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# Preparing For Your Return To The Community:

## What Parolees and Their Families Need To Know



# PA Board of Probation and Parole PA Department of Corrections



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# Preparing for Your Release:

## The Key to Starting Over

As a person who wants to leave your criminal past behind and rebuild your life, it is important that you realize that returning home to your community is a process that begins from the day you enter prison.

Begin preparing now. Put your time to good use.

It is up to **you** to follow the correctional plan that has been developed specifically to meet your needs. DOC will assign you a counselor who will monitor your progress in specific programs or treatment.

It is up to **you** to take advantage of educational and vocational programs that will help you after you are released. Talk to your counselor about a GED or college diploma, vocational training, parenting classes, basic life skills courses, and how you can get involved in other positive programs or activities within the prison.

**Returning home successfully requires work, but it will be rewarding.**

For you to be successful when you leave prison, it is important that you maintain connections to your family, and/or religious or community organizations that are willing to assist parolees with reentry into the community. They will help you find solutions to problems and help you to live a safe and healthy life.

This network of support may help you find a place to live and a job, two very important parts of the reentry process. Employment will enable you to support yourself and your children, if any, and keep you on the track to a new lifestyle.

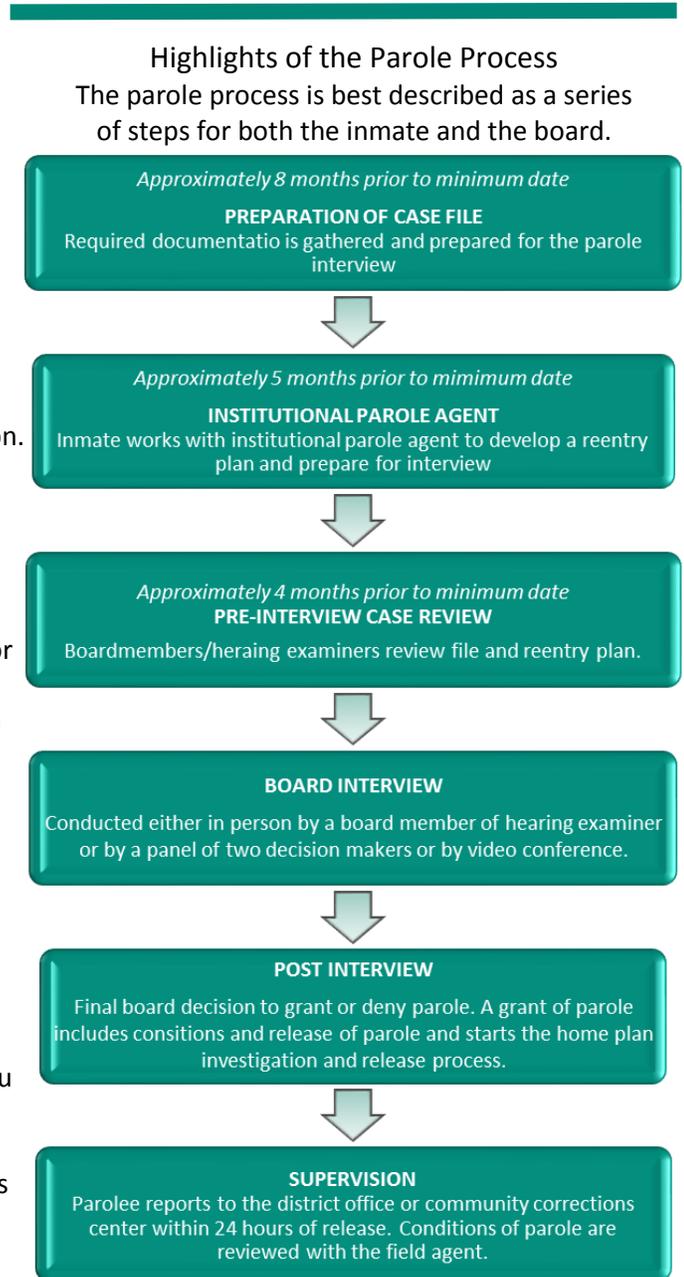
When you are released, get in touch with those individuals and organizations that you kept in contact with while in prison that can support your positive reentry into society. They can help you after you return home.

To help you adjust, get involved in local organizations. Find ways to give back to your community. Avoid individuals and organizations that will encourage you to get re-involved in criminal activity.

**Your parole agent can help you and your family after you are released.** Parole's goal is to help you be successful. After you are released on parole, talk to your parole agent about your activities and get his or her support.

**Remember - there are many agencies, programs and people waiting to help you succeed!**

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# Preparing For Your Return To The Community: What Parolees and Their Families Need To Know

Each parole district offers a family support class for inmates who are nearing release from prison. These classes help family members understand the parole process and gain an understanding of conditions of parole. The goal is to help the family understand how they can help the parolee to be successful. For more information on these classes, please contact the district office where the parolee will be living after being released.

A parolee's successful return to the community is dependent on many factors. Planning and preparations begin while still in prison to ensure that housing, employment, benefits, treatment, programming and medical needs are met after the inmate leaves prison. The efforts that an inmate makes to prepare for release is viewed as the foundation for the person to rebuild ties with the community and succeed on parole. Prior to parole consideration, an inmate must submit a home plan. This plan will be investigated to determine whether the proposed residence is appropriate for the parolee while on parole.

## Home Plan

Home plan investigations are conducted in accordance with the Board's dual mandate to protect the safety of the public and aid in the rehabilitation of the parolee. Home plans are investigated on a case by case basis. The board investigates a home plan to consider staff and public safety as well as victim issues and any other issues that may impact the successful reentry and parole completion of the parolee. These individual determinations depend upon a variety of factors. Field agents investigate each proposed home site, keeping in mind the person's history and supervision needs, using discretion and sound judgment to determine the appropriateness of the home plan.



Ideally, an inmate should submit two (2) proposed home plans in the event that one of them is not determined to be in the best interest of the parolee or the public. The home plan should provide a stable environment that will provide support and assistance to the parolee while searching for a job, attending counseling, seeking medical care, striving for financial stability and locating transportation. The person will have conditions of parole that must be followed and family members can help the parolee to follow them. This can be a stressful time that can cause a parolee to relapse – but a strong family support system, the help of clergy and friends and mentors can help this not to happen.

Although a potential home provider may agree to accept a parolee, the final decision still rests with the parole supervision staff based on the individual circumstances of the case and the past experience in supervising certain types of individuals.

The institutional parole staff will assist the inmate with the home plan process, but they are not responsible for securing a home plan for an inmate.

**In deciding if a residence is suitable, a parole agent or parole investigator will obtain the following information and any other information deemed necessary regarding the proposed home:**

- Name and relationship to inmate of person offering the home
- Name and phone number of person interviewed
- Location of home, including the type of neighborhood
- Proximity to employment and availability of public transportation

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- List of the occupants and their relationship to parolee, age, sources of income, criminal records and feelings toward parolee
  - Potential sources of conflict
  - Responsibilities of the parolee: rent, room, and rules
  - Whether or not weapons are present in the home
  - Determine if a telephone is available
  - Any history of domestic violence with members of the household
  - Confirm that the home provider is aware of the person's criminal record

**The investigating parole agent must provide potential home providers with the following information:**

- Agent's role, responsibilities and contact information
- Parole conditions and their impact on those residing in the home (see general parole conditions)
- Moving/travel restrictions: the parolee cannot move or leave the district without permission from the parole agent
- Board's weapons policy - **No weapons are allowed in the home**
- **The agent's ability to conduct searches and make unannounced visits – without a warrant**

## **If Granted Parole...**

If granted parole, the board may parole the inmate to an approved home plan (private residence), a Department of Corrections (DOC)-operated Community Corrections Center (CCC), or a privately operated facility (CCF) that operates under contract to the DOC.

If granted parole to a CCC or CCF, the DOC will determine a bed date for the inmate, based on where he plans to live and any special treatment needs he requires. DOC tries to place individuals in CCCs as close as possible to the parolee's proposed home area or the committing county.

The parolee's family members, friends, or previous employers can assist the individual in applying for employment while the inmate is still incarcerated. Institutional counselors and institutional parole agents will provide guidance as appropriate – they do not have lists of employers willing to hire parolees.

Home plans are investigated by the agent who will supervise the parolee after the inmate receives a Board Action, which is the official board decision, to grant parole.

There are a number of restrictions imposed on the home provider, and not everybody that offers an inmate a home at first will be able to keep that offer after they learn all the rules.

If the provider is still willing to provide a parolee with a residence, they also will have to provide a copy of proof of ownership of the property or verifiable contact information for the landlord to the investigating agent.

***Approved home plans are valid for 150 days from the date of approval.***

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If an inmate's home plan expires, or if the situation inside the home changes, the parole agent will have to recheck the inmate's plan prior to his release

Individuals with sex offense histories, violent criminal histories and medical concerns represent cases that may experience delays that do not fit the normal process and timing. These hard to place individuals need to work closely with their families and institutional parole agents to try to develop viable reentry plans.

It is in the inmate's interest to remain aware of his home plan status and coordinate this information with his case manager at the prison. As a guideline, parole staff has approximately 30 days to approve or deny a new home plan proposal after the field agent receives it.

If a person hopes to live in another state upon parole release, he should begin the planning process as early as possible. Interstate applications require payment of a \$100 fee upon application.

## Timeline

**If the inmate is approaching his minimum sentence date:**

- Approximately eight months before the minimum sentence date, the inmate should be given a Statement of Residence and a Statement of Employment form.
- The inmate should send the Statement of Residence form to the person(s) offering him a residence and the Statement of Employment form to potential employers.
- After the inmate has received the Statement of Residence signed by the potential home provider or the Statement of Employment signed by the potential employer, it is the inmate's responsibility to make sure the forms are given to his institutional parole agent.
- The investigation of a home plan is initiated shortly after an inmate has been granted parole, which is often before the minimum sentence date.

**If the inmate has previously been denied parole:**

- The inmate's most recent Board Action will establish a proposed month for a parole review.
- The inmate's institutional parole agent will instruct the person on how to submit a proposed home plan three months prior to the scheduled parole interview month.

**If the inmate is in a CCC or halfway house:**

- When the inmate thinks he has found a valid home plan proposal, he contacts his DOC case manager or parole agent at the facility and provides him with this information.
- After the inmate receives these materials back from the potential home provider, the materials are to be given to the inmate's DOC case manager. The case manager will forward these materials to institutional parole staff for individual investigation by a field agent.

## How is a home plan investigated?

The assigned parole agent will visit with the proposed home provider, in person, at the residence being offered.

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The agent will give the home provider a copy of this brochure: *Preparing For Your Return To The Community: What Parolees and Their Families Need to Know*.

The agent will review the Home Provider Agreement Letter with the proposed home provider and have the home provider sign the form.

It is very important for the home provider to be available to meet with the agent.

***Unanswered phone calls and a refusal to respond to business cards left in the door in a timely manner will result in a home plan rejection.***

The agent will obtain input from local police, neighbors and other community members, and he or she will determine the availability of community resources to assist with reentry.

The following information will be recorded on a checklist by the agent:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ A business card was given to the home provider.</li><li>✓ The general conditions of parole and possible special conditions for the parolee were reviewed with the home provider.</li><li>✓ The offense which the inmate is currently convicted of will be disclosed to the proposed home provider. Information disclosed is limited to public information.</li><li>✓ The procedure for the parolee changing his residence was explained.</li><li>✓ The proposed home provider restrictions regarding possessing firearms and other weapons and implications for home suitability were explained.</li><li>✓ <b><i>The agency's right to conduct warrantless searches of the approved residence was explained.</i></b></li><li>✓ The home provider was informed of the location and hours of the field parole office.</li><li>✓ The home provider was informed that staff may conduct visits to the residence outside of the normal business hours.</li><li>✓ The home plan provider was informed of the board's policy statement on domestic violence and was given a copy of the board's brochure: <i>Preparing For Your Return To The Community:</i></li></ul> | <p style="text-align: right;"><i>What Parolees and Their Families Need to Know.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Staff has determined the availability of a telephone in the residence and noted in the summary any lack of telephone access due to special features or Internet access.</li><li>✓ The possibility of electronic monitoring restrictions was reviewed with the home provider.</li><li>✓ Staff has listed all residents, their age, relationship to the parolee, any source of income and any criminal record, for each.</li><li>✓ Staff has toured the entire proposed residence and determined:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Any circumstances that would place the parole supervision staff in danger such as dangerous dogs.</li><li>▪ The physical condition as far as habitability.</li><li>▪ Any sources of conflict that may preclude approving the residence.</li><li>▪ The number of exits in the home.</li></ul></li><li>✓ The responsibilities the home provider expects from the parolee such as paying for rent, room, board, and any rules to which the person must comply.</li></ul> |
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✓ Whether the home provider is renting or leasing the residence. If so, staff must obtain the landlord's name, telephone number, and address and ask to see the lease.

✓ If the plan is being submitted for investigation without employment, there must be verification of the availability of other forms of financial support such as family support, Social Security or disability benefits.

## Factors That Could Result in Home Plan Rejections

- Section 8 or other public housing sometimes does not permit individual who were not previously on the lease in their housing units.
- Proposed residence has weapons or circumstances exist that would place the parole supervision staff in danger.
- The physical condition of the home is unsafe or unfit or inadequate sleeping arrangements.
- Conditions existing within the proposed home that would present the likelihood of the parolee committing similar offenses or technical parole violations.
- The proposed home provider is not currently cooperative with parole supervision staff.
- The presence in the home of other parolees or those on probation for serious offenses which may increase the parolee's risk of re-offending.
- Conditions leading to the offense are not re-established, such as when the victim or victim's family resides in the household or in close proximity, domestic violence issues, and sex offender issues.
- The proposed home provider is unwilling to agree to conditions contained in the home agreement or has inadequate household accommodations.

## Inmate Obligations That Must Be Met Before Release

Most parole interviews occur four months prior to the inmate's minimum sentence date, but the person cannot be released before the minimum sentence date. Many things must happen prior to release. On average an inmate is released within 4-6 weeks from the time they are notified of the decision to parole if their minimum date has passed.

After parole is granted, but before an inmate may be released to either a CCC or a home plan, the laws of Pennsylvania require completion of various actions.

### Negative Pre-Release Drug Screening Test

Inmates with drug-related convictions or who have tested positive for drugs while in prison must test negative for illegal drugs. Test results are valid for 45 days.

### Payment of Fees for Victims

Pennsylvania law requires inmates to pay a fee to a fund that provides certain services to victims of crime.

### Submission of DNA Sample

All inmates currently incarcerated for certain misdemeanors or any felony offenses are required to provide a DNA sample. Inmates convicted of an offense requiring registration must register their home address, intended place of employment, and/or enrollment as a student with the Pennsylvania State Police.

### Participation in Victim Impact Education Program

If a person is convicted of a crime of violence, as defined by 42 Pa.C.S. § 9714(g), the inmate must participate in a victim impact education program offered by the DOC.

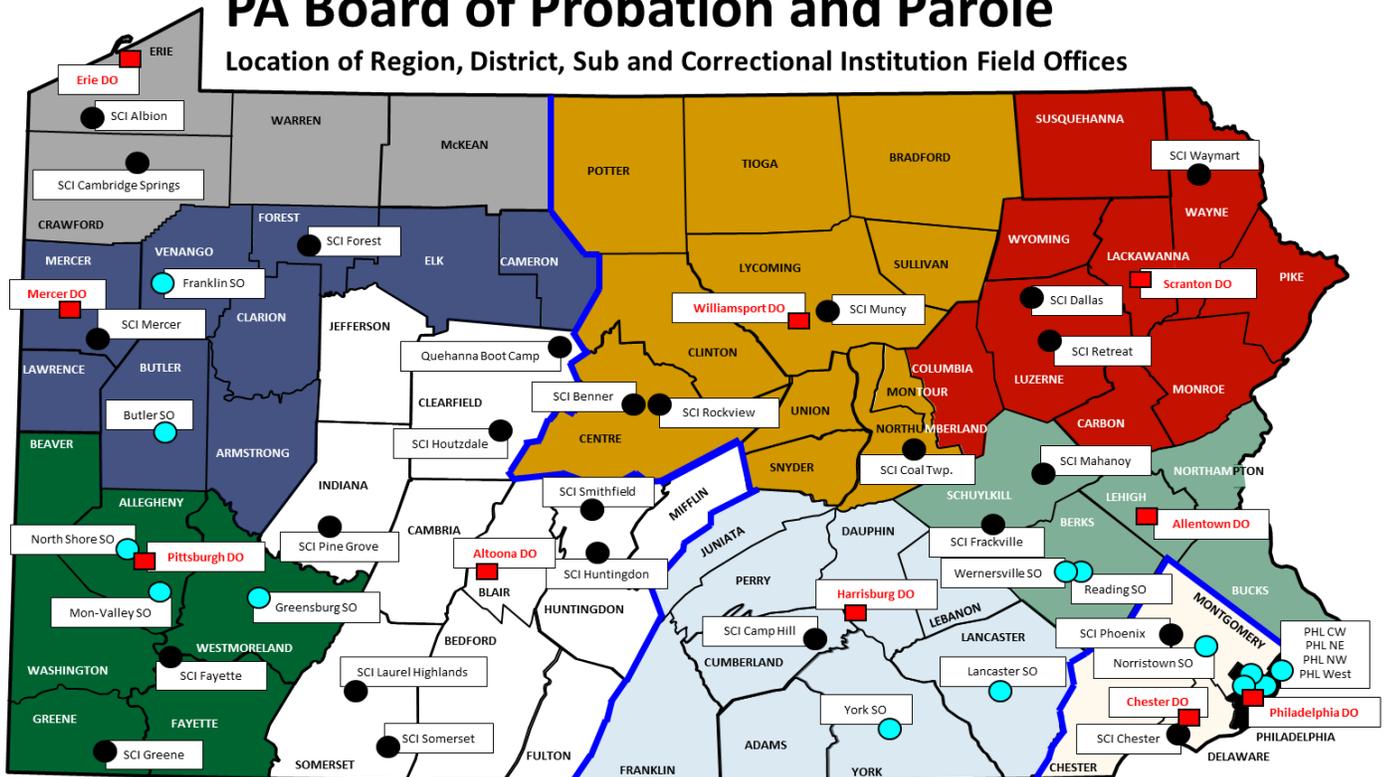
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# General Conditions of Parole

- Must be under the supervision of a district office or sub office and not leave that district without prior written permission of the supervising parole agent.
- Must obtain prior written permission of the supervising parole agent in order to change residence.
- Must maintain regular contact with the parole agent by:
  1. Reporting regularly as instructed and following written instructions of agent.
  2. Notifying agent within 72 hours of an arrest, receipt of a summons, citation or offenses punishable by imprisonment.
  3. Notifying agent within 72 hours of a change in status including employment, on-the-job training and education.
- Must comply with state, county, local and federal criminal laws, regulations, ordinances, the vehicle code and the liquor code.
- Must abstain from the unlawful possession or sale of narcotics/drugs and from the use of controlled substances without a valid prescription.
- Must refrain from owning/possessing firearms or other weapons. This includes all firearms whether functional or not and includes facsimiles, muzzle loaders, archery equipment, etc.
- Must refrain from assaultive behavior, including physical and verbal assault.
- Must make continuing payments on fines, costs and restitution imposed by the sentencing court.

## PA Board of Probation and Parole

Location of Region, District, Sub and Correctional Institution Field Offices



### Western Region

Erie District	Altoona District
Mercer District	Pittsburgh District

### Central Region

Williamsport District	Harrisburg District
Scranton District	Allentown District

### Eastern Region

Chester District
Philadelphia District

■ PBPP District Office (10)

● PBPP Sub-Office (14)

● State Correctional Institution (25)