FINDING YOUR WAY AFTER PRISON:

What to do before you are released

Where to go for help after you are released

September 2006
Important Notice

The information contained in this resource guide is current as of September 2006, but may change without notice. Whenever possible, you should check to make sure the information is accurate.

This resource guide is meant to be informational only and is not meant to constitute legal advice in any situation.

If you need legal help or have questions about your particular situation, call a lawyer. If you can’t afford a lawyer, call Legal Services of Eastern Michigan at 810-234-2621 or 1-800-339-9513.

This resource guide was created and written for Legal Services of Eastern Michigan by the Center for Civil Justice, 320 S. Washington Ave. Saginaw, MI 48607. Please do not call the Center for Civil Justice about individual legal problems. We would like to know, however, if the information in this book needs updating. Contact us at info@ccj-mi.org.

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PART I: IMPORTANT PAPERS AND RECORDS

PAPERS YOU WILL NEED

You'll need certain papers to get a job, get help from social services, and to find a place to live. This section lists some of the papers you'll need. You should get as many of these papers as possible before you're released. If you do not have a driver’s license or state ID card, you will need these papers to get your driver’s license or state ID card. The facility agent may be able to help you get some of these documents.

If you aren't able to get all the papers you need for a state ID card before you are released, you should ask your field parole agent to refer you to a local church or other organization that may be able to help you get the rest of the papers.

1) Papers to get before you’re released

Birth certificate
Your birth certificate can help you prove your identify, age, and birthday. If you are a U.S. citizen, you may also now need it to get Medicaid. If you were born in Michigan, you must have a photo ID and pay $26. You can use your prison ID (which has a photograph) to get your birth certificate. Talk to your facility agent or contact the Michigan State Vital Records Office at 201 Townsend St., Lansing, MI 48913 for help. If you have questions or problems after you are released, talk to your field parole agent or call 517-335-8666.

Other Papers Showing Who You Are
There are other papers that you can use to help prove who you are. Some of these papers might be hard to get. So, if you get them, you should keep them in a safe place so you don't lose them. You can work on getting some of these documents together before you're released. Examples of papers that you can use to help prove who you are include bank cards or account statements, paychecks, pay stubs, lease agreements, DHS cards or documents, photo identification cards issued by government agencies (other than your prison ID card), school records, and documents that are issued by the government, like your voter registration card.

2) Documents to get after you’re released

There are some documents that you can’t get before you’re released. But, these documents are really important, so you should get them as soon as possible once you’re released. Once you have them, be sure to keep them in a safe place so they don’t get lost.
State ID card and Driver’s License
Once you are released, you will need either state ID card or a driver’s license to help prove who you are. You will also need an ID card or license to get a job. If you have or can get a driver’s license, you can use that as your ID. If you can’t get a driver’s license for any reason, you need to get a state ID card.

Where to Apply
Go to your local Secretary of State office. To find the nearest office, look in the phone book, call 517-322-1460 or go to [www.mich.gov/sos](http://www.mich.gov/sos). There is also a list of local offices in the back of this resource guide.

Proving Who You Are
In order to get either a state ID card or driver’s license, you will need proof of who you are. You can’t use your prison ID card to prove who you are. Many of the papers you can use to prove who you are listed above under “papers to get before you are released.” This includes things like a birth certificate, a marriage license, school records or divorce papers. It’s up to the Secretary of State to decide if you provided enough proof.

Proving You Live in Michigan
You’ll also need to prove you live in Michigan at a particular address. For the first 30 days after your release, you can use your parole letter to show that you live in Michigan. Be sure that you keep your parole letter in a safe place and apply for an ID right away. After the 30 days has passed, there are other papers that you can use to help prove where you will live. Some of these papers might be hard to get. So, if you get them, you should keep them in a safe place so you don’t lose them. Examples of papers that you can use to help prove where you will live once you’re released include: lease agreements; applications for places to live; checks, money orders, or receipts for a security deposit or first month’s rent; utility hook up in your name; letters from a shelter verifying that you live there; and letters from your parole or probation officers that say where you’re going to live. It’s up to the Secretary of State to decide if you have enough proof. Contact Legal Services of Eastern Michigan if you have problems.

Getting a State ID card
A state ID card costs $10 for most people. There is no charge if you’re 65 or older, legally blind, or if the Secretary of State decides you can’t have or keep a driver’s license because you have a disability.

Getting a Driver’s license
In addition to the information you need for a state ID, you will also need to have your Social Security number to get your license. You may also need to pay up any fines you owe.
Part I: Important Papers and Records

My driver’s license has expired. How do I get a new one?
You’ll have to take a written test if it’s been expired for four (4) or more years.

My license has been suspended. Can I renew it?
No. You can’t renew your license if your driver record shows six (6) or more unpaid parking tickets, you owe other fees because of driving problems, or if your license has been suspended or revoked. Depending on why you lost your license, you may have to go to a hearing to ask for it back. You’ll also probably have to pay a fee. The Secretary of State’s office can tell you why you lost your license and what you have to do to get it back. If you need help getting your license back, you should try and find an attorney. The phone number for Legal Services of Eastern Michigan is 1-800-339-9513.

I don’t know where my license is. What now?
You can apply for another license. You’ll need to take some type of ID with you when you go, like your birth certificate, marriage license, or photo ID cards from a Michigan governmental agency, like DHS.

Social Security card
You need a Social Security card to get a job and a driver’s license. There is no charge. You need to apply in person to get your card when you are released. You will need a picture ID, but you cannot use your prison ID. You must be interviewed at a local Social Security branch office. Call the Social Security Administration 1-800-772-1213 for help. It will take several weeks for the card to be mailed. In the meantime, you can get a receipt that shows that you’ve applied for a card. If you think someone stole your social security number, call the toll-free number as soon as you can and tell them about it.

CHECK YOUR CRIMINAL HISTORY
It’s important to review your criminal history. You might need to answer questions about your convictions to get a job or housing. If you don’t fill out the forms correctly because you don’t know what is on your record, the employer or landlord may think you are lying. You could be fired for lying. Also, lots of criminal histories have mistakes. If yours is wrong, it could lead to a lot of problems. It could be even harder to find a job or a place to live. Sometimes records are wrong because someone made a mistake. But, sometimes records are wrong because someone else is using your name and personal information.

How can I check my criminal history?
First, get a copy of your criminal history. If you didn’t get a job or an apartment because of your record, you can ask the employer or landlord for a copy of the record they used. You can get a copy of your record before you are released by having a friend or family member go online. The website address is www.michigan.gov. Once they’re there, click on “online
services,” “Michigan State Police,” then “ICHAT.” If your friend or family member doesn’t have a computer, they can go to any public library and use one there for free. They’ll have to pay $10 to get your record. If you don’t have $10, click on “FAQs” on this website for information about how to get a free copy of your record. Once they have the record, have them mail it to you at the prison. Be sure that they mail you only your own history, and not anyone else’s. You’re not allowed to receive any other prisoner’s criminal history through the mail.

**Do I have to wait until I’m released to check my history?**
No. You can check your history while you’re locked up. It should be available on the Pre-Sentence Investigation (PSI) Report you should have received. You can also have a friend or family member help you get a copy of your history (see the paragraph above for more information).

**My record is wrong. Can I change it?**
Yes. But first you need to get a certified copy of the judgment of conviction in your case. You can do this by writing to or going to the court where you were convicted and asking for one. You may need to pay a few dollars for this.

If your record has incorrect information about one of your convictions, send the certified copy of the judgment in that case, and a letter explaining the problem with your record to: Michigan State Police, 7150 Harris Dr., Lansing, MI 48913. Be sure to include your current address and phone number so they can contact you if they need something.

If your record contains a conviction that does not belong to you, you will need a copy of your fingerprints. Go to a police station to get your fingerprints taken. The police may do a warrant search. You may have to pay money to get your fingerprints taken. Send your fingerprints, your conviction record, and a letter explaining your problem to the Michigan State Police.

**How Long Will My Conviction Stay on My Record?**
In most cases, your convictions will stay on your record for the rest of your life. If you have only one conviction, you can wait for five years after you are released from prison, and then try to get the conviction removed from your record. This is called expungement. You will be able to find forms to request an expungement on www.michiganlegalaid.org.

**Where can I go for help?**
If you have problems or need more help, you can call the Michigan State Police at 517-322-5531. If you can’t resolve the problem you should talk to a lawyer. If you can’t afford a lawyer contact Legal Services of Eastern Michigan, 810-234-2621 or 800-339-9513 to see if they can help you find a lawyer.
PART II: YOUR FAMILY

CHILD SUPPORT

This section will help you understand the laws related to child support. It is very important to pay your child support. If you don’t pay your child support, you can lose your driver’s license, be taken to court, and be put in jail. The state can also take all the money out of your bank account. If you can’t pay your support, you need to make sure the Court knows this and adjusts your payment amount.

I can’t afford to pay my support. What can I do?
You can file a paper with the court asking them to lower it. You have to file the paper in the same court that issued the child support order. If you have more than one child or court case, you’ll have to file a paper for each child or case. These cases might be in different courts. The prison may have a kit you can use to do this. If not, write or call Legal Services of Eastern Michigan for a kit you can use. Their phone number is 1-800-339-3915.

Do I have to pay child support while I’m locked up?
You don’t have to pay if you get your support order changed first. If you don’t tell the Court that you are locked up or if you can afford to pay, you still have to pay. You can file papers to change the amount of child support you owe now and in the future. But, you can’t go back and change the amount you owe for the past. The law doesn’t allow judges to erase the debt later because you were locked up or didn’t have the money to pay.

What papers do I need to reduce my child support?
If possible, you should file a motion with the court to “suspend” your child support. Your prison law library should have forms you can use. If you can’t file a motion, you should at least send the Friend of the Court a letter in writing to 1101 Beach St., Flint, MI 48502. Be sure to keep a copy! Once you’re released and get a job, the court can take up to 65% of what you earn to pay current and/or overdue child support.

Do I have to tell the Friend of the Court when I’m released?
Yes. You’ve been ordered to keep telling the court where you’re living and working. If you don’t, you could get in trouble. You could also be left out of court proceedings if the court can’t find you.

I owe a lot of money. I can’t afford to pay it. What can I do?
You can file a paper with the court that issued the order and ask for a payment plan. If your child was on cash welfare when you couldn’t pay the support, and if the State agrees,
Sometimes the Court will forgive some of the debt. If you owe child support to the other parent, that parent will have to agree before you can do a payment plan. Ask your prison officials or contact Legal Services of Eastern Michigan (see address and phone number in next paragraph) for forms that can help you ask for this waiver.

Where can I go for help?
If you need legal help after you are released, you should call a lawyer. If you can’t afford a lawyer, you can Legal Services of Eastern Michigan (LSEM). LSEM serves Genesee County. Their phone number is 810-234-2621 or 1-800-339-9513. Their address is 436 S. Saginaw St., Flint, Michigan 48502.

YOUR CHILDREN

Can I see my children?
Your rights to see your children will depend in part on your parole conditions. You should always make sure you understand exactly what you can or cannot do. You also need to see if there are any other court papers saying what you can and cannot do with your children. Depending on what your crime was and how long you were locked up, a court may have taken away all your rights as a parent. If they did this, you don’t have any rights to see or talk to your children.

The other parent has custody. How can I see my kids when I am released?
First, find out whether the other parent has a custody order. If there is a court order, it probably gives you visitation rights. You should check with the local Family Court or Friend of the Court to see what the order says and find out how you can get a copy. If you have visitation rights, you should contact the other parent after you are released to arrange times to see your children according to the court order. You should not take the children on an overnight visit unless you have a safe and suitable place for them to stay. If you have not seen the children for a while, you may want to talk to the other parent about the best way to help them become comfortable with you again. If there is no custody or visitation order, then you should contact the other parent to see what can be arranged.

What if the other parent and I cannot agree on visitation?
You can ask for help in solving the situation. If the other parent is willing to meet with you, contact the Community Dispute Resolution Center. A trained mediator may be able to help the two of you work out a schedule. Call 810-249-2619. If this doesn’t work, you will have to file court papers asking for visitation. The Friend of the Court should be able to tell you what to file. If you have questions, contact a lawyer or Legal Services of Services of Eastern Michigan 1-800-339-9513 or 810-234-2621.
I think my children have a guardian. How can I find out?
Call or write the Probate Court where the guardianship was granted. They'll tell you if the guardianship is still in place. If it is, you might not be able to see your children right away unless the guardian is willing. You can file a paper with the court asking the court to let you see your children or to dissolve the guardianship. The Probate Court may be able to tell you what papers you need. It is a good idea to try and see if a lawyer can help you. The Genesee County Probate Court number is 810-257-3510.

I don't know where my children are. How can I find out?
It depends. If there aren't any court orders saying otherwise, you can contact the person who had your children last. If you don't know where that person is, try contacting people who know where he or she might be. You can also check the court records where your child last lived. If there is a child support order, you might be able to find out where your children are from the County Friend of the Court who is monitoring that order.

I want to get custody of my children. How do I do it?
Getting custody of your children can take a long time and cost a lot of money. You should wait until you're out of prison and have a suitable place to live before you file papers to ask for custody. If you and the other parent have never been to court, you'll have to file for custody. If you have been to court and there’s a court order, you’ll have to file a motion with the court asking them to change the order so that you have custody. You may need to hire a lawyer to help you do this.

I think my children have been taken away. How can I find out?
CPS (Children’s Protective Services) is the agency in charge of protecting children. CPS is a part of the Department of Human Services. If you think your children may have been taken away, you should contact CPS at 810-760-7300. But, depending on the status of the case, CPS might not tell you anything.

If CPS took away your children, but has not yet ended your rights as a parent, you might be able to work with CPS. They are supposed to help you develop a plan to return your children to you. It might take a long time. You may have to make changes in your life and you will have to report regularly to your CPS worker.

If CPS wants to take away your rights to your children, they must tell you this. You also have the right to a court-appointed attorney if you cannot afford one. An attorney should have been appointed for you if CPS got involved in a court case. Always be sure to tell the Court you want a court-appointed attorney if CPS is involved.
PART III: MEETING YOUR BASIC NEEDS

FOOD STAMPS

Food Stamps can help you buy food. In Michigan, the Food Stamp program is called the “Food Assistance Program” or FAP. If you are eligible, you will receive a card called a “Bridge Card” that you can use like an ATM debit card to buy food. The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) runs the program. Under current rules, you can’t apply for or receive Food Stamps until you are released from prison. If you want an estimate on how much Food Assistance you should receive, call the Food and Nutrition Program Helpline 1-800-481-4989 after you are released.

How do I apply?
You must file an application form with DHS. Ask if the prison has copies of the application form. If so, start filling it out a week or two before you get out, if you know where you will live, and whom you will live with. Check the box on the front page that says you want “food assistance.” Do not sign and date the form until you are released. Drop the form off at or mail it to Genesee County DHS at 630 S. Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48501 right away. DHS must accept the form, even if it is not complete, but they may not be able to meet with you that day. You may need to provide more information and papers within a couple of weeks so your application is complete. If you need help with the form or getting any papers, you must ask DHS for help. If you do not have transportation or have a job that makes it hard to go to appointments, ask DHS for a telephone interview because you have a hardship (no transportation or job conflicts).

What if I’m denied?
If you are denied Food Stamps, you should receive written notice from DHS. Call the Food and Nutrition Program Helpline 1-800-481-4989 if you have questions about it or want to know what you can do. If you want to appeal, you can request a hearing. For help, call Legal Services of Eastern Michigan, 810-234-2621 or 1-800-339-3915.

What papers will I need?
You need papers to prove who you are. You can use your prison ID to prove your identity. You may also need papers to show how much income your new household receives, your housing and utility costs (if any), the child support or childcare costs you pay (if any). If you are age 60 or older, or you know you will receive disability benefits, bring papers to show any regular monthly medical expenses. You don’t need all these papers on the day you apply, but will have to send them in within 10 days. If you need help getting these papers, DHS must help or give you a little more time, if you ask. If you don’t have a steady address, you can
pick up your “Bridge Card” (the debit card you use to buy food) at DHS or have DHS mail it somewhere for you.

**How Fast will I get Food Stamps?**

If you have very little income or savings, tell the DHS office that you want “expedited” (fast) Food Stamps. There is a separate paper called the “Filing Document” (DHS form 1171F) that you need to fill out. DHS should set up an interview with you (which can be by phone) within 1 business day. If you qualify, you should get food stamps in 7 days. Otherwise, you should start receiving Food Stamps in about 30 days. If you don’t have a decision within this time, contact your caseworker. If you can’t reach the worker, contact the supervisor. If this doesn’t work, call the Helpline at 1-800-481-4989.

**I’m moving back in with my family. Can I get Food Stamps?**

Maybe. If you are married and living with your spouse, DHS must consider your spouse’s income. DHS must also consider the income of parents and their children under age 22 who live together (whether or not the two parents are married to each other). If you are under 22 and live with your parent or stepparent, their income will be counted against you. Other family members who live together are treated like roommates (see next question).

**I’m moving in with people who I’m not related to. Can I get Food Stamps?**

Maybe. It depends on how you buy and make your food. If you and your roommates buy and cook your food separately, DHS is not supposed to count their income. You must tell DHS who lives with you on the application. But if you keep your food separate, you should check the box “no” when it asks if you “buy, fix, or eat food” with others in the house. If you want to find out whether it’s better for you to eat with the other people or separately, call the Food and Nutrition Helpline 1-800-481-4989.

**What if I have outstanding warrants or violate parole?**

When you apply for or renew Food Stamps, DHS runs a national warrant search. If you have outstanding felony warrants or you violate a condition of your parole or probation, you can’t get Food Stamps. You might also be arrested.

**I have questions about or problems with Food Stamps. Who can I call?**

After you are released, call the Genesee County DHS office at 810-760-7310. Or you can call the Food and Nutrition Program Helpline at 1-800-481-4989. It is run by the Center for Civil Justice, and is not connected with DHS. Call weekdays from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. If no one is available, leave a message. Someone will call you back. The Helpline staff can tell you if you will qualify, how to apply, how to make sure you get the right amount and help you solve problems.
Where can I live?
Your parole officer must approve where you will live before you are released. Talk to your parole officer about parole conditions that may apply to you. For example: Can you live with or near children? Near schools? Can you live with others who have criminal records?

Housing rules, especially those that apply to public housing and Section 8, can be confusing. Your family or parole officer might be able to think you can’t live in public housing or Section 8, even though you can. Or they may think you are allowed to live there, when you can’t. If you have questions or need help, talk to a lawyer. If you can’t afford one, contact Legal Services of Eastern Michigan at 810-234-2621 or 1-800-339-9513.

Can my landlord ask about my criminal history?
A landlord can ask about your convictions. A landlord may also be able to ask about arrests. A landlord can refuse to rent to you because of your criminal history. But, if you have a current lease, the landlord cannot evict you just because you have a criminal record unless the lease allows it or you lied on the application.

Can I move in with someone else?
If you want to move in with someone who owns their own home, you can, as long as it is ok with your parole officer. If you want to move in with someone who rents or lives in a mobile home park, always check to see if there is a lease or other written rules. The other tenants may have to tell their landlord about you and ask for the landlord’s permission. They should talk to a lawyer if they have questions about their lease. They should also talk to a lawyer if they are charged on their utility bill for any old bills in your name. See “utilities” section on page 16.

Can I move into subsidized housing?
What is “Subsidized housing”? This includes public housing owned by the Flint Housing Commission or the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). It also includes Section 8, which usually involves a private landlord. In most subsidized housing, the rent you pay is based on your family size and income. In this section, the word “landlord” means only Section 8 and public housing landlords.

Drug-related activity – If you were convicted for producing methamphetamine, you can never live in any kind of subsidized housing. If you were evicted from public or Section 8 (also called “subsidized”) housing because of drug-related activity (whether or not there was a conviction), you can’t move back in for at least three years unless the landlord agrees you are rehabilitated (see below).
Other convictions – If you will be listed on the sex offender registry for the rest of your life, you can never live in subsidized housing. For other types of convictions, each landlord will have rules on whether they have to consider your criminal record, and how many years back they must look.

Past criminal activities - A landlord can consider your past criminal activities when deciding whether to rent to you. It doesn’t matter whether you were convicted. This can include drug use, violent activities, and other criminal acts that may threaten other residents.

Proof of rehabilitation – Even if you can’t get into Section 8 or public housing because of your criminal record or past criminal activities, you can ask the landlord to consider proof that you have been rehabilitated. You will need to show papers proving what has changed since you were convicted. You can use things like certificates from a drug treatment program, drug drop results, a GED diploma, a vocational certificate, or letters of support. If the landlord still refuses to rent to you, you may still have the right to request a grievance hearing or other meeting. Be sure you don’t miss any deadlines if you want to appeal. You should talk to Legal Services of Eastern Michigan right away about whether you can do this and see if they can help you.

Criminal activities after you move in – If you move into subsidized housing, a landlord can evict you from subsidized housing if you, or someone you live with, or a guest are involved in new criminal activities after you move in. The landlord can evict you even if the activities happened away from the place you are renting and did not result in a conviction. The landlord can evict you if you have felony warrants or are violating your parole or probation. Always ask for help from Legal Services of Eastern Michigan if a landlord tries to evict you or your roommates from subsidized housing.

HEALTHCARE

I don’t have health insurance. Can anyone help me?
Maybe. You might be eligible for health insurance through Medicaid, the Adult Medical Program, or the Genesee Health Plan. To find out what types of insurance program you could receive, contact the HELP-line of the Healthcare Eligibility Law Project (HELP) at 810-238-8053. Most insurance programs have some co-payments or deductibles you have to pay.

Can I get Medicaid?
Medicaid is available only to certain types of people. You might be able to get Medicaid if you are low income and:

• you are under age 21 (but rules can be different for children of different ages)
• you are a parent who is living with your child or stepchild under age 18
• you are the primary caregiver for a child under 18 to whom you are related
Part III: Meeting Your Basic Needs

- you are age 65 or older
- you are disabled according to the state’s disability rules (See “disability” on page 5)

Can I get Insurance from the Adult Medical Program (AMP)?
Once or twice a year, the Department of Human Services opens up a health insurance program to people who have no insurance and very low income. It is called the Adult Medical Program. It is also known as Genesee County Health Plan “A”. The program is closed to new members most of the year. If you qualify for this program, you may also be eligible for some inpatient hospital coverage through the “Resident County Hospitalization” (RCH) Program. To find out if you can apply for AMP, call DHS at 810-760-730 or HELP at 810-238-8053.

The Adult Medical Program isn’t open. Now what?
You can apply for insurance through “Genesee Health Plan B.” Genesee Health Plan B helps uninsured adults with basic preventive services and some prescription drugs.

How do I apply for Medicaid and the Adult Medical Program?
You can apply for Medicaid and AMP at DHS (Department of Human Services). Check the box that says you want “medical assistance.” You have to qualify for the program. When you apply, you’ll need to take documents with you that show that you don’t have much money, like bank statements. You’ll also need to take other documents, like your prison identification, birth certificate and your Social Security card. You can be turned down for Medicaid even if you think you don’t have much money. Call DHS if you’d like to apply. Their phone number is 810-760-7300. The AMP program is usually open to new members only a couple of months each year. If it is closed when you are released, you should apply for the Genesee Health Plan B.

How do I apply for the Genesee Health Plan B?
Contact the Genesee Health Plan at 810-232-7740 to find the enrollment site that is closest to you. You can’t apply until you’re released. Once you’re released, you should apply as soon as possible. You’ll know if you’re approved usually within 24-48 hours after you apply.

I can’t afford the co-payments for my prescriptions. What can I do?
If you have Medicaid, you should tell your pharmacy that you do cannot afford your co-pay. You should be able to get at least the first prescription without paying the co-pay. After that, you may need to show that you are trying to pay the co-pays you owe before your next prescription will be filled. If you have problems getting a prescription filled you should call the Healthcare Eligibility Law Project at 810-238-8053. You may also be able to get help from the Medicaid Customer Service line at 1-800-642-3195.
Where else can I go for health services?
There are several other places in Genesee County that may be able to help you get healthcare. These include:

- Genesee County Free Clinic: 2437 Welch, Flint, MI 48502, 810-235-4211
- Planned Parenthood (for birth control information and services) G3371 Beecher Road, Flint, MI 48532, 810-234-1659
- Hamilton Community Health Network: 4001 N. Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48505, 810-789-9141
- Health Access: 1428 W. Court St., Flint, MI 48503, 810-232-4200
- Genesee County Health Department (for pregnancy-related services): 4608 Beecher Rd., Flint, MI 48602, 810-232-4200
- Veteran’s Administration (for veterans): 1-877-222-8387

I need dental care. Where can I go?
There are several different places you can go for dental care. They are listed below. In general, these agencies provide only cleanings (not other work, like fillings, etc.). Also, you will have to pay a $25 fee.

- Hamilton Community Health Network: 4001 N. Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48505, 810-789-9141
- Health Access: 1428 W. Court St., Flint, MI 48503, 810-232-4200
- Mott Community College Dental Hygiene Clinic: 1401 E. Court St., Flint, MI 48503, 810-762-0493

I don’t have health insurance yet and I need my prescriptions refilled now. Who can help me?
If you need your prescriptions refilled but don’t have health insurance, you can contact these two agencies for help. They can help you get your medication at low or no cost.

- Health Access: 1428 W. Court St., Flint, MI 48503, 810-232-4200
- Hamilton Community Health Network: 4001 N. Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48505, 810-789-9141

What should I do if I’m denied Medicaid or AMP?
Contact the Healthcare Eligibility Law Program 810-238-8053 to find out whether the decision looks right. HELP will help you figure out whether you have a case, or whether you need an attorney to work on it. If you are denied Medicaid or AMP when you should be eligible, HELP will try to solve the problem or find an attorney or paralegal to represent you.
DISABILITY BENEFITS

If you can prove you can’t work because you’re disabled, there are programs that can help you support yourself. This section will help you understand some of those programs.

- **Supplement Security Income (SSI)** is a program of the Social Security Administration (SSA). It’s for people who are disabled and don’t have much money. Some people get both SSI and “Social Security Disability benefits.” Social security disability benefits are based on the taxes you paid at any jobs you had. If you qualify for SSI you will also get Medicaid based on disability.

- **The State Disability Program (SDA)** is a program of the Department of Human Services. SDA pays less than $250 per month, but can help you while you apply for SSI. If you qualify for SDA, you may be able to get Medicaid. If you qualify for Medicaid, and your income very low, you may be able to get SDA.

**Am I disabled?**

You will not be considered “disabled” just because you are coming out of prison. The Social Security Administration (“Social Security”) decides if you are disabled based on your medical records, education and job record. Even if you think you can’t work, Social Security may deny you SSI, if your medical records don’t meet Social Security’s disability rules. In general, you must have medical records that show that there is no job you can do (even a “sit down” job) for 12 months. Or they must show you are likely to die from your condition within 12 months. The Department of Human Services decides if you qualify for SDA.

**How long does it take to get SSI or SDA?**

It can take several months and sometimes years to start getting SSI. If you need money right away, you can ask Social Security for up to $200 in emergency benefits. If you get this money, it’ll be taken out of the first check. You can also apply for State Disability Assistance (SDA) at Genesee DHS. It may take 2 or more months to get SDA.

**How do I apply for SSI?**

Your prison should have copies of the application form. You can start to apply 30 days before you’re released. If you apply sooner than that, Social Security will deny you because you’re locked up. If you are already out of prison, call 1-800-772-1213 to apply over the phone or find the nearest local Social Security office where you can apply in person. When you apply, the Social Security office will run a national warrant search. If you have outstanding felony warrants or are violating a condition of your parole or probation, you can’t get SSI. You might also get arrested.
How do I apply for SDA?
You fill out the application form and turn it into the Genesee Department of Human Services. The address is 630 S. Saginaw St., Flint, MI 48501. You can turn in the application as soon as you are released. You should also check the box to ask for Medical Assistance. It will usually take 60-90 days for you to receive a decision. In most cases, you will have to show you have also applied for SSI.

I was getting SSI before I went to prison. Can I still get my checks?
Maybe. If you were getting SSI before you were locked up, your checks were automatically stopped when you went to prison. You must show the social security office proof that you have been officially released before the checks can start up again.

Can I get SSI based on a disability that started when I committed a felony?
Probably not. If you became disabled as a result of committing a felony on or after October 19, 1980, you will never be able to get SSI based on that disability.

Can I get SSI based on a disability that started or got worse in prison?
Maybe. You won’t be able to apply until 30 days before you are released. If your disability is related to your commission of a felony, you won’t be able to get SSI based on that condition.

I was disabled before I was locked up, but never applied. Can I apply now?
Yes you can apply for SSI anytime starting 30 days before your release of date.

I’m living in a half-way house as a condition of my parole. Can I get SSI?
Probably not. Social Security doesn’t pay SSI to people living in halfway houses under the control of the Department of Corrections. You can apply 30 days before you’re released from the halfway house or if you switch to a tether program.

Where can I get help?
It can be very difficult to get SSI or SDA unless you have an attorney or paralegal helping you. If you are denied SSI and SDA, call Legal Services of Eastern Michigan at (LSEM) 810-234-2621 or 1-800-339-9513. If LSEM thinks you have a case, LSEM will either represent you or help you find a lawyer.
OTHER CASH ASSISTANCE

**Family Independence Program** – If you will be moving back in with your children, stepchildren or acting as a parent for minor children to whom you are related (grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, etc) you may be able to qualify for Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits. If you are moving in with your own children who receive FIP, you should be added to your children’s FIP case, unless a guardian has been appointed for your children. The adult receiving FIP for your children can ask their caseworker at the Department of Human Services to put you on the FIP case on the date you are released. If the children don’t receive FIP, you should apply for FIP as soon as you are released.

**State Disability Assistance for Caregivers** - If a doctor will say you are needed for at least 90 days to care for someone who is completely disabled (other than your spouse or child), you might be able to qualify for State Disability Assistance even though you are not disabled yourself. You must live with this person. You need to show you are needed to provide personal care services. These include cooking, laundry, shopping, errands, light cleaning, non-nursing personal care (bathing, dressing, etc.) and assistance with medication.

**UTILITIES**

**I don’t have money for a utility deposit. Who can help?**
If you need help paying a deposit to turn on utilities, the State Emergency Relief (SER) program may be able to help. You will have to be able to show how you will pay the bill once it is on. Apply for SER at the Genesee Department of Human Services.

**I owe an old utility bill. Will this affect the bill of my housemates?**
If you have unpaid utility bills in your name, it is possible that the utility company could try to add them on to the bill of someone else when you move into the household. If your housemates lived with you when the bills ran up, this may be legal. However, if you didn’t live together at that time, this should not happen. Contact the utility company’s customer service office and ask to have your old bill taken off. If that doesn’t work, contact Legal Services of Eastern Michigan right away at 810-234-2621.

**Where can I go for help in paying old or high utility bills?**
The SER program might be able to help. If you have income other than welfare – even if you didn’t earn enough to pay taxes - you may also get help from the State Home Heating Tax Credit. Some gas and electric companies will help you fill out forms for the latest tax year. There are volunteer groups that may be able to help you fill out the tax forms for past years. To find out what other organizations in Genesee County help with tax forms or utility bills, call First Call for Help at 810-762-5824.
PART IV: RESOURCES

AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Children’s Protective Services (CPS) ..................... 810-760-7300, TDD 810-760-7309

630 S. Saginaw St., P.O. Box 1615, Flint MI 48501

Department of Human Services (DHS)

Genesee County DHS - Pierson Road District ................. 810-760-4900
2320 W. Pierson Rd., P.O. Box 1625, Flint MI 48501, TDD (810) 760-4918

Genesee County DHS - North District .......................... 810-760-2773
125 E. Union St. Floors 4-5, P.O. Box 2102, Flint MI 48501, TDD 810-760-2590

Genesee County DHS - McCree District ......................... 810-760-7300
630 S. Saginaw St., P.O. Box 1615, Flint MI 48501, TDD 810-760-7309

First Call for Help (general information about where to get help) 810-762-5824

Food and Nutrition Program Helpline ........................................810-481-4989

Genesee County Free Clinic................................................810-235-4211

Genesee County Health Department ........................................810-257-3840

Genesee Health Plan .................................................................810-232-7740

Hamilton Community Health Network ................................. 810-789-9141

Health Access .................................................................810-232-4200

Healthcare Eligibility Law Project HELP-line ......................... 810-238-8053

Legal Services of Eastern Michigan ................................. 810-234-2621 or 1-800-339-9513

436 E. Saginaw St., Flint MI 48502

Medicaid Recipient Hotline .............................................. 1-800-642-3195

Michigan Department of Civil Rights ..............................517-335-3165

Capitol Tower Building, Ste. 800, Lansing, MI 48933, TTY: (517) 241-1965

Michigan State Police .........................................................517-322-5531

Criminal Justice Information Center, 7150 Harris Dr., Lansing MI 48913

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA)

Michigan State Vital Records Office .................................... 517-335-8666
Part IV: Resources

Michigan Dept. of Community Health, 3423 N. Martin Luther King Blvd, P. O. Box 30721, Lansing MI 48909

Mott Community College Dental Hygiene Clinic.................................810-762-0493
Planned Parenthood...................................................................................810-234-1659
Secretary of State - All offices open Monday – Friday from 9 A.M. until 5 P.M.
  Flint Area Super!Center.................................................................810-732-6040
  5512 Fenton Rd., Flint MI 48507 – More hours: W until 7PM, Sat 9AM - 12PM.
  Flint-West..........................................................................................810-732-6040
  4205 Miller Rd. Flint, MI 48507 - More hours: Wed until 7PM
  Flint-Downtown................................................................................810-732-6040
  408 S. Saginaw St., Flint MI 48502
Social Security Office.................................................................1-800-772-1213, local: 810-789-2164
  4909 Clio Rd., Flint MI 48504
Veteran’s Administration...........................................................................1-877-222-8387

COURTS AND LEGAL PROCEEDINGS CONTACT INFORMATION

Circuit Court
  Genesee County Circuit Court.......................................................810-424-4355
  900 S. Saginaw St., Flint MI 48502

Community Dispute Resolution Center..............................................810-249-2619
  315 E. Court St., Flint MI 48502

Family Court
  Genesee County Circuit Court.......................................................810-424-4355
  900 S. Saginaw St. Flint, MI 48502

Friend of the Court (FOC)...............................................................810-257-3300
  1101 Beach St. Flint, MI 48502

Genesee County Lawyer Referral ......................................................810-232-6000

Legal Services of Eastern Michigan..................................................810-234-2621 or 1-800-339-9513
  436 E. Saginaw St., Flint MI 48502
**Michigan Lawyer Referral** .................................................................1-800-968-0738

**Probate Court** ..................................................................................810-257-3510
900 S. Saginaw St., Flint MI 48502

**HELPFUL WEB SITES WHEN YOU ARE RELEASED**

Legal Aid : [www.michiganlegalaid.org](http://www.michiganlegalaid.org) - search on “prisoner” for self-help materials

Legal Services of Eastern Michigan: [www.lsem-mi.org](http://www.lsem-mi.org)

Michigan Food Stamp Partnership: [www.foodstamphelp.org](http://www.foodstamphelp.org)

Secretary of State (Michigan): [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos)

Social Security Administration: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

State of Michigan: [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov)