Mapping Your Future is a free publication. Please help us to distribute it to every person who requests a copy. Most people leaving prison have very limited funds. If you are in a position to make a donation, please send a check to the Education Justice Project, 403 E. Healey St., Champaign, IL 61820. Your support will help us to provide the book to others.

We receive no funds from the Department of Corrections or the State of Illinois for producing this book, and each one costs around $4.35 to produce. Thank you!

Correction: $10.55 to produce each guide

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Welcome Home!

We’re glad you’ve picked up *Mapping Your Future: A Guide for Successful Reentry*. This booklet can help you transition successfully from prison to life on the outside. It contains information about employment, housing, healthcare, and more that can help you plan your next steps.

If you are the family member of someone who is coming home from prison, this book will help you, too. It can be difficult to adjust your life and your household to accommodate someone who has been away. It will take time to get to know one another again and to build trust. We hope that you will find resources in this book that will assist you.

Let’s be honest: adjusting successfully to life on the outside isn’t easy, especially if you have been locked up for a long time. Reentry is so difficult in large part because incarceration is so hard. Loved ones are separated from one another for a long period of time. It is expensive to stay connected. Prison life breeds new habits and ways of interacting that may not be useful, and may even be harmful, on the outside. In addition, society places many obstacles in the paths of people with criminal records. These include legal barriers and social stigmas. The conditions of parole may feel unfair. At times it can feel like there are too many challenges placed in your path! How can anyone expect to succeed?
We believe it’s important to acknowledge all of this. There is much that needs to change in our state and in our country to make our communities more welcoming to formerly incarcerated individuals and to better ensure their success.

*Mapping Your Future* will help you meet the challenges. We wouldn’t have written it if we didn’t believe in YOU—yes, you!—and your ability to make a positive difference in the world. Don’t stop believing in yourself.

Throughout this book, you’ll find words of encouragement and inspiration from people who traveled the same journey that you’re about to begin. Many of them are alumni of the Education Justice Project, a college-in-prison program that has operated at Danville Correctional Center since 2008. It was their idea to write *Mapping Your Future* and we’re grateful for their important contributions to it.

Let this guide serve as a reminder that others have successfully navigated reentry, and you can, too. Take the time to read it, make plans, and seek help from others. And don’t give up.

Please keep in touch. We’d love to know how you’re doing, and how we can update this guide. Your feedback can help those coming after you.

Again, welcome home. *We’re glad you’re back.*
Making This Guide Work For You

Adjusting to life after incarceration can be challenging. This guide provides information and resources to help you succeed. It is organized in three main sections:

1. **Before you Leave.** If you are considering how to prepare for your release, read this section. It covers topics such as gathering the documents you will need, preparing mentally for your release, and finding housing.

2. **After You’re Out.** If you need guidance after you leave prison, turn to this section. It is organized by topic and has advice about many of the challenges you will face, from finding employment to getting health care and receiving veteran benefits.

3. **Directory.** Maybe you are simply looking for a phone number for legal services or the address of a foodbank. Turn to the directory. This section is also organized by topic (employment, housing, healthcare, etc.), with tabs so that you can easily find what you need. Lists of organizations and resources are provided, with addresses, phone numbers, websites, and brief descriptions.

In this guide, you will find worksheets to help you think about release and copies of forms for applying for benefits and different programs for your convenience.

We are aware that everyone’s situation is unique. Some of you are leaving after a short time in prison, while others have spent decades in prison. Some of you may have a large support network of family and friends to return to, while others may be alone. Some of you may know a lot about the reentry process, while others may know very little. We’ve tried to provide information that will be useful to everyone, but feel free to skip around to the sections that are most relevant to your situation and needs.

**We have listed a number of different programs, services, and businesses throughout this guide as resources for people leaving prison, people out of prison, 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).**
What sort of information will you find in this guide? For one thing, it challenges some common myths about reentry and provides you with the information you need to move forward. Here are a few examples:

**MYTH:** You can’t be employed after being incarcerated.

*False.* You can definitely be employed after being in jail or prison. Employers in Illinois can choose to not hire you, but cannot ask to see your criminal record until you have been deemed qualified for the job. They also need your permission to do so.

For more information about searching for jobs and what to do when you have a criminal record, turn to the Employment sections located on p. 24 and p. 36. The Directory also has employment resources, with lists of places you can go for help.

**MYTH:** You will be responsible for all medication you take upon release.

*False.* While it is true that you will be responsible for your medication, prisons offer a limited supply of medication upon release, ranging from 30-90 days. You can prepare for your release by getting medications ready and requesting physical, dental, or eye exams.

See Health Records and Check Up under Before You Leave on p. 30 to find out more.

**MYTH:** You can’t get financial aid for college if you have been incarcerated.

*False.* Most financial aid is available to students on parole or probation. For more information about the different kinds of training and higher education programs available and how to apply for financial aid.

See Education on p. 48

**MYTH:** You can’t get a bank account if you have been incarcerated.

*False:* You can open a bank account regardless of your legal history. You still have to meet the guidelines for opening certain bank accounts, such as minimum deposit requirements.

For more information about what to do with your money and the different kinds of banking options available, see Finances, Credit, and Taxes on p. 82.
**MYTH:** If you have been incarcerated you are entitled to Social Security compensation for your time in prison.

*False.* You do not qualify for Social Security benefits during the time you are incarcerated. However, if you were previously collecting Social Security you can resume benefits after providing proof of your release.

More information about Social Security benefits can be found in Meeting your Basic Needs on p. 56.

**MYTH:** You can’t receive VA benefits after being incarcerated.

*False.* If you are a veteran, you can have your benefits resumed 30 days before your rescheduled release date. You just need to provide evidence of this date from a parole board. For more information about accessing veteran benefits, see Veterans on p. 94.

**MYTH:** People with criminal records can’t vote.

*False.* In Illinois you can vote upon release, and should.

See Voting and Citizenship on p. 92.

**MYTH:** Health insurance is too expensive. It is easier to pay healthcare costs out of pocket.

*False.* While it is true that health insurance can be expensive, there are some more affordable options, such as Medicaid or subsidized insurance through the Healthcare Marketplace. Not having insurance can lead to expensive emergency room visits, and you will have to pay a $695 per year penalty if you are not insured.

For more information about health insurance and how to stay healthy, see Healthcare on p. 98.
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Collect Health Records ———— 30
It’s never too early to prepare for leaving prison. Even if you have a very long sentence, keep your eye on life after release. If your out date is many years away, you can prepare by getting an education (Adult Basic Education, GED, and college), working in prison so that you build your skills and your resume, taking advantage of programs like anger management and parenting classes, and developing hobbies. Play an instrument, learn how to draw, join a choir. Read. Consider attending religious services and Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. All of this will surround you with positive people and help prevent you from becoming “institutionalized,” or thinking of yourself solely as a prisoner who has nothing to contribute to the world.

Even while in prison, you can still make a difference. Education Justice Project (EJP) students developed an English as a Second Language program to teach English to others behind bars. They run anti-violence discussion groups in the prison. Many incarcerated people donate to locate charities like food pantries and Habitat for Humanity. What can you do?

The more you stay connected to the outside during your time in prison, the easier it will be to re-enter outside society.
outside can feel very rushed. EJP alumni report that visiting Lake Michigan and looking out over the water, taking long walks, biking, and gardening have helped them to find space to breathe in the busy world outside. How can you build such activities into your life?

It will be useful to practice patience. Everything may not go as you would wish. There will be disappointments. Sometimes you will be confused by how much things have changed since you went away. Go slow. Breathe. It is natural to feel stressed sometimes, but you can keep it from getting out of hand. You might join a group that is learning to practice Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), offered through some hospitals, social services, and a few churches.

The mindfulness suggestions on page 18 are taken from Jon Kabat-Zinn’s book *Full Catastrophe Living.* You can start applying them even while you’re still in prison.

Use the “Getting Ready to Get Out” checklist on page 17 to help you plan the logistics around your transition. Ideally, you’ll want to start doing this around 18 months before your release.

**PREPARE FOR CHALLENGES**

Before leaving prison, work on practicing patience, both with others and with yourself. When things go wrong, or when you’re disappointed, what can you do to keep yourself on track and focused?
**KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS**

What have you done in the past to successfully adjust to major life changes? What skills, habits, or traits helped you stay motivated, build positive relationships, and maintain self-respect?

---

**BUILD YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK**

People often isolate themselves during tough times, but it can help to keep in touch with positive friends and family members. Try to put your support system in place before you leave. Contact family members and friends and be honest about what you need from them, whether it’s housing, financial support, advice, or emotional support. Find out exactly what they expect from you. Who are the people you’re counting on to be there for you?

---
GETTING READY FOR RELEASE CHECKLIST

Use the checklist below to identify issues you can begin to address to ensure a smoother transition back.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues you may face upon release</th>
<th>Got this covered</th>
<th>Need to address</th>
<th>Page in this guide where you can find help in this area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of Money</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Issues</td>
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<td>Housing</td>
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<td>Clothing</td>
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<td>Medical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
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<td>Child Care</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
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</table>
Ways of Practicing Mindfulness

Adapted from Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (Bantam Dell: 2013)

**Breathe.** Tune into your breathing at different times during the day, feeling the belly rise and fall several times. Become aware of your thoughts and feelings at these moments, without judging them or judging yourself.

**Sit.** Try to remain still. Don’t expect anything and don’t look for anything. Practice being completely open to whatever comes into your mind. Let your thoughts come and watch them go. Witness them in stillness. Try this for 5 or 10 minutes at a time.

**Listen.** Hear what is there to be heard, moment by moment. Do not judge what you hear. Listen for the silence between sounds as well as the sounds themselves. Imagine that the sounds can move in and out of your body, through the pores of your skin. Do not hold on to the sounds; let them go freely. Try this for 5 or 10 minutes at a time.

**Walk.** Consciously focus on the sensations of your feet and legs. Do not try to get anywhere. Just be present at each step. Realize that you are where you are. Do not look at the sights around you or at your feet, just look straight ahead. Become aware of what your body is doing when you walk. It may be useful to do this exercise while walking in a small circle.

*Go slow, breathe. Make a 3-5 year plan on paper.*

– Darrell W.
As your release approaches, your top priority is to obtain copies of your birth certificate and social security card. Both are crucial to setting up your life after prison. For one thing, you will need the birth certificate and social security card to get your ID upon release.

This section will help you get a head start on securing both documents. We recommend you begin this process at least one year before you are released.

Remember, you have the legal right to have these documents. Nobody can refuse to issue them to you just because you have been incarcerated.

---

**Birth Certificate**

You want a certified copy of your birth certificate. A certified copy is one that is imprinted with a state seal and includes a notarization (signature and date) by the county registrar. There are three possible ways of securing your birth certificate while you are in prison.

1. Your prison library or counselor should have a form that you can complete to request a birth certificate. Work through your librarian or counselor, who can help you with this process.

2. Contact the County Clerk’s Office in the district where you were born to request a copy of your birth certificate in the mail. A certified copy of your birth certificate typically costs $15. If you were born in Illinois, locate the nearest county clerk’s office by consulting the list of Illinois County Clerks in the directory.

3. It may be possible for your parent or legal guardian to get your birth certificate for you. Ask them to contact the relevant County Clerk’s office directly.

---

**Gather Your Documents**

Items you will need if you request your birth certificate from the County Clerk:

- Birth Certificate Request Form
- Copy of a photo ID
- Payment
- Self-addressed, stamped envelope (for mailed requests)
If you are able to get your birth certificate before your release, we recommend that you not keep it with you in prison. Instead, have it sent to a trusted loved one or friend to hold on to.

If you are not able to get your birth certificate before you get out, you can request it at the County Clerk’s Office after you are released. It’s often possible to obtain a certified copy the same day you make the request. However, every County Clerk’s Office is different. Each one has different rules for how to get your birth certificate. It is best if you speak directly with them after your release to get their instructions.

OUTSIDE ILLINOIS
The instructions above apply only to those born in Illinois. If you were born in another state, contact a friend or family member, or seek the help of a counselor at your prison, so you can learn the process for getting a birth certificate from that state.

See the form on page 160 for Cook County and Illinois Birth Certificate Request forms, or use one of the services in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of service</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>How long it takes to get your records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currency Exchange</td>
<td>Call 847-759-8905 or visit mycurrencyexchange.com for locations</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>Up to 7 business days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VitalChek</td>
<td>Call 866-252-8974 or visit vitalchek.com</td>
<td>$2-$50</td>
<td>10-14 days (+$12.45) 5-7 days (+$16.50) 3-5 days (+$19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above services will obtain Cook County records for you, for a fee.

Social Security Card
All U.S. citizens and permanent residents have a social security number (SSN), used by the government to track federal and state taxes and social security benefits. Essential services like electricity and water require a social security number to activate accounts. You will need your social security card, the official record of your social security number, when you accept employment, open a bank account, or buy a house. If you do not already have a social security card, you will need to apply for one. If you have a card but have lost it, you will have to apply for a replacement card. It is not necessary to be a U.S. citizen to receive a social security card.

First piece of advice, make sure that you get all your documentation together and have your social security card and birth certificate sent in.
– Shaun W.
There are 2 possible ways of securing a social security card while you are in prison.

1. Request a form from your prison library or counselor. Begin the process at least one year before you leave prison.

2. Identify a convenient social security office by having a friend call the Social Security Administration toll free at 1-800-772-121 or look up the address at the following website: ssa.gov/agency/contact. Then, contact the office and ask what the procedure is for obtaining a new or replacement card while in prison. Each office has a different procedure.

As with your birth certificate, if you are able to get your card while still incarcerated, avoid carrying it with you. Memorize the number and keep the card in a safe place—with a trusted friend or loved one—until you are released. Your SSN is sensitive information. Be aware that sharing it with another person could put you at risk for fraud.

The Department of Corrections makes a Temporary Identification Card available to individuals getting released. It is valid for 30 days after your release. While there have been problems with having those cards recognized by the Secretary of State, you may still find it useful to get one, especially if you are unable to secure either your birth certificate or social security card before you leave prison. Hopefully, the problems will be solved by the time you are released.

See the form on page 162 for Social Security Card Application.
PULLING TOGETHER YOUR DOCUMENTS

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Taken care of</th>
<th>Need to Tackle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth Certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Driver’s License</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary Identification Card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>State ID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage License</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorce Decree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport or Green Card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Account Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Discharge</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you are getting ready to leave prison, employment is probably very much on your mind. Unfortunately, this is an area where you are likely to hit many roadblocks and challenges. This may not be what you want to hear. However, it is important to be realistic and prepare yourself. Perhaps it doesn’t seem fair that, even after you have served your time and “paid your debt to society,” you will encounter employers who are unwilling to give you a fair chance. Sadly, many people in our society are prejudiced against people with records.

The good news is that there are employers who are willing to give you a chance. And there are ways you can prepare yourself while still in prison to have a head start on finding a decent job.

**Build Experience**

Take advantage of opportunities to earn certificates, gain job experience, and acquire skills while in prison. Work while you are incarcerated. It provides a track record of what you’re capable of, boosts your confidence, and can help you identify skills you didn’t know you had.

Enroll in education programs, from ABE to college programs. This can prepare you for work on the outside and also demonstrate your intelligence and dedication to prospective employers.

Engage in volunteer work in prison. This helps to develop your skills and it is something you can add to your resume. Examples of non-paid work that can prepare you for paid employment on the outside are taking on leadership positions within prison groups and being active in programs such as band or choir.

*If you sat at a table playing cards for ten years and now you want to come out and you want to go out and get yourself a job that’s paying $18-20 an hour – well, be realistic. You’re not going to have that job because you didn’t do anything to prepare. What are you going to put on your resume, that you played cards for ten years?*  
– Anonymous
Write Your Resume

Another important thing you can do while you’re still in prison is to write your resume. This is a summary on paper of your skills, strengths, and work experience. You will need a resume to search and apply for jobs. A resume is a paper showcase of your skills and experience for potential employers. Even if you do not have access to a computer or typewriter, write your resume out while you are still incarcerated. You can type it out after your release.

Your resume should have several parts:

1. **Your name, address, and contact information.** If you are not sure of your address yet, ask a friend or family member if you can use their mailing address.

2. **An objective** (optional). This tells potential employers what you are looking for and provides a brief summary of what you have to offer. At this point, your objective might be very broad, like, “energetic and dependable individual seeks opportunity to bring growth to your company,” or “hardworking, college-educated individual with excellent writing skills seeks position.”

3. **Education.** Your resume should have a list of schools you’ve attended. Consider including your educational experiences in prison, especially if you have earned any degrees or certificates (high school level and beyond). Your resume is also a place to list any scholarships, awards, or distinctions you earned during your education.

4. **Work experience.** List your jobs. Some resumes include volunteer work. However, it might be worthwhile to have a separate section for volunteer work if you have done so much that it will favorably attract a prospective employer’s attention. Include where, when and for how long you had each position.

5. **Other professional skills.** This includes certifications, technical skills, language abilities, and awards and recognitions. If you have published any writing while in prison, e.g., in a prison newsletter or outside publication, you can list that on your resume.

Please note that it is not necessary to indicate on your resume that you gained education or work experience while incarcerated if you are worried that employers might view this unfavorably. The sample resumes on p. 163 can show you various ways that other formerly incarcerated people have handled this situation.

Of course, if a prospective employer asks you if you have been incarcerated, you should provide a straightforward and honest answer.

Your resume should be a one- to two-page document. Review it many times, and try to have another person review it as well. Things to look out for:

- Are all details correct?
- Are there any typos or misspellings? You want your resume to reflect your attention to details and professionalism.
• Is there anything on your resume that is untrue? Do not claim experiences that you have not had. This could land you in serious trouble.
• Is the formatting consistent? For example, if the first section title is in bold, all of them should be in bold.

• Is your resume attractive to look at? Employers have to review many resumes. Make yours stand out by being nicely designed and easy to read. Resist the temptation to use “fancy” type or a lot of underlining. These features make reading difficult.

Please see our forms section on page 163 for sample resumes.

Search for Employment Opportunities

Getting a job requires networking—talk with other people to get information, develop contacts, and find job opportunities. You can begin networking with career counselors at the prison, if available. They can help you plan.

Talk to your family and friends about job opportunities they may be aware of. Ask for their help. Let them know you are serious about finding work and supporting yourself. Most people on the outside network heavily to find work.

If you have computer access, make a few copies of your resume and mail them to friends and family members. Ask them to share your resume with prospective employers. For example, they might have family friends who own their own businesses, a neighbor who has a restaurant, or someone whose company is looking to hire. At this point, you are not looking for an ideal job. You simply want a position from which you can continue to build a good employment history and, eventually, land that dream job.

For information about how to find and apply for jobs once you are released, see the Employment section in "After You’re Out" on p. 36. Be hopeful. Many people have found jobs after incarceration and, with the right preparation and attitude, you can too.
When you are released from prison, you are either “on parole” or you are on your own (“maxing out”). If you are released on parole, it means that you chose not to complete your entire sentence in prison and that you were granted permission to leave the facility. You will remain under the supervision of the Illinois Department of Corrections until your parole period is over. (If you plan to submit a request for transfer from Illinois to parole in another state, please see your counselor. You must submit that request within 120 days of your release date.)

While on parole, you must comply with parole restrictions. In addition, you will need to pay to be on parole, since part of the cost of supervision is born by the individual. One advantage of being on parole, in addition to getting out early, is that your parole officer can link you with services and support that may not be available to those maxing out.

An advantage to maxing out is that you will not be under supervision when you get out, and you do not have to pay supervision fees.

Most people leave prison on parole; only a minority “max out.” We realize that it can be frustrating to know that even though you are getting out of prison, you will not actually be free because you will have restrictions and obligations related to parole. Hang in there. Parole is difficult, but many people successfully manage it. You can, too.

Preparing for Parole

The schedule for submitting a parole plan varies by institution. Generally, the process begins around six months before your release date. You will be visited by the Prisoner Review Board (PRB), which will make recommendations surrounding the conditions of your parole. For example, you may be required to attend anger management classes, or you may be placed on electronic monitoring for a period of time. A copy of the Prisoner Review Board Order can be seen in our forms section on page 202.

In your parole plans, you will submit the address of the residence where you intend to live while on parole. If you plan to parole to the home of a family member or friend, this is your “host site” and it will need to be approved. If electronic monitoring is a feature of your parole, a parole officer (PO) will visit the home and determine whether it is suitable. If electronic monitoring is not involved, they will usually simply call your family member and confirm that they have given permission for you to stay with them. What do parole officers look for during a
home visit? Generally, they are looking for contraband, such as firearms and controlled substances. Also, you may not live with someone else who is also on parole. The person you want to live with will be asked to complete a Host Site Agreement. Usually the form comes in the mail, but the PO may bring it when the home is inspected for approval.

Many of the conditions of parole—the rules you will have to follow—will affect the people you live with. It is important to communicate early and clearly with anyone you plan to live with so that they understand how your parole conditions will impact them. We encourage host site residents to contact the Illinois Department of Corrections well in advance of your parole date with any questions they might have.

If you are planning to parole to a home that you own, you will not have to complete a Host Site Agreement. If someone is going to pick you up from prison, it is a good idea for them to call the facility first to confirm the date and time. Once you get home, it is important that you not leave until your PO visits. Usually this will happen within 72 hours.

If you can’t parole to your own home or the home of a family member or friend, there are a few halfway houses in Illinois that you may be able to parole to. A halfway house is a temporary place where you can live as you adjust to life outside of prison. Halfway houses serve people recently released from prison as well as those who are recovering from substance abuse or mental illness. Many also provide supportive services, like substance abuse counseling and employment assistance.

Talk to your counselor about halfway houses where you may be able to stay. Be sure to ask a lot of questions, since there is a wide range in quality among halfway houses and not all of them may meet your needs. In addition, many have restrictions about who they will admit. For example, some halfway houses do not accept people who have been convicted of violent crimes or of sexual offenses.

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

– Shaun W.

Halfway Houses

For a list of halfway house resources, see the Directory on page 130.
Planning for health care before you leave prison saves money and helps you avoid problems like running out of medication or getting sick and having to go to the emergency room (which is very expensive). There are a few steps you should take before you are released.

1. Ask your counselor what the procedure is for the release of health records at your facility. In most instances, you will be able to complete forms to acquire those records. Request them about 90 days before your release. You will likely have to pay for any copies. There are separate forms for medical records and HIV and mental health records.

You especially want copies of your prison medical records if you had any particular medical issues. You can receive the records after your release, but if you wait more than a few months post-release to request them, you must send the request to the Department of Corrections in Springfield rather than to the facility where you were held.

2. Request a dental exam, an eye exam, and a physical exam to address any health concerns you may have before you leave prison. Prisons can even offer glasses, if needed. Women are encouraged to request a gynecological exam with a PAP smear and ask for a mammography if they’re over the age of 40. Start early (within the year of your release) in case your dentist or doctor finds something you will need to address.

See page 107 for a list of tests and exams you should request before release.

3. Get your medications ready. Prisons offer people a limited amount of medication supply upon release, ranging from a 30 to 90-day supply. Make sure you discuss your medication needs with the prison doctor.

4. Begin the process of getting health insurance. People who just get out of prison are often eligible for Medicaid, a government-sponsored healthcare program for people with limited resources. You can begin the application process before you leave prison. Ask your counselor to help you get started. Once you submit the paperwork, it takes 30 days to obtain insurance, so it is a good idea to fill it out a few months in advance so that you can have access to health care when you are released. This is especially important if you have certain health conditions that will require immediate treatment. You will be expected to pay for whatever treatment you need out of pocket until your Medicaid kicks in.

For more information about health insurance and how to apply, see the health section of the guide.