

Texas Reentry Center Reentry Starter Pack

Your First Week Home, Step by Step
Practical Tools for Texans Starting Over

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INTRODUCTION

Reentry is hard because nobody explains the process. You walk out the gate with nothing but instructions you barely had time to read and a list of agencies that don't answer their phones.

This guide fixes that.

This is your first-week survival plan for Texas; what to do first, who to contact, where to go, and what actually matters. No jargon. No lectures. Just clear steps that keep you stable long enough to rebuild your life.

Use it your own way. Check off what applies. Skip what doesn't. The point isn't perfection, it's progress without chaos.

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FIRST 24 HOURS

This is triage mode. Do the things that stabilize you.

1. Contact your support network

Family, partner, friend, or a trusted person.
Let people know you're safe and reachable.

2. Secure tonight's place to sleep

If you don't have housing lined up, here are practical options:

- Transitional housing programs
- Homeless shelters with reentry beds
- Churches that offer emergency stays
- County reentry centers (varies by county)

3. Notify probation/parole (if applicable)

- Call immediately if you were instructed to
- Ask for your first reporting date
- Get your assigned PO's name and number
- Ask about your required conditions

4. Get a phone or access to one

You'll need it for: jobs, benefits, probation, housing waitlists, medical appointments.

5. Add these numbers to your phone:

- Probation/Parole Office
- Local MHMR crisis line
- Local shelter hotline
- Texas Workforce Solutions
- SNAP/Medicaid assistance line

FIRST 72 HOURS

This window is about getting documents, food, and your basic needs under control.

1. Temporary ID / proof of identity

Some counties or reentry centers issue temporary ID paperwork. If not, gather the documents you *do* have: release papers, inmate ID, previous licenses, etc.

2. Request your birth certificate

Order from Texas Vital Statistics or your birth state.

If you were born in Texas, use:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vital-statistics>

3. Apply for SNAP

SNAP can give you same-day emergency benefits if you qualify. Apply online or through a workforce center.

4. Connect with Texas Workforce Solutions

- Ask for reentry-friendly employers
- Ask for transportation vouchers
- Ask for job readiness classes
- Use their computers for applications

5. Start housing research immediately

Reentry housing fills fast. The earlier you get on a list, the better.

7-DAY SUCCESS CHECKLIST

By the end of the first week, aim to have:

- Signed up for SNAP
- Requested birth certificate
- Requested Social Security card
- Started state ID process
- Located safe short-term housing
- Spoken with your PO
- Started a resume
- Contacted 2–3 hiring programs
- Scheduled mental health intake (if needed)
- Saved emergency contacts
- Set up transportation options

EMERGENCY ESSENTIALS

Here's what to handle if everything feels unstable:

Food

- Food banks
- Community kitchens
- Church pantries
- Emergency SNAP approval

Clothing

- Goodwill vouchers
- Workforce clothing closets
- Churches offering reentry clothing

Hygiene

- Shelters
- Day centers
- Community outreach programs

DOCUMENT STRATEGY

Your “Big Three” documents unlock everything else:

1. State ID

Needed for jobs, housing, benefits, banking.

2. Social Security Card

Needed for ID, jobs, and benefits.

3. Birth Certificate

Needed for both ID and Social Security.

Full instructions for each will be in PDF #3 (ID Recovery Guide), but this pack gives you the order:

Step 1: Birth certificate

Step 2: Social Security

Step 3: State ID

If you lack *any* of these documents, start now. Processing takes time.

HOUSING STRATEGY

Housing in reentry moves fast. If you are released on parole, you should have this done. If not, build a layered plan:

Level 1: Immediate Shelter

- Local shelters
- Salvation Army
- Church overnight stays

Level 2: Transitional Programs

- 90-day reentry housing
- Sober living
- Faith-based programs

Level 3: Long-Term Options

- Boarding rooms
- Shared housing
- Employment-based housing

BENEFITS STRATEGY

SNAP: Apply early; can activate in 24 hours for qualified applicants

Medicaid: Apply through YourTexasBenefits

TANF: Limited but possible for families

Workforce funding: Ask for transportation, training support, work clothes

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

Your goal: **reliable access** to work, appointments, and PO check-ins.

Options include:

- Bus passes
- Workforce Solutions travel support
- Ride vouchers
- Nonprofit transportation programs
- PO transportation accommodations (rare but possible)

PROBATION & PAROLE SURVIVAL

If you're under supervision:

1. Report early and communicate clearly

- Always keep copies of everything
- Always note dates, times, instructions

2. If you need help: ask

POs prefer honesty over excuses.

3. Understand your conditions

Examples:

- Curfew
- Drug testing
- No-contact orders
- Travel restrictions
- Required classes

MENTAL HEALTH + RECOVERY SUPPORT

Texas MHMR centers offer:

- Counseling
- Crisis lines
- Medication management
- Substance use treatment
- Walk-in assessments

Addiction recovery support:

- AA
- NA
- Celebrate Recovery
- SMART Recovery

EMPLOYMENT GAME PLAN

Step 1: Build a simple resume

Don't overthink it. Workforce Solutions can help.

Step 2: Target reentry-friendly employers

Industries that hire:

- Warehouses
- Construction
- Food service
- Landscaping
- Manufacturing
- Oilfield support
- Car washes
- Moving companies

Step 3: Use workforce centers

They offer:

- Job lists
- Computers
- Resume help
- Job leads
- Certifications

REENTRY AGENCIES WORTH CALLING

- Texas Workforce Solutions
- Salvation Army Reentry Programs
- Local MHMR
- Goodwill Job Connection
- Local county reentry councils
- Faith-based programs

WHEN TO USE THE CHATBOT

Use the reentry chatbot for:

- Housing options
- Job leads
- Benefit steps
- Document replacement
- Probation questions
- Contacts for help
- Emergency resources

CONTACTS YOU SHOULD SAVE

Add these to your phone immediately:

- Your PO
- Workforce Solutions
- MHMR
- Local shelter hotline
- SNAP support line
- Suicide/Crisis hotline (988)
- Community reentry org (varies by county)