



PREPARE
PREpare for PArole and REentry

You Have A Life Sentence and Have Been Recommended For Parole. Now What?

The Maryland Parole Commission handles life sentences differently from any other type of sentence. When a candidate with a life sentence goes up for parole, he or she will see two commissioners, however this hearing only produces a recommendation. If the recommendation is favorable, it is the beginning of a process which may take a year or more.

If you have received a favorable recommendation from your commissioners, congratulations! You are over the first hurdle and on the right path. Be sure to continue doing the positive things that got you to this point as you prepare to take the next steps forward.

The Risk Assessment

When you receive your recommendation, you will be given a psychological assessment called a risk assessment. Because there are many people waiting for risk assessments and few doctors qualified to give them, this is the longest part of the process. Generally, the wait is a year or more.

The risk assessment itself has changed over the years and continues to be subject to change. However, it includes a review of your case and social history, an interview, and several objective measures that produce scores. You and/or your representative will be able to view the completed report, and it will be sent to the Parole Commission.

The most important thing is to be patient with the process. You've already made it this far. When your day does come, be honest and let the assessor see the same good things the commissioners did. Nobody expects perfection, but they do look out for deception.





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En Banc Review

When your commissioners receive the report from your risk assessment, they will decide whether or not to present your case to the en banc panel. En banc panel means all ten of the parole commissioners. If the commissioners do not choose to present your case, they will give you a rehearing date, comments, and a list of recommendations to be completed before your next hearing. If you were a juvenile (under 18 years old) when you committed your crime, you will get a more detailed narrative report.

If the commissioners decide to proceed with the en banc panel, all ten commissioners will review your case including anything you have submitted, other items in your parole file, and your risk assessment. In order for your release to be granted, you need a majority of the commissioners to affirm the recommendation. Assuming a full panel of ten commissioners, this means you need six commissioners total to affirm.



Your Decision

The governor is no longer a part of the parole process in Maryland, so if the en banc panel affirms your release, you are on your way. Still, the panel can recommend either an immediate or a delayed release. They may ask you to do work release for a period of time. They also might require you to go to a transitional house when you leave prison. The Parole Commission wants to make sure you have what you need to successfully reenter society and adjust to the many changes in the world.

If the en banc panel does not affirm your release, you will receive a rehearing in the future along with recommendations to complete in the interim. It is important to not give up and make a good case for release next time. Even if you do not get a release the first time, even making it through part of this process shows that you are a good candidate. Be encouraged, and keep up the good work.

About PREPARE

PREPARE: Prepare for Parole and Reentry is a Maryland-based not-for-profit with a mission of empowering people to make their best case for parole. Our program began in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) in 2021. It grew out of the work of Maryjoel Davis, and her organization Second Chance for Women, as well as the work that was already being done by the women in the prison to help themselves and others.

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CONTACT



PREPARE
P.O. Box 16274
Roland Park/Baltimore, MD 21210



prepare.parole@gmail.com



www.prepare-parole.org