

IDENTIFICATION AND PERSONAL RECORDS *tipsheet*

Planning Now to have Critical Documents and Identification (ID) Needed for Reentry



Preparing to Go Home

You will face many challenges when you go back home. One of the most important is to get a state-issued ID and your other personal papers. These will help you get many types of services like food, education, and training. They also help you get jobs and medical care. Having your ID will make your return easier. And it will be easier to reach your goals.

First, you **MUST** put the ID and other personal documents you have in a safe place. That way they will be ready to use when you get out. In the United States everyone needs these papers for jobs, medical care, and other services. It isn't just people who have been to jail. Everyone needs these documents.

So what are the most important ID and personal papers?

- Social Security card or an official copy
- Government photo ID. For example, a driver's license, prison ID, or passport. Or a state-issued ID given upon release.
- Birth Certificate as a US citizen
- Criminal history/RAP sheet
- All school records, earned credentials, and job training certificates

Getting new documents and IDs can take time. You have to apply and then they have to send them to you. Don't wait! Let's start these important steps!

Questions to think about:

- What ID or personal papers do I need to get a place to live? A job? Into school?
- What ID and personal papers do I already have? Where are they now?
- How do I replace an ID if I can't find it?
- What IDs do I need to apply for because I never had them?
- How much will the ID or personal papers cost to get? Is it worth my time and money?
- When an employer or school checks my background, will my RAP sheet be right?
- If I finished school or a training program, where is the certificate? How can I get a new one if I lost it?
- What name or names have I used in the past? What name should I use for ID or other personal papers?

**The important message is: Get your personal documents.
Put them in a safe place to be ready when you need them!**

Before Your Release

- The Social Security agency **DOES NOT** take forms sent right from a person in jail. Ask someone at the jail to follow the state rules to send in the forms for you. You could ask a counselor/case worker or parole officer. They should also send any other papers needed with the forms.
- Ask your counselor or case manager to put your ID forms in a file until you get out. Or mail them to someone you trust. IDs get lost in the "release shuffle" a lot and then you'll start all over again!
- Make sure you have a copy of your birth certificate. Your case manager or counselor may help you get it before you get out. Proof of who you are with your legal name will be needed. This could be a prison ID or state ID.
- Get a copy of your Criminal Record or RAP Sheet. Look to see what is listed when someone checks your background. Is it right?
- Get copies of all your school records. This includes from before jail and while you were incarcerated. Contact local organizations you were involved with or your American Job Center who may also have records of training you finished in the community.

A Social Security Administration form for a Social Security Card. The form is titled "APPLICATION FOR A SOCIAL SECURITY CARD" and includes fields for name, date of birth, race, citizenship, and ethnicity. A blue pen is resting on the form.

After Your Release

- If you haven't gotten your ID and other papers, start RIGHT NOW to get them! It takes time to fill in the forms and get the papers. You often need one kind of ID as proof to get another kind.
- If you have never gotten IDs before, find some help. A case worker or parole officer might help. An American Job Center or a local program also may help (see the Resources section below to find one near you).
- You don't need ID just because you were in jail. Everyone has to prove who he or she is now. All citizens need ID and personal papers to see a doctor, enroll in school program, or to get a job or a loan.

What to Expect When You Are Applying for ID or Replacement Documents

- To get a Social Security card, you need the form to apply for a Social Security card. It is the SS-5 form. This is also if you need to replace a card you lost.
- Use the name on your birth certificate to fill out forms or apply for ID papers. That is your legal name.
- When you fill out the Social Security forms you must also prove who you are. You can use a state ID, valid driver's license or a passport. You could also use a marriage or divorce record. Or you can use an official ID from the jail.
- In many states, the DMV works with Corrections. They help people in jail get ID before they get out. If your state offers that service, do it before you leave.
- Getting a Social Security card can take TIME!!! This is true if it's new or to replace one you lost. Plan ahead. Get the paper work in as soon as you can. Government agencies do not always move as fast as you need them to in getting you the ID.

Getting on Track: What I Need to Know

- In most states, you can use your prison ID to prove who you are. This will help you when trying to get other IDs. Use it when trying to get a Social Security card or other critical documents.
- Many programs are tied to your Social Security Number. It proves who you are. Or it shows that you can get the services. That makes it very important. For example, it could matter in getting loans or scholarships.
- The law says an employer must have copies of your ID. It proves you are who you say you are. Without your ID, you cannot be hired.

As you prepare to leave, get your IDs in order. Having all the IDs and personal papers you need will help you get jobs and services when you get out.



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Resources

- **Social Security Administration** - 1-800-772-1213 or <https://www.ssa.gov>
To request a new card or one to replace a card you can't find. Also, call to find a local office in your neighborhood.
- **Bureau of Vital Records or Office of Vital Records** - The Center for Disease Control site lists the address to contact for each state. Find the address for your state office. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>
- **Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training you Need** - This is a guide written by the US Department of Education, Office of Correctional Education. It helps you get started or continue your education. Get it FREE at 1-877-433-7827 or edpubs@edpubs.ed.gov
- **American Job Centers (formerly called CareerOneStop Career Centers)** www.dol.gov/ajc - This site tells you about state education and training programs, apprenticeships and other certification options. There is also a link for extra resources for people who have been to prison. <https://www.careeronestop.org>
- **The National H.I.R.E. Network** - This site lists education and service providers supporting your re-entry for each state. Click on "Resources and Assistance." Then click your state. You can see a copy of your RAP sheet to check what is listed under the "Criminal Record Repository." <http://www.hirenetwork.org>
- **Department of Motor Vehicles** - The DMV in your state will list the steps to get your state ID or driver's license. Renewing a license can usually be done online or at a local office.
- **State Departments of Corrections** - They often list your RAP sheet. Search your state's site to check what they report for you.