



**PREPARE**  
PREpare for PARole and REentry

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# PREPARING TO PREPARE FOR A PAROLE HEARING



## CERTIFICATES

Certificates are obtained from the completion of any class or program. They are also available from programs through the mail. It is important to save all of your certificates from the beginning of your incarceration in a safe place so they will be available when you put your parole packet together.

“Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”

**Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**



## INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this workbook is to help a person in prison to prepare - well in advance - for a parole hearing. Parole is the early but conditional release of a person from prison.

PREPARE is a not-for-profit organization with a mission of empowering people to make their best case for parole and strong reentry plans, so they can leave prison as soon as possible, as prepared as possible. We pursue this mission by providing information about, materials for, and support with parole hearing preparation in Maryland.

Our direct advocacy support happens when a person is within a year or two of a parole hearing. There is a lot that a person can do long before then though, to ensure that when the time comes to put a parole packet together, they will be a strong candidate for parole. These tabbed dividers give guidance on that early preparation.



## DAILY GOALS

This is a place to jot down what you want to work on in your daily life. It may not make immediate sense how this relates to parole, but by reaching for and achieving the small things that will improve your life, you will make progress toward your larger goals. Daily goals are about planning and maximizing your time and helping yourself stay on track when things get rough.

“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant.”

-Robert Louis Stevenson



## INFRACTIONS

In a perfect world, this would be an empty section, but if you do get an infraction, make sure to save your copy here, along with the hearing decision and any evidence you have. You will need to remember what infractions you've received and be able to explain them. You can also ask for revoked diminution credits to be restored when you are close to your release, although there is no guarantee of a favorable response.

“When you make a mistake, there are only three things you should ever do about it: admit it, learn from it, and don't repeat it.”

**Paul "Bear" Bryant**



## EVALUATIONS

Sometimes, in the course of your incarceration, you will receive performance evaluations. Unlike letters, these are form documents that usually rate you on a scale and may include a small comment section where the evaluator writes a few sentences. Here are some common evaluations you may get:

- **Work** - some jobs will provide all employees with standard reviews at specified times. These are often provided annually, semi-annually, or quarterly, and may involve pay adjustment
- **Transcript** - colleges and other multi-year programs often provide a transcript at the end of each semester. Transcripts list all the classes you've taken with the grade you received and provide cumulative numbers like credits earned and grade point average (GPA). If you are in a program that provides a transcript, it is important to keep the most recent one
- **School** - some classes provide a less formal evaluation that rates your class performance in several key factors such as attendance, participation, and homework on a numeric scale. This is common in single-session classes that do not build toward a degree

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

Abraham Lincoln



## PRISON GOALS

These are your longer-term goals that can be achieved right where you are. Maybe it's getting a job where you earn more money or diminution credits, taking a class, or getting your GED or college degree. It could also be staying clean, giving back to your prison community, or growing in faith. Once you've identified your prison goals, try to come up with daily goals that move you in the right direction.

“In my country we go to prison first, then become president.”

Nelson Mandela



## LIFE GOALS

This is where you start including goals that reach beyond the gate. Where do you want to be when you go home? What do you see yourself doing for work? Where would you like to live? Are there specific experiences you want to have? Or things you'd like to buy? This is your place to dream, but it's also something you can work toward. If you want to make a million dollars, why not go to college? And if you want to take vacations with your kids, make sure you put in the work to maintain your relationships. Knowing where you want to be helps you make the right choices where you are.

"I knew I was a good person in my heart. I decided I wanted to prove everyone wrong and that I could turn my life around. I went to my cell for three days and wrote my master plan."

**Chris Wilson, The Master Plan**



## LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

It is important to ask for letters of support throughout your incarceration. If you wait until you are about to go up for parole, you will miss the opportunity to get a lot of good support. Remember, classes and programs end, staff change jobs, other residents go home, and memories fade. While it is important for your home plan and job offer to be current when you go up for parole, this is not true of other types of letters. Here are some letters you can collect at any time:

- **Character** - speaks to your growth, behavior, and impact on the community
- **Recommendation** - specifically recommends you for release and gives reasons why you would be successful
- **Work Reference** - usually from a supervisor, speaks to how you are as an employee, your skills, and work ethic
- **Education** - usually from a teacher/professor, speaks to your performance as a student and behavior in class
- **Support** - discusses specific, tangible support the writer intends to provide upon your release

"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."

**Desmond Tutu**