PERSON AND HOLDING HIMSELF/HERSELF OUT OPENLY TO THE PUBLIC AS THE SPOUSE OF THE OTHER PERSON? ☐ YES ☐ NO *(If "Yes," provide an explanation)* _____	7. HAS THE VETERAN'S CHILD(REN) BEEN LEGALLY ADOPTED BY ANOTHER PERSON? ☐ YES ☐ NO

PART I - INCOME AND NET WORTH

Report all income and net worth. Report the gross amounts before you take out deductions for taxes, insurance, etc. If you do not receive income or net worth from a particular source, write "0" or "none" in the space provided. **Do not leave the space blank.** ***Note:*** If you are the veteran or surviving spouse, report only your income and net worth. If you are the claimant or are filing on behalf of the claimant(s), report all income and net worth for all persons for whom an apportionment is being claimed. If you are claiming an apportionment as the custodian of the veteran's child or children, report your income and net worth and the income and net worth of the child(ren).

MONTHLY INCOME

SOURCE	VETERAN OR SURVIVING SPOUSE	CUSTODIAN	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR
1A. GROSS WAGES FROM ALL EMPLOYMENT	$	$	$	$
1B. SOCIAL SECURITY				
1C. RETIREMENT OR ANNUITIES				
1D. SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI) / PUBLIC ASSISTANCE				
1E. OTHER INCOME *(Show source)*				
1F. OTHER INCOME *(Show source)*				

NET WORTH

SOURCE	VETERAN OR SURVIVING SPOUSE	CUSTODIAN	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR
2A. CASH/NON-INTEREST-BEARING BANK ACCOUNTS	$	$	$	$
2B. INTEREST-BEARING BANK ACCOUNTS				
2C. IRAS, KEOGH PLANS, ETC.				
2D. STOCKS, BONDS, MUTUAL FUNDS, ETC.				
2E. REAL PROPERTY *(Not your home)*				
2F. ALL OTHER PROPERTY AND ASSETS				

PART II - MONTHLY LIVING EXPENSES

Show your monthly living expenses, including any monthly installment payments. If you do not have expenses from a particular source, write "0" or "none" in the space provided. Do not leave the space blank.

Note: If you are the veteran or surviving spouse, report only your expenses. If you are the claimant or are filing on behalf of the claimant(s), report expenses for all persons for whom an apportionment is being claimed. If you are claiming an apportionment as the custodian of the veteran's child or children, report your expenses and the expenses of the child(ren).

SOURCE	VETERAN OR SURVIVING SPOUSE	CUSTODIAN	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR	PERSON APPORTIONMENT IS CLAIMED FOR
1A. RENT OR HOUSE PAYMENT	$	$	$	$
1B. FOOD				
1C. UTILITIES *(Water, gas, electricity)*				
1D. TELEPHONE				
1E. CLOTHING				
1F. MEDICAL EXPENSES				
1G. SCHOOL EXPENSES				
1H. OTHER EXPENSES *(Show source)*				
1I. OTHER EXPENSES *(Show source)*				

PART III - CERTIFICATION AND SIGNATURE

I CERTIFY THAT the foregoing statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1. SIGNATURE OF VETERAN OR CLAIMANT	2. DATE SIGNED

PENALTY - The law provides severe penalties which include fine or imprisonment or both, for the willful submission of anystatement or evidence of a material fact, knowing it is false, or fraudulent acceptance of any payment to which you are not entitled.

PRIVACY ACT INFORMATION - The VA will not disclose information collected on this form to any source other than what has been authorized under the Privacy Act of 1974 or Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations 1.576 for routine uses (i.e., civil or criminal law enforcement, congressional communications, epidemiological or research studies, the collection of money owed to the United States, litigation in which the United States is a party or has an interest, the administration of VA programs and delivery of VA benefits, verification of identity and status, and personnel administration) as identified in the VA system of records, 58VA 21/22/28, Compensation, Pension, Education and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Records - VA, published in the Federal Register.Your obligation to respond is required to obtain or retain benefits. The requested information is considered relevant and necessary to determine maximum benefits under the law. The responses you submit are considered confidential (38 U.S.C. 5701). Information submitted is subject to verification through computer matching programs with other agencies.

RESPONDENT BURDEN - We need this information to determine whether an apportionment of VA disability or death benefits may be made (38 U.S.C. 5307). Title 38, United States Code, allows us to ask for this information. We estimate that you will need an average of 30 minutes to review the instructions, find the information, and complete this form. VA cannot conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless a valid OMB control number is displayed. You are not required to respond to a collection of information if this number is not displayed. Valid OMB control numbers can be located on the OMB Internet Page at www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain. If desired, you can call 1-800-827-1000 to get information on where to send comments or suggestions about this form.