



How To Create an Updated Packet for Your Rehear

The purpose of an updated packet is to let the Parole Commission know what you've accomplished between your most recent hearing and your rehear. It is a document that will give the Parole Commission an understanding of the following:

- How you fulfilled the requirements set by the commissioner at your prior hearing (or why you did not);
- What you've accomplished since your last hearing; and
- The details of your reentry plan

A copy of the updated packet should be sent to the Parole Commission at least two weeks before your hearing at 6776 Reisterstown Road, Ste 307, Baltimore, MD 21215. The phone number is 410-585-3256. You should also bring a copy of the packet to your hearing.

PREPARE is a nonprofit with a mission of empowering people to make their best case for parole and achieve a successful reentry. We pursue this mission by providing information about, materials for, and support with parole hearing preparation in Maryland. We began our program in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women where we provide direct in-person support with parole hearing preparation and are scaling across Maryland.

The guidance you are reading right now is intended for those who are not receiving in-person advocacy support. The intent is for you to be able to put together an update packet on your own. This guidance follows a very similar structure to that which we use when working with clients in-person.



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

PREPARE
P.O. Box 9738
Towson, MD 21284

Website: www.prepare-parole.org
Email: prepare.parole@gmail.com



UPDATED PACKET SUMMARY

Starting your update with a summary allows the Parole Commission to quickly familiarize themselves with an overview of your case. We have given you the structure below in case you'd like to use it.

If there are things that you don't know the answer to, just state that. If there are things that are not relevant to you, say so, and explain why. Keep the answers very brief in this table. You will elaborate on the answers elsewhere in the parole packet. This is just a snapshot.

Name	
DOB and Current Age	
DOC Number	
Conviction	
Trial or Plea	
Sentence	
Date of Crime	
Date of Sentencing	
Date Incarceration Began	
Date Parole Eligibility Reached	
Date of Next Parole Hearing, and Outcomes of Previous Hearing(s)	
Infractions	



UPDATED PACKET SUMMARY

(continued from previous page)

Prior Criminal Offending	
Prior Supervision (probation or parole)	
Education Level	
Substance Abuse History	
Mental Health History	
Home Plan	
Employment plan	
Jobs While Incarcerated	
Main Family Support	
Current MSR Date	
Estimated Final MSR Date (if not granted parole)	

“You can't let your failures define you,
you have to let them teach you.”

Barack Obama



ADVOCACY LETTER

This is the section of the updated packet in which to set out your strongest arguments for parole in a letter, and the only part of an update packet where you should reference information that was already heard at the prior hearing along with the new information. When PREPARE is working with a client, this letter comes from the parole advocate. If you don't have a parole advocate, the letter can come directly from you.

The main part of the letter should set out arguments which relate to the factors set out in law, that the Parole Commission has regard to. It should focus especially on how you are a better candidate now than at the prior hearing. The end of the letter is strategic. It is where you specify what you are asking of the Parole Commission.

Here are some examples of arguments that can be made in support of a person's case for parole. Obviously, these need to be specific to each individual.

Public Safety Risk	This is X's only incarceration. She has no prior criminal record and remains infraction-free. During the time since her last hearing, she received Peer Recovery Specialist training and is working with other women to support their recovery.
	At 22 years old, X was an emerging adult when he committed his crime and initially struggled with institutional adjustment. He has participated in several cognitive programs where he learned new skills and matured. He has received no new infractions since his last parole hearing.
Strong Reentry Plan	X has an excellent reentry plan. She will live with her mother in a single family home where she will have her own room and transportation. She has also been accepted into X Program which provides wrap around reentry support to women, places all participants in jobs at the end of the program, and stays connected with alumni to ensure they always have work and support.
	X has an excellent reentry plan. He has transitional housing at X Organization which is specifically designed for men returning from long term incarceration. He will receive housing, employment, mental health treatment, substance use disorder treatment and important reentry services such as job placement, transportation, technology training and individualized evaluation and support.



ADVOCACY LETTER

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Progress in Education and other Programming	<p>X arrived in MCIW with a 9th grade education level. She obtained her GED and was accepted into the Goucher College Program. She has spent three years taking college classes and has excellent letters of recommendation from professors.</p>
	<p>X was recommended for GED class placement at his last hearing, however he remained on the waiting list for the entire 3 years. He has identified GED classes through X Community College just two miles from his home. The classes are free.</p>
Remorse	<p>X is deeply remorseful for the actions which have brought her into prison. From her remorse statement it's clear she has a level of emotional maturity and insight into the challenges she faces which were not present at the time of the crime.</p>
Views of Sentencing Judge	<p>It is clear from the portion of the sentencing transcript included in this parole packet that Judge Z who sentenced X considered it would be appropriate for him to serve no more than three years before moving on to out-patient addiction treatment.</p>

Strategy

At a rehear, the most important things to present are that the requirements set out by the Parole Commission at the last hearing have been met and there are no new negative facts such as infractions. When these two things are true, it is reasonable to request an immediate release. Unfortunately, sometimes things go wrong between hearings, or the Parole Commission recommends a class or job placement that is unavailable. In the case of a condition that cannot be met as a result of circumstances beyond the candidate's control, it is best to request an alternative recommendation from the commissioners. If that is not possible, explain the situation and build the requested service into the reentry plan. In the case of a new infraction or other negative fact, it may be necessary to request a delayed release or even another rehear with a set of recommendations that will help the candidate achieve success in their remaining incarceration.



UPDATED LIFE STORY

This section is intended to let the Parole Commission know what you've been doing between hearings. Because rehears can be given for very short periods such as a year or two or longer periods of a decade or more, this letter varies greatly in length and content from case to case. The worksheet on this divider will help you collect the information you need and outline your update letter:

1. Looking at each of the commissioner's recommendations from your last hearing, did you accomplish each of them? YES NO

If Yes, what did you do? _____

If No, why were you unable to complete the recommendation(s)?

2. Did you complete any programs or classes beyond the commissioner's recommendations? (If No, Skip to Q3) YES NO

Name of Program/Class and Description

3. Do you have any other accomplishments since the last hearing that you would like to share with the Parole Commission? (If No, Skip to Q4) YES NO

If Yes, what did you do? _____

4. Since your last hearing, did you receive any...

Infractions? YES NO

New Charges? YES NO

Investigations? YES NO

(If you answered NO to all, skip to Q5)

If you answered Yes, please list and explain:

Infractions: _____

New Charges: _____

Investigations: _____

5. Do you want to change or update anything on your reentry plan? If Yes, please complete the Reentry Needs Assessment Yes No

6. Would you like to add or remove any of your advocacy call participants? If Yes, please complete Contacts for Advocacy Call. Yes No



REENTRY PLAN

The reentry plan is the most important section of the parole packet. Try to make your plan as strong as possible, backing each element up with supporting documentation.

At PREPARE, when we work with a client directly, we help make connections with reentry providers. It is obviously difficult to research options, make phone calls, and send emails from prison. If you don't have a parole advocate, ask a family member to help you build your reentry plan. They may find www.returnhome.org a good starting point.

The reentry plan in your parole packet should be one or two pages which summarize the following three things:



HOME PLAN

Under the home plan put the address where you will live and specify whether it is transitional housing, the home of a family member, or some other option.

If you are going to be living with a family member, specify their relationship to you and include a letter from that family member which states that their home will be where you will go on release, states who else lives there, and confirms that there is space for you. That letter could be accompanied by photographs of the home.

If you are going to transitional housing, as supporting documentation include your letter of acceptance and a flyer setting out the services provided. If you are in the application process, include documentation if possible.

If your home plan has not been firmed up yet, give as much information as you can, and specify the options you are looking into.



REENTRY PLAN



EMPLOYMENT PLAN

Under the employment plan, set out your plan for employment. If you will be attending full time school or believe you will qualify for disability, explain and document this.

If you do have a job, be very specific as to what it is and include a letter from your employer, preferably on letterhead, as supporting documentation. Many transitional providers offer vocational training and job placement as part of their programs, so be sure to highlight that if you do not have a specific job lined up. There are also non-residential job training and placement programs you can utilize if you have a family home plan and no job offer.

If you have nothing lined up, set out your plans, and various leads you will follow up on. Include a resume if possible and point to specific vocational training. Another possibility would be to request a short delayed release with a recommendation for Work Release placement in order to save money and secure employment.



REENTRY SUPPORT PLAN

In this section set out the various people and organizations who will help you to reestablish yourself and be successful in your reentry. List the key family members and friends who will be in your life and specify what support they have provided and will provide.

Specify any non-residential reentry program or support group you will be taking part in. Include details, and acceptance letters where you have them. Be specific about what services you will receive. If there is a church or community group which will be important on your reentry, give information and, if possible, a letter of confirmation.



EVALUATIONS AND LETTERS OF SUPPORT

This section is for written testimony from others that you did not include in your prior parole packet that goes to your readiness for parole. Be certain to only include new information obtained since your last packet and hearing. The Parole Commission retains all prior packets, so they have a copy of everything you sent before.

It can include things like work evaluations where something positive has been said about you, letters of support written specifically for your parole packet, as well as other written testimony that might go to readiness for parole.

At the start of this section have a page or two which lists the letters and evaluations in the section, specifying what they are and who has written them. Choose the best quote from each letter or comment and put it with the author's name so the summary pages give a good overview of the contents of the letters. After that summary include the documents themselves, in the order that you listed them.

On Gathering Letters of Recommendation

When it comes to letters of recommendation, quality is more important than quantity. Letters can come from people who know you from your time in prison and from people who know you from outside of prison. A good letter of recommendation should always begin by explaining how the writer knows you, and then go on to set out the writer's knowledge of your good qualities and the reasons why the writer believes you are ready for and will make a success of parole. Every letter will be different, but topics covered could include:

- The way in which you have grown and matured while incarcerated;
- Specific achievements of which the writer has knowledge;
- Ways you had a positive impact on the writer's life;
- Positive character traits; and
- Any support the writer will provide once you are released. Support could be financial, practical, emotional or moral.



CERTIFICATES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

This last section is where you put certificates relating to the various programs and courses you have taken part in since your last parole hearing. It should begin with an inventory sheet. Depending on how many new certificates you've earned, you could arrange things chronologically or make subheadings to group things together by topic. An example is below. This approach is particularly useful if there is a topic which relates specifically to the reason you are in prison – for example substance abuse, or parenting - and you have worked hard on addressing that issue by taking part in numerous programs.

Education:

- Most Recent Transcript from Such and Such College, Spring 2023

Work:

- DLLR Certificate of Achievement for Maintenance and Repair 2022
- DLLR Certificate of Achievement for Plumbing 2021
- DLLR Certificate of Achievement for Grounds Keeping 2021
- Employee of the Year, Maintenance Department, 2021

Life Skills:

- Alternatives to Violence, Advanced Course, 2023
- Alternatives to Violence Basic Course 2022

While you should never include actual certificate copies that have been previously submitted, it is acceptable to include inventory sheets from prior parole packets at the end of the new information to show long-term progress in a page or two.

"A person who, no matter how desperate the situation, gives others hope, is a true leader."

Daisaku Ikeda