



Preparing to Go Home

The doors of the prison open and you are excited to go home. You don't know what will happen, but it has to be better than what you are leaving. Are you ready for what comes next?

Life after jail will throw many problems at you. Be ready to face them head on. One of the biggest issues you may face is how much schooling you have. This affects the type of jobs you can get. Often, the more school and training you have, the more you will be paid. You can take charge of your future by making plans, setting goals, and taking action.

Questions for you to think about:

- In the past, were you ready for school? Or did you have too many other things going on in your life?
 - Are you under pressure to just find a job? Or do you have time to plan for your future?
 - Do you want your kids to see you as a role model for going back to school?
- Think about a good memory of school. Maybe it was a class in jail. Or maybe a case manager or coach taught you a lesson. Maybe someone from your community or family taught you something. What was the topic? How did they teach you the lesson? What else was going on in your life?

Getting more education or training will set you up for a better future. There are people to help. All you need to do is get some help in making a plan of action.

The message in all of this is: You can do it!

Before Your Release

Hopefully, you kept learning while still in jail. You can do many things as you get ready for exit. You can:

- Take a test of your skills including reading, math, writing, and "life skills." This will show where you are now. Then you can target areas to improve.
- Did you finish high school or get a GED? If so, find a program inside to help show you which of your skills you can apply to school or work.
- If you didn't finish high school or get a GED, sign up for classes. You can do this in jail, or find classes nearby when you get home.
- Find your identification (ID) cards. Get new ones if you don't have them. You need them to apply to school or programs. Employers will also need to see them. (Read the *ID Tipsheet* to learn more.)
- Find or get copies of all your past school records. Get your high school diploma, GED papers, work records, and any certifications.

After Your Release: So Now What?

Once you go home, there are many important things to do. Find a place to live. Get a job to take care of you and your kids. Staying drug and alcohol free.

Improving your talents and abilities is also important to fitting back in and staying home! You can do this by finishing or going farther in your education. Better education can help you get a better job. (Also read the *Employment Tipsheet* to learn more about getting a job.)

Let's look at where you are now, and some next steps (on the chart on the next page):

Learning Options I Can Try – Where I Can Go Next

Where I Am Now - which of these applies to me	GED	College That Leads to a Credential	Credential or Short Term Training Certificate	Jobs
I don't have a GED	<p>Find a GED program nearby.</p> <p>Sign up for a GED program at your jail.</p> <p>Talk to a teacher or counselor about the best way to study and prepare for the test.</p> <p>Learn about recent changes in the GED test in your state.</p>			
I finished high school or got a GED. I want more education.	<p>Get a copy of your high school diploma or GED certificate.</p> <p>Take a test of your current skills in reading, math, writing, and speaking.</p> <p>Develop your education plan.</p> <p>How will you pay for it? Look for options here: www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov</p>	<p>Go to a local college or community college and set up a meeting with a counselor.</p> <p>Take career interest tests to help you decide what courses to take or what programs to look at.</p> <p>Talk to a counselor about ways you can pay for the next part of community or a four-year college.</p>	<p>Take career interest tests to help you decide what courses to take or what programs to look at.</p>	
I have some college		<p>Get a copy of your college transcript (official report card).</p> <p>Go to a local college or community college and set up a meeting with a counselor.</p> <p>Take career interest tests to help you decide what courses to take or what programs to look at.</p> <p>Talk to a counselor about ways you can pay for community or a four-year college.</p>		
I have a credential (college, associate's degree, or certificate)		<p>Get a copy of your credential paper(s).</p> <p>Is your certificate or degree current?</p> <p>Do you need to update it?</p> <p>Where can you go to get that update or upgrade?</p>	<p>Identify a job type that you are interested in. Determine if there are specific credentials you need to work in that area.</p>	
I don't want or can't go to school now				<p>Go to an American Job Center and talk with a counselor (see resources at the end of this <i>Tipsheet</i> to find one near you). List the skills and experiences you have had inside and outside of jail.</p> <p>List potential job leads that match those skills and your interests.</p>

Learning Options I Can Try - Continued

Where I Am Now - which of these applies to me	GED	College That Leads to a Credential	Credential or Short Term Training Certificate	Jobs
I don't know what to do next		<p>Talk to someone about your plan, next steps, and what you need from them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Case manager • Parole or probation officer • Friend or mentor • Counselor • Positive family member <p>Explore resources and websites such as www.mynextmove.org</p>	<p>Think about what jobs are interesting to you. What Career and College Readiness or college programs may be options?</p>	<p>Go to an American Job Center (OneStop Career Center) and talk with a counselor (see resources at the end of this <i>Tipsheet</i> to find one near you).</p> <p>List the skills and experiences you have had inside and outside of jail.</p> <p>List potential job leads that match those skills and your interests.</p>
I have a college degree		<p>Get a copy of your degree or college transcript (official report card).</p> <p>If you have a degree, does it link directly to a job?</p> <p>Do you need more education, training, or certifications to get hired?</p> <p>Talk to a counselor at your college or an American Job Center (see resources at the end of this <i>Tipsheet</i> to find one near you).</p> <p>Is your degree in a field that you can work in now that you have a criminal history?</p>		

What to Expect When You Apply to an Educational Program

Introduction and a review of your Education History:

- The staff will do an intake interview to talk about your past school history.

Education and Credential review:

- Staff will request papers or proof of any degrees or certificates you have earned.

Educational and Career Tests:

- Staff will test your current skills in math, writing, reading, and other basic skills.

Talk about skills you need:

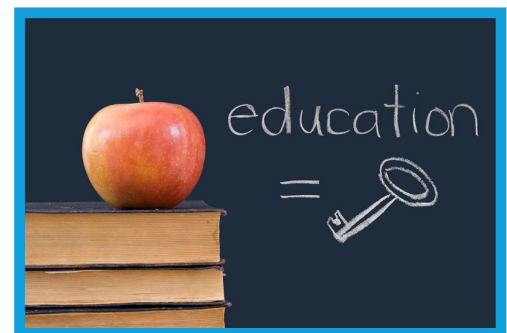
- Staff will suggest the skills you should learn or improve to reach your goals.

Talk about program options:

- Staff will suggest options to help you meet your goals. These may include GED readiness, college courses (catch-up or for credit) or certification training.

Time management:

- Staff will help you create plans for using your time wisely for school-work, study, and the other things you need to do.



Support or assistance:

- Staff will help you try to reach your goals. But they will also help you figure out your outside support system. This may be a friend or family member, teacher, mentor, or a neighbor.
- Staff will help you complete the FAFSA (a form to help you apply for financial aid) if you might qualify.

Keep your spirits up:

- Staff will help you stay positive as you work on reaching your goals. Going to school is like a job. It is hard work. You have to keep at it and focus on the schoolwork. This includes studying and passing tests.

Getting on Track: What I Need to Know

- Where is the best educational program based on MY needs?
- How will I pay for it?
- Will it make a difference in finding a job?
- Who can help me match my interests and skills to a local program?
- How can I know what skills I have now and what skills I need to improve?
- When I go back to school, do I have what I need to finish? Will I need a home computer? What resources, computers, or study areas can I use in my community, library, or community college?

Take the Next Step

Going home is exciting, but also scary! When you are ready to take your education to the next level, take one step at a time:

- Plan, Plan, Plan!
- Start your Education Plan using the chart above as a guide for your next steps.
- Find positive people who know education is important and will support you every day.
- Set up a daily schedule of what needs to happen that day. For example – take children to school, work, study for GED class, do homework, sleep, and so on.
- Look at where the jobs are in your area so that you are smart about what jobs you can apply for when you finish the education or training.
- It is smart to start school or training with a plan and a way to make it happen. BUT, don't wait to come up with the "perfect plan."
- Be sure that your basic needs (a place to live, a way to get around, food, child care, drug or alcohol abuse help, and so on) are under control before you start school.
- Use your positive support networks and community resources often. Don't be afraid to ask for HELP!! We *all* need help sometimes in our lives.

REMEMBER: No matter where you start in taking the NEXT STEPS for education, it will be a great step forward!

Resources

- **American Job Centers** – American Job Centers (formerly know as One Stop Career Centers) have a website at www.dol.gov, ajc, and can help you look for job openings, training options and other career preparation services such as developing an online job application.
- **CareerOneStop** – The CareerOneStop website www.careeronestop.org tells about state education and training programs, apprenticeships and other resources. There is also a link for extra information and help for adults and youth who have been in jail.
- **Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training you Need** - a Guide developed by the US Department of Education, Office of Correctional Education. It will help you get started or keep going in your education. It is available FREE at 1-877-433-7827 or edpubs@edpubs.ed.gov
- **www.gedtestingservice.com** - This site has up to date information about the GED and possible changes. It also has ideas and materials for getting ready.
- **Reentry Mythbuster! (Series)** - Gives information on federal Student Financial Aid, on Youth Access to Education upon Reentry, and other topics. National Reentry Resource Center: <http://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/>

- www.mynextmove.org - a web-based tool for new job hunters, students, and people looking at different jobs to learn more about their options.
- <https://www.careeronestop.org/EducationTraining>
- **The National H.I.R.E. Network** - <http://www.hirenetowrk.org> has lists for each state about education and service providers to help your re-entry.
- www.fsapubs.gov - This site offers free resources about federal student aid.
- www.fefe.arizona.edu - FEFE= Family Economics and Financial Education. They have ideas to help you learn about money and Life Skills.
- www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov - This site shares some sources of educational funding to help students going to any training after high school.
- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** - www.studentaid.ed.gov See also link to: "Incarcerated Individuals and Eligibility for Federal Student Aid"

My Education Action Plan

My Goals	My Next Steps	My Timeline: By What Date, I Will...	My Successes

Adult Education Words to Know

ABE: Adult Basic Education is a company that teaches GED readiness.

American Job Centers (they used to be OneStop Career Centers): These are centers found in most cities and areas around the U.S. They are paid for by the State Department of Labor. They have many ways to help with reentry, job search, and can recommend you to places that help you continue your education.

Career and Technical Education (CTE): Offers a series of academic and technical courses that ready the student for more education or a career.

Credential: A credential is earned when a person can show the technical or work skills needed to get hired or move ahead within a job field. These skills are based on guidelines either written or agreed to by the industries and employers.

Credit hours: The number of weekly class hours for the course. If you have three hours of class time each week, you will earn three credit hours if you finish everything the instructor asks of you.

FAFSA: A form to request money and help for education that can be used to apply for many kinds of help paying for school. This includes help for people that have been to jail.

GED: General Education Development test is a U.S.-wide credential that takes the place of a high school diploma. It says that people who pass the test have the knowledge and skill of someone with a diploma.

Post-Secondary Education: Education beyond high school that may include job-related certifications or academic degrees.

Student Loans: Money borrowed to pay for school that has to be paid back with interest (an agreed-to amount of extra money on top of the amount borrowed).

Tuition: Money that is paid to sign up for and attend a school, technical program, college, or university.

Undergraduate student: A student who is working on a college or technical degree.