# Back to School:

## *A Guide to Continuing Your Education after Prison*

**July 2010**

**Prisoner Reentry Institute**

JOHN JAY COLLEGE
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

This guide was prepared under the direction of the Office of Correctional Education of the United States Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education by the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The authors are Anna Crayton and Nicole Lindahl of the Prisoner Reentry Institute. This guide was prepared under the United States Department of Education Contract No. ED-06-PO-1807.

The view expressed in this guide are those of the authors. Contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the United States Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

The Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice was established in February 2005. Its mission is to spur innovation and improve practice in the field of reentry by advancing knowledge; translating research into effective policy and service delivery; and fostering effective partnerships between criminal justice and non-criminal justice disciplines.

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**Acknowledgements**
The authors wish to thank John Linton, Zina Watkins, and Debbie Kalnasy of the Office of Correctional Education of the United States Department of Education, for their continuous support, and Debbie Mukamal, Director of the Prisoner Reentry Institute, for her invaluable input and editorial suggestions. We also thank Jason Hare for his creative direction and graphic design of this guide as well as Kathryn Pesyna for her formatting and revisions for the July 2010 edition.

The following individuals contributed significantly to the content of this guide: Lynne Bejoian, Assistant Professor at Columbia University's Teachers College; Arthur Clark, Education Specialist at North Carolina Department of Correction; Gwynne Cunningham, Director of Specialized Programs for the Virginia Department of Correctional Education; Candy Curl, Reentry Administrator at the Washington State Department of Corrections; Linda Hollmen, Director of Education for the New York State Department of Correctional Services; Jeff Mellow, Associate Professor of Law, Police Science, and Criminal Justice Administration at John Jay College of Criminal Justice; and Allyson West, Director of the California Reentry Program. Staff of the Federal TRIO-Educational Talent Search Program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, including Sandy Alexandre, Feona Chance, Josefina R. Couture, Alex Huezo, and Kris Resurreccion, provided valuable feedback on tone and format. Staff of the College Initiative at Lehman College, including Charlene Griffin, Benay Rubenstein, and Cheryl Wilkins, provided information and brokered links to several of the formerly incarcerated students who share their experiences within the guide. We also thank the students and graduates of Patten University at San Quentin State Prison who reviewed the guide for accuracy, comprehensiveness, and clarity: Bobby Evans, Michael Humphrey, Felix Lucero, Truong (Jay) Ly, Jesus Mudo, Hector Oropeza, Mike Tyler, and Noel Valdivia.

Finally, we offer a special thanks to the following individuals for contributing their personal experience to this guide: Marvin Calvin, Luis Garcia, Truong (Jay) Ly, Amanda Seerattan, and Dwight Stephenson.

*Reprinted by the U.S. Department of Education, July 2010*

# Welcome!

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

By picking up this guide, you have already taken an important step towards continuing your education. Going back to school will require hard work and dedication. The process will be both challenging and frustrating. But if you stick with it, continuing your education can bring you tremendous rewards, including:

- The **pride** that comes with gaining new skills and knowledge
- The **satisfaction** of being able to support yourself and your family
- The **opportunity** to surround yourself with other people who are expanding their minds, planning their futures, and working to improve their lives
- The **capacity** to set a positive example for your family and friends and become a leader in your community

Earning a General Education Development credential (GED), vocational certificate, or college degree will make you a better job applicant, increase the amount of money you can earn, and improve your chances of getting a promotion. Learning new skills, gaining knowledge, and making contacts can bring new opportunities and help you shape a vision of your future that may have seemed out of reach before.

But don't just take our word for it. Take a look at these statistics on earning and employment from the U.S. Department of Labor for the year 2006:

| | Unemployment Rate | Median Weekly Earnings |
|---|---|---|
| **High School Diploma** | 4.3% | $595 |
| **Associate's Degree** | 3.0% | $721 |
| **Bachelor's Degree** | 2.3% | $962 |

This guide is designed to help you take the first steps towards continuing your education, whether that means learning English, working towards your GED, learning an occupation, or building on college credits you have already earned.

Wherever you start, the idea of going back to school can be intimidating. It may have been years since you set foot in a classroom and you may be worried about juggling the responsibilities of a job, school, and family. Throughout the process of going back to school, it is important to remember <u>you are not alone</u>. In fact, over 18% of adults have not finished high school or earned a GED and, in the year 2000, over 70% of college students were financially independent, working full-time, and/or responsible for a child (according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics, respectively).

# Back to School

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

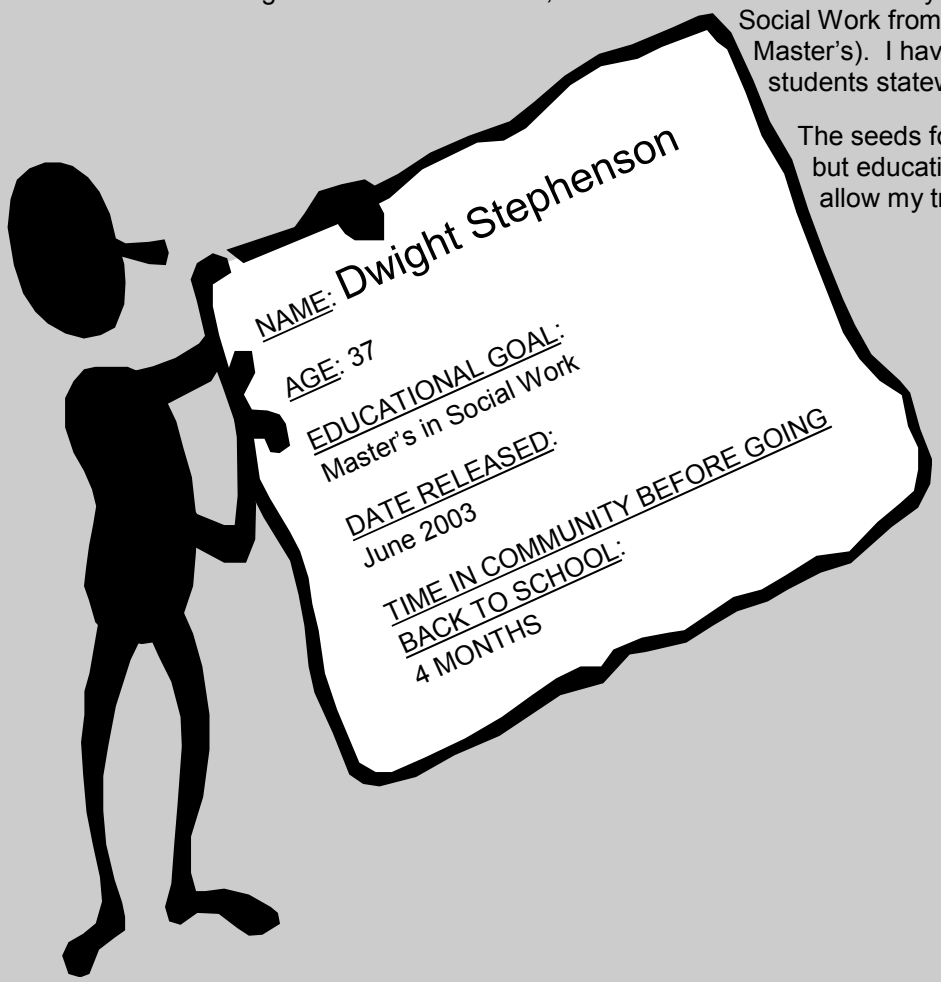
I was released from prison after 14 years of incarceration in June 2003. I must admit, I was nervous, excited, anxious, sad, angry, confused but hopeful. I was all rolled up into one ball of human emotions. What I felt the most, though, was lost, foreign, even alien. There was a lot to get used to. Everything seemed new.

After a month of being home, I secured a job with an inventory company. Around mid-October 2003, I got in contact with a friend from prison who told me about a college program – The College Initiative – that was prisoner friendly. He remembered that I wanted to get a degree and become a social worker, so he figured that I would be interested.

We made plans to go down there together. When I arrived, my friend wasn't at the meeting place. So, I had to go alone. For all my enthusiasm, hope and determination, I could not bring myself to go inside. I suddenly became gripped with fear and apprehension. I started to see really young-looking kids coming in and out and I felt intimidated. For some reason, I began to doubt myself. I felt I could not match up. I was outside for over an hour trying to build up enough courage to go inside. Finally, while talking to an ex-girlfriend on a pay phone, I was able to find the strength to walk inside. Once inside, I saw that I wasn't alone. There were other former prisoners looking to "catch up" on life. Some were also pursing social work as a profession. Knowing this sort of validated my own goals for me.

College was the beginning of a beautiful new life for me. After graduating from the Borough of Manhattan Community College with honors and a degree in Human Services, I am now three semesters away from receiving my undergraduate degree in Social Work from Lehman College (where I plan to obtain my Master's). I have also been honored with being one of 10 students statewide to receive the Belle Zeller Scholarship.

The seeds for my future may have been planted in prison, but education and the connections I've made are what allow my tree to keep growing.



# The Pathway for Continuing Your Education

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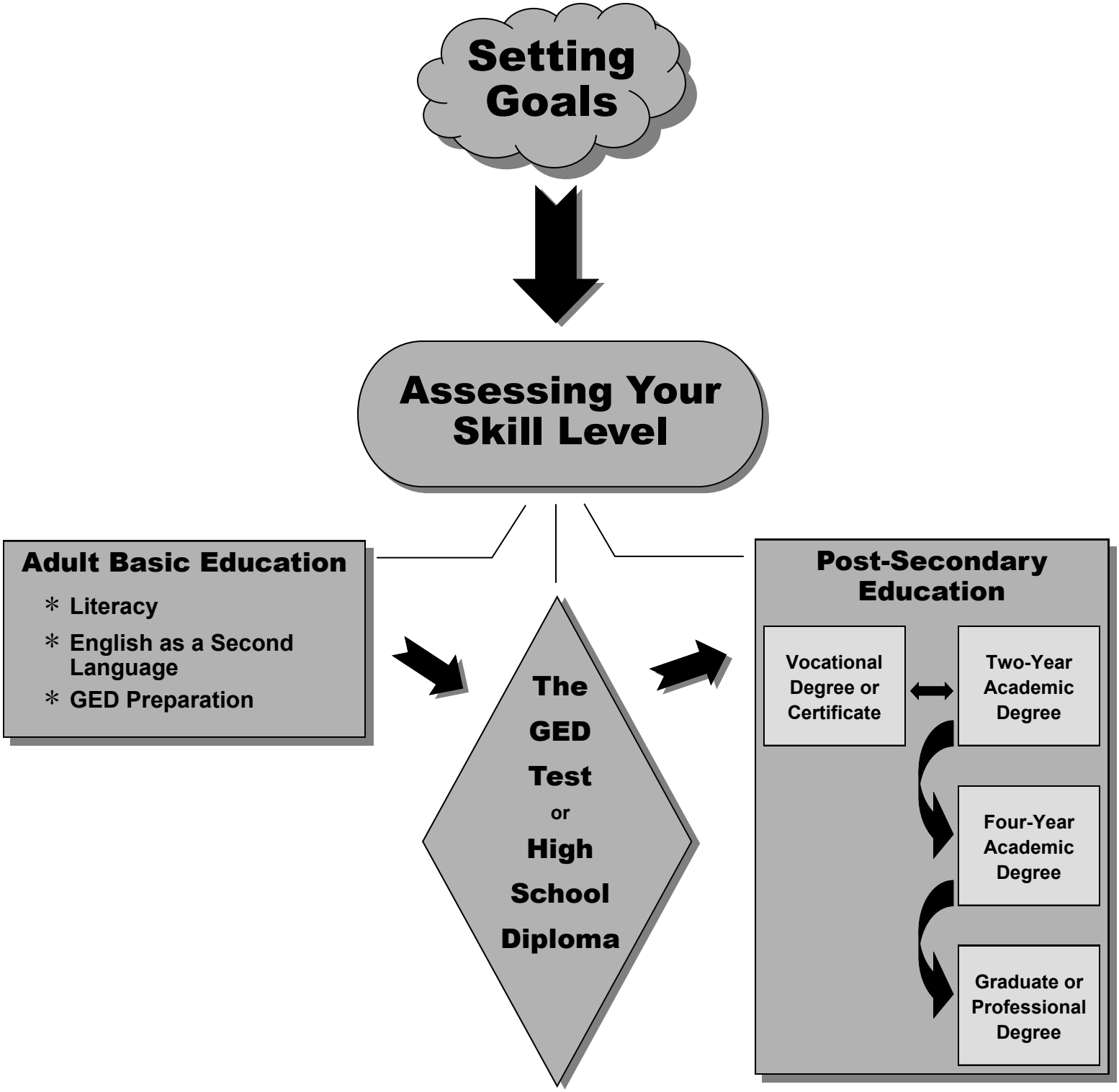

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# INTRODUCTION

This guide walks you through the process of setting educational goals and getting organized; enrolling in the education program that best suits your needs; and receiving assistance to pay for college. It also offers practical advice for each step of the process. It won't answer all the questions you have about going back to school, but it will help you get started and point you in the direction of people and agencies that can provide you with more information and support.

## First Things First: How to Use This Guide

### Key definitions

You will notice that certain words are in bold text. This means that the definition, the word, and more information about it are included in the Glossary on pages 62-65. We will also sometimes refer you to an "Appendix," which is a section in the back of the guide that provides you with additional information about some of the services and issues we discuss throughout the guide.

### Accessing information

This guide is intended to be helpful to you while you are in prison and in the community. Because it is usually not possible to access the Internet when you are prison and some agencies do no accept collect calls, we have provided mailing addresses whenever possible. However, many sources of information are increasingly only available on the Internet. While you are in prison, you can ask family, friends, or correctional staff to access these resources for you (assuming the rules of the correctional facility allow it). Otherwise, you may have to wait until you have been released. If you are not familiar with the Internet, we include some Internet basics on pages 10-11.

### Finding local services

The information included in this guide is intended for use by people in prison across the United States. It does not include information on services that are available in a specific state or city. Whenever possible, the guide gives you the contact information for a resource that will allow you to locate the services in your area. Also, the person who provided you with this guide may be able to give you more information on the specific services and organizations that are available in your state, city or neighborhood.

## Practical Advice

In many ways, the process of enrolling in school and applying for financial aid can be extremely frustrating. You will have to deal with administrative procedures that are never as efficient or organized as you would like them to be. Much like prison, you will come across people who should be able to help you, but who won't have the time or information you need or will not be willing to go out of their way to help you. Following are some tips for staying focused, calm, and sane through this process.

**Notes:**

## Take it slowly

The transition from prison to the community can be very stressful. Other needs, like housing, employment, and health, must come first for you to succeed in school. You can find more information on where to go to get help with these issues in on pages 12-13 of this guide.

## Ask for help

Seek advice from counselors and other people familiar with the process of going back to school, but trust your instincts when selecting the right people to approach. It's important that you feel comfortable talking with them and that they have the time and experience to be able to help you.

People who might help you through the process include staff from:

- The education department within your correctional facility
- Self-help, religious, and other programs within your facility
- Reentry programs in the community
- The financial aid and admissions offices of you local **community college**

## Show your appreciation

One of the best ways to cut through red tape is to get to know the staff of the offices you have to deal with on a regular basis. Go the extra mile to be friendly and understanding, even if you are frustrated. And when someone is really helpful to you, write the person a thank you note.

## Make informed decisions

There are many service providers that take advantage of people who don't take the time to fully research their options when it comes to selecting schools and receiving financial aid. These programs could end up costing you a lot of money while providing you with lower quality services. For these reasons, it is essential that you take your time to find out as much as you can before making important decisions. Throughout this guide, we will point out the issues and topics that are especially important to research to make a smart decision.

## Create a portfolio for important documents

Keeping track of the information and documents related to your education will save you time and frustration. Use a large envelope or folder to store all the important documents that relate to your education. These documents include information you will need to provide multiple times to enroll in school and receive financial aid. When we mention important documents in the guide, we will remind you to store a copy in your portfolio.

## If you have some time before your release…

If you have at least two years before your release from prison and have a GED or high school diploma, enrolling in college courses is an excellent use of your time. If college courses are not provided at your facility, you can look into taking correspondence courses. For more information on correspondence courses, see Appendix A.

**First Things First: How to Use this Guide**

**Practical Advice**

**Internet Basics**

**Essential Services in Your City or Neighborhood**

**Notes:**

# Internet Basics

## Accessing the Internet

To visit a website, you must use a computer that is connected to the Internet. You can access the Internet for free at your local public library. Also, many public libraries and One-Stop Career Centers provide free classes on how to use the Internet. Information on locating libraries and One-Stops is included on pages 12-13.

### *Important Definitions* ★★★★★★★★

- ***Online**: A term often used to describe activities related to the Internet. For example, if information is available on the Internet, you can say the information is "available online." accessing the Internet is often called "going online."*
- ***Desktop**: Refers to the computer screen when the computer is turned on. The start menu and computer programs can be accessed from the computer desktop.*
- ***Icon**: A symbol that appears on the desktop and represents a computer program. The icon for Microsoft Word is located to the right. Word is the most common computer program for writing documents such as papers, resumes, and letters.*

- ***Click**: Computers have a feature, called a "mouse," that allows you to direct an arrow that appears on the computer screen and click on icons by pressing a button on the mouse. You can open programs on the desktop by directing the arrow to the icons and double-clicking the button. When using the Internet, you can click on words and pictures which will take you to another webpage.*

## Visiting a specific website

To view a website on the Internet, you use a computer program called a "web browser." Some of the most common web browsers are Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, and Firefox.

- On the desktop of the computer, there will be an icon for one of the web browsers mentioned above. Click on the icon to open the program.
- When the web browser opens, there will be an "address bar" that is located at the top of the screen. Here you type in the web address and then hit the return key. Web addresses begin with "http://www." For example, the web address for *USA Today* newspaper is: http://www.usatoday.com.
- The website will appear after a few seconds.

## Searching the Internet

If you don't know the web address for the website that contains the information you are looking for, you can search for the information by using a "search engine." The most common search engines are Google, Yahoo! and MSN Search.

- Type one of the following web addresses into the address bar:
  - ◊ Google: http://ww.google.com
  - ◊ Yahoo!: http://www.yahoo.com
  - ◊ Bing: http://www.bing.com

**Notes:**

- Once the website for the search engine appears, type a keyword that describes what you are looking for into the space provided and click on "search." For example, if you want to find out information on the GED test, type "GED test" into the space provided. If you want to identify locations where you can take a GED test in your area, include the name of your city, such as "GED test Nashville."
- The search engine will provide you with a list of websites related to your search. Look through the list and click on the website that gives you the most useful information. See Appendix B for an example of a search page.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *The websites provided in this guide are underlined. If you are looking at this guide on a computer that is connected to the Internet, you can click on the web address and the website will appear on your screen. Note that you do not need to underline the web addresses when typing them into the address bar.*
- *Websites and web addresses can change frequently. If you type in a web address and it doesn't take you to the website you want to visit, try doing a search for the website instead. Searching is usually the best way to find the websites and information for which you are looking.*

## Email: Sending and receiving messages

The Internet also allows you to send and receive messages through an email account. Email has become one of the most common and convenient ways of communicating for people in school. Your instructors might email you homework assignments and changes in class schedule. Also, school administrators may use email to send you information about your enrollment and financial aid. Several websites provide email accounts for free, including Gmail, Hotmail, and Yahoo!.

- Type one of the following web addresses into the address bar and then hit the return/enter key:
  - ◊ Gmail: http://www.gmail.com
  - ◊ Hotmail: http://www.hotmail.com
  - ◊ Yahoo!: http://www.yahoo.com
- Click on "sign up" and follow the instructions provided.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *When you sign up for an email account, you will be asked to provide some information about yourself, including your name and zip code.*
- *You will also have to create a "user name" and password. Make sure to select words and numbers that are easy to remember. Write down your user name and password and keep them in your portfolio. Each time you check your email, you will have to provide both of them.*
- *Note that your user name will appear in your email address. Because you will provide your email address to potential employers and schools, choose a simple, professional user name that projects a positive image.*

**First Things First: How to Use this Guide**

**Practical Advice**

**Internet Basics**

**Essential Services in Your City or Neighborhood**

**Notes:**

# Essential Services in your City or Neighborhood

Getting and keeping a job and staying healthy are essential as you continue your education. Sometimes, these issues need to be addressed before you can start working toward a GED, high school diploma, or higher education degree. Below is information on resources available in your community that provide free or low cost information on important issues you may face during your transition home.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

*Several websites provide maps and directions to a specific address in your community. Once you've identified services in your area, these website can help you get where you need to go. The following websites locate addresses and provide maps and directions for most communities in the United States:*

- ◊ *Google:* http://www.maps.google.com
- ◊ *Mapquest:* http://www.mapquest.com
- ◊ *Hopstop:* http://www.hopstop.com

## Public libraries

Your local public library is an excellent resource as you begin to locate services in your community, search for a job and/or continue you education.

### Services

- Free access to computers and the Internet
- Governmental forms
- Literacy services and resources
- Librarians who can help you find other information you might need

**Cost:** Free

### How to find public libraries

- Look up the terms "library" or "public library" in the city government section of your local phonebook.
- Go to: http://nces.ed.gov. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "School/Library Search."

## One-Stop Career Centers

One-Stop Career Centers are excellent resources providing many services to help you find and prepare for jobs in one centralized location. One-Stops have replaced Employment Offices and Employment Security Commissions in most communities. One-Stops are a useful resource because they provide links to training, apprenticeships, and degree or certificate programs that prepare you for the job you want. To find out more about One-Stops, go to: http://www.careeronestop.org.

### Services

- ***Assessment:*** Staff can help identify the skills you have gained through previous work experience and the skill areas in which you need training.

**Notes:**

- ***Career counseling:*** Workshops and counselors will help you identify which jobs and occupations are right for you given your skills and interests and the types of jobs that exist in your area.
- ***Training or referral to training:***
  - ◊ **Hard skills** (the skills you need to get and keep a job in a particular field)
  - ◊ **Soft skills** (such as communication and leaderships skills)
  - ◊ Resume writing
  - ◊ Preparing for interviews
- ***Referrals to other resources:***
  - ◊ Education programs
  - ◊ Child care
  - ◊ Transportation
  - ◊ Unemployment insurance
  - ◊ Welfare programs
  - ◊ Veterans services

**Cost:** Most services are free. Some specialized services may require a fee.

### How to find One-Stop Career Centers

- To locate One-Stops in your community, go to: http://www.servicelocator.org or call 1-877-348-0502.
- For a map of the One-Stops in each state, go to: http://www.dol.gov.
  - ◊ Under "Topics," click "More"
  - ◊ Click "Training"
  - ◊ Click "Clickable Map of One-Stop Centers' Websites"

## Community-based organizations

**Services:** **Community-based organizations** meet many different kinds of needs. Some provide **case management** and information and services related to:

- Employment
- Education
- Health care
- Counseling
- Substance abuse treatment
- Housing
- Transportation
- Child care

**Cost:** Usually free, though some may charge fees for specialized services.

### How to find community-based organizations:

- The National Information Referral System is a great way to identify services that exist in your area. Go to: http://www.211.org or dial 211 on your telephone. Note that this services has not yet been fully implemented in all states.
- Some community-based organizations specialize in providing services to people with criminal records. A list of some of these organizations is available on the National H.I.R.E. Network's website: http://www.hirenetwork.org.
  - ◊ Click on "Resources and Assistance"
  - ◊ Click on your state
  - ◊ Click on "Local Service Providers"
- Goodwill Industries International is one example of a large non-profit organization with local locations in many communities. Goodwill Industries provides a number of employment and educational services. To find your local Goodwill, go to: http://www.goodwill.org and click on "Job Seekers" or call 1-800-741-0186.

# Adjusting to School Life

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

## Why did you decide to continue your education?

After doing 10 years in prison and drugs for three years before that, no one was going to give me a decent job, and I did not want to return to prison. Instead of remembering those prison numbers, I decided to replace them with Marvin R. Calvin, M.S.W.

## What were your goals when you started your education?

My goal was to earn an Associate's degree in Behavioral Science.

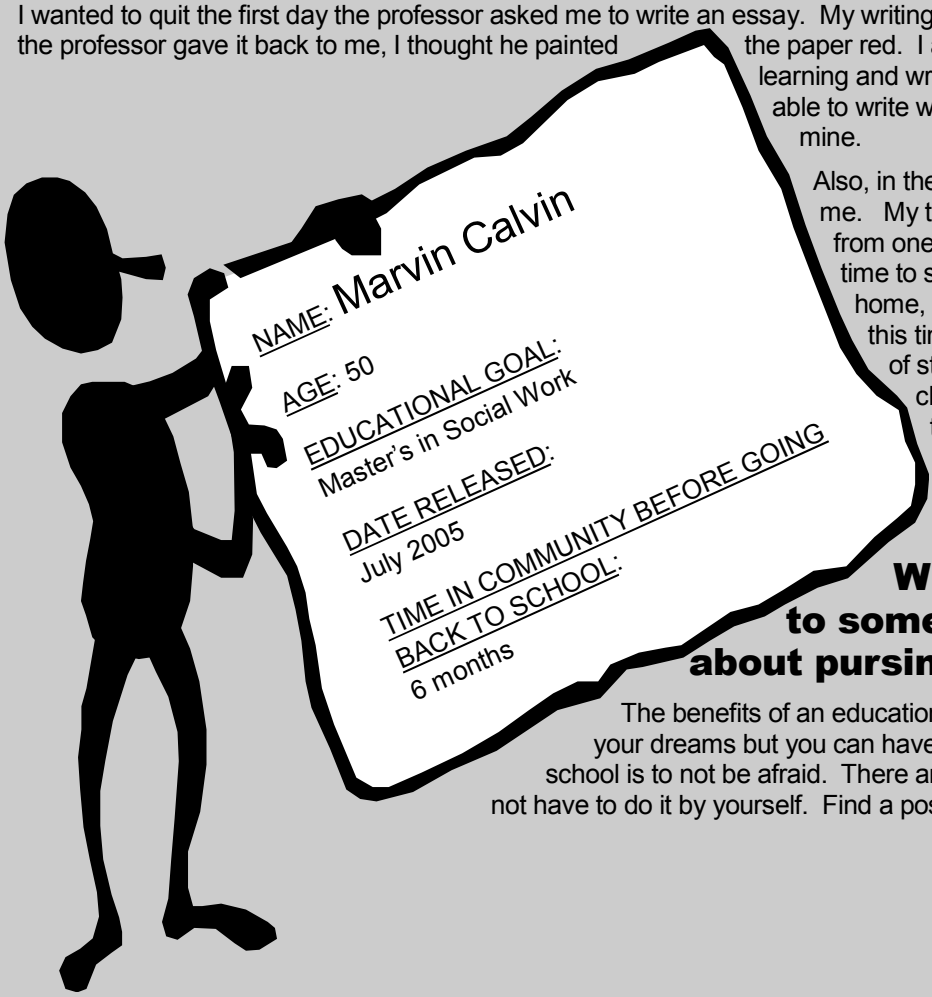
## Have your goals changed as you've continued your education?

I began to like school and decided to obtain a Master's degree. Also, I found that with my job, I could not move any higher than an assistant case manager. In order to become a case manager, I must have at least an Associate's degree. And if I want to make any real money, I must obtain a Master's degree.

## What obstacles did you face when you returned to school?

I wanted to quit the first day the professor asked me to write an essay. My writing was so terrible. Nonetheless, I did it, and when the professor gave it back to me, I thought he painted the paper red. I am still not where I want to be; however, I am still learning and writing is becoming easier. I knew that once I was able to write well and articulate my ideas, the world would be mine.

Also, in the beginning, finding time to study was very hard for me. My time management was completely off. I sought help from one of my professors and he told me how he made the time to study. He would study going to work and coming home, and sometimes on his lunch break. When I added this time up for me, it gave me at least three hours a day of studying. Then, instead of going home right after class would give myself at least one hour of study time school library. Now I have at least four hours of study time a day which is a great benefit to me. For two consecutive semesters I made the Dean's List.




## What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about pursing an education?

The benefits of an education are beyond measure. Not only can you obtain your dreams but you can have fun doing it. My advice to anyone returning to school is to not be afraid. There are people around ready and willing to help. You do not have to do it by yourself. Find a positive support group and you will do just fine.

**Making a Game Plan: Setting Goals**

**Setting Yourself Up for Success**

**Gathering Identification and Other Important Documents**

**Notes:**

# Part I: PREPARING TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL

As Marvin describes, staying on task while working, going to school, and supporting your family can be a challenge. The key is to be prepared and go through the process with your eyes open:

- Set clear and achievable goals
- Gather the documents that will help you enroll in school
- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses as a learner
- Be disciplined with your schedule

## Making a Game Plan: Setting Goals

Where would you like to see yourself in five years? Developing a clear vision for your future will help you set educational goals and stay focused. Your goals may change during the process of going back to school. However, setting goals ahead of time can save you time and money and will help you stay motivated. Here are some practical steps to help you create a vision and set educational goals.

### Step 1: Create a list of the jobs you might want

To identify jobs you might enjoy and succeed in, ask yourself these questions:

- What skills, training, and job experience do you already have?
- What sorts of activities do you enjoy? For example, do you spend your free time talking with other people, building things, playing sports, reading and writing, or doing something else?
- What are you good at?
    - ◊ If you are good at sports or dance, you might consider a career as a personal trainer, athletic coach, or dance teacher.
    - ◊ If you like to be outside and get your hands dirty, you might become a landscaper, house painter, mechanic, or construction worker.
    - ◊ If you are an artist, you could be a draftsman or graphic designer.
    - ◊ If you like interacting with other people and giving them advice, you might be a good instructor, substance abuse counselor, or social worker.
    - ◊ If you have good ideas and business sense, you might consider starting a business.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *A great resource for exploring potential career paths is the book,* What Color is Your Parachute? *This and other career guidebooks may be available at the public library or the library in your correctional facility. See page 12 for information on locating your local library.*
- *Another tool for determining which occupations might be right for you is an "interest inventory." These tools are often available at One-Stop Career Centers and on the Internet. See page 12 for information on finding your local One-Stop.*

**Notes:**

## Step 2: Determine if the jobs on your list are open to people with criminal records

People with criminal records are sometimes restricted from working in certain jobs and occupations. These restrictions vary from state to state. A few states issue **Certificates of Rehabilitation** or offer other ways to lift these employment restrictions. Here are some resources about employment issues for people with criminal records:

- If you are in prison, check with your facility's education department or your counselor or case manager.
- To find information on the employment restrictions in your state, go to the National Association of Attorneys General's website at: http://www.naag.org and click on "the Attorneys General" to find the contact information for the Attorney General's Office in your state. In some states, this information will instead be listed on the website of the state Department of Licensing and Regulation or Division on Licensing Services.
- A summary of state laws related to loss of rights due to a felony conviction and the process of restoring those rights, pardon/expungement information, and contact information for corresponding agencies is available in a report called *Relief from the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Conviction: A State-By-State Resource Guide.* Go to: http://sentencingproject.org/PublicationDetails.aspx?PublicationID=486.
- Information on laws related to employment barriers for people with criminal records and contact information for each state's attorney general's office available at the National H.I.R.E. Network's website. Go to: http://www.hirenetwork.org and click on "Resources & Assistance."
- A state-by-state overview of legal barriers facing people with criminal records in all 50 states is available in a report called *After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry*.
    - ◊ Go to: http://www.lac.org.
    - ◊ Click "Free Publications."
    - ◊ Click "Criminal Justice."
    - ◊ Click "After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry."
    - ◊ Click "What's the Law."

***Important Tip*** ★★★★★★★★

*Educate yourself about the employment restrictions and other related options in your state. Otherwise, you could end up spending time and money on an educational program only to find out that your criminal record prevents you from working or getting a permit or license in that profession.*

## Step 3: Find out as much as you can about the jobs remaining on your list

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* is an excellent resource that provides comprehensive information on different kinds of jobs in a wide variety of industries.

### Information provided:

- Training and education needed
- Earnings
- The expected demand for workers in the field
- Typical activities and responsibilities
- Working Conditions

**Notes:**

### How to find it

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* is revised every two years. As of the writing of this document, the most recent edition is called *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-2007 Edition*. It is available online or in printed form.

- The U.S. Department of Labor provides access to the information contained in the handbook at: http://www.bls.gov/oco.
- Check for the handbook at your public library, One-Stop Career Center, or the library of your correctional facility. See page 12 for information on finding your local library and One-Stop.

## Step 4: Set your educational goals

Once you have decided which job(s) from your list you would like to pursue, use the information in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* to determine what degree or certificate you need. This information will indentify the next step on your educational path. For example, if you decide to do an apprenticeship to become an electrician, you may need to earn a GED to apply to an apprenticeship program. More information about the requirements for vocational and academic college programs is included later in this guide, on pages 36-41.

# Setting Yourself Up for Success

## Learning challenges

Each of us experiences certain challenges to learning. Figuring out what is difficult for you will allow you to focus on improving in those areas. It will also help you develop learning strategies and ask for what you need to address your challenges. Many people experience difficulties when learning, called **learning differences**. Learning differences—also known as learning disabilities—are challenges that you can learn to live with by developing a combination of strategies to help you in the classroom and when doing homework. This process may take a while, and the strategies you develop may need to be adjusted as you further in your education and tackle more complex material.

### Educating yourself about learning differences

Learning as much as you can about your learning differences will help you create strategies for coping with them. Here is a list of some of the most common learning differences:

- ***Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):*** difficulty controlling behavior and paying attention
- ***Dyslexia:*** difficulty understanding written words
- ***Dyscalculia:*** difficulty solving math problems and understanding mathematical concepts

***More information on learning differences is available at the following websites:***

- Comprehensive information and resources related to learning differences is provided by the Learning Disabilities Association of America at: http://www.ldanatl.org.
- Information on learning styles and the challenges that face people with learning differences is available at: http://www.ldpride.net.

**Notes:**

- Comprehensive information on learning differences, particularly ADHD, is available at: http://www.ldonline.org.

***Many successful people have overcome learning differences to achieve their goals. A few famous examples are:***

- Tommy Hilfiger, the fashion designer
- Dexter Scott King, son of Martin Luther King, Jr. and President and CEO of The King Center
- Charles Schwab, founder and CEO of the Charles Schwab Corporation

## Getting assessed

If you believe you have a learning difference, a qualified professional can provide you with an assessment. This process will give you more information about your learning difference and may qualify you for certain educational and testing accommodations (see lists on page 18-19). Even if you have been assessed in the past, it's a good idea to research current information about your learning difference since our understanding of these issues is constantly improving.

***How to find agencies that provide assessment:***

- Search for the student services division of your local community college at the American Association of Community Colleges' website. Go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu and scroll down to the heading "Find your Community College."
- Search for Vocational Rehabilitation offices in your state at: http://www.jan.wvu.edu.
    - ◊ Click on "Small Business and Self Employment" at the bottom of the page.
    - ◊ Click "Resources for Small Businesses and Self-Employment."
    - ◊ Click on "State Vocational Rehabilitation Offices."
- Search for local literacy and adult education centers at your local public library. See page 12 for information on finding your local library.
- Search for your local community mental health office with the National Mental Health Locator. Go to: http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov and click on "Service Locator" on the right hand side of the page.
- Search on the Internet using terms like "learning disability assessment." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.

## Receiving a diagnosis

Once you have been assessed, you will receive a **diagnosis**. The professional who provides your diagnosis should explain the diagnosis, tell you which support services you are eligible for, and offer recommendations for appropriate employment and education paths. Keep your diagnosis and any additional paperwork in your portfolio.

## Accommodations

Education programs often provide support and special help if you have a diagnosed learning difference. For standardized tests such as the GED, testing conditions may be modified to support you. To find out if you are able to receive accommodations and support for your learning difference, talk to the staff at your education program or testing center.

**Notes:**

***Testing accommodations might include:***

- Audiocassette edition of the test
- Large print edition
- Use of a scribe
- Extended time
- Use of a calculator
- Supervised frequent breaks
- Use of a private room for testing

***Other types of support might include:***

- Intake assessments
- Counseling/advising
- Registration assistance
- Referrals to resources and information
- Reading and writing support

## Creating a learning environment

Before you enroll in school, set up a space where you will be able to store the books and materials related to your education and do your homework. This space should allow you to spread out your books and papers so you can do your work comfortably. It should also be in a place that will allow you to focus on your work without distractions. For example, if you learn better in a quiet environment, the space should be away from the television, radio, and other people. If you don't have room in your home to create a learning environment, consider studying at the public library, a coffee shop, or in the designated study areas of your school.

## Organizing your schedule

It can be very difficult to find time to study when you are going to school, working, and taking care of other responsibilities all at the same time. Organizing your schedule ahead of time will help you feel prepared for your work, instead of overwhelmed by it.

- Map our your weekly schedule using the sheet provided in Appendix D. If possible, make several copies first in case you make a mistake or your schedule changes.
- Identify blocks of free time and write in "study time" or "homework" so that you set aside time to complete your work. Reserve blocks of time that are consistent with the amount of time you can usually stay focused. For example, if you have a hard time focusing for long periods of time, identify small blocks of 20 minutes or so. Also, if you know that you study better in the morning, reserve time in the beginning of the day to study.

# Gathering Identification and Other Important Documents

Several documents are important to have in hand as you continue your education, apply for jobs, and access other services. These documents include:

- Social security card
- Birth certificate
- Rap sheet/criminal record
- GED certificate/high school diploma or transcripts
- State identification card (ID)/driver's license
- Resume
- References lists and letters

**Notes:**

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *As you apply for and receive these documents, remember to keep copies of the applications and documents in your portfolio.*
- *Getting some of these documents will require that you pay a fee. This fee will vary depending on the document and the state or agency that issues it. It is always a good idea to ask if the fees for these documents can be waived if your income is below a certain level.*
- *If you are in prison, you might not be permitted to keep some documents with you. You can ask your counselor or case manager to receive the documents in the mail and keep them in your file until you are released. Be sure to let your counselor or case manager know that you are applying for these documents so they know to put them in your file when the documents arrive.*
- *You might have gone by different names at different points in your life or have had an alias. It is important that you use the name that appears on your birth certificate when completing all forms and applications.*

## Social security card

Your social security number is required to access services and apply for jobs, education programs, and financial aid. Social security cards are free.

- If you are in prison, talk to your counselor or case manager about getting your social security card. The U.S. Social Security Administration will not accept an application directly from a person in prison so you must have a corrections staff member help you.
- If you are no longer in prison, fill out a SS-5 form.
  - ◊ To request a form, call the U.S. Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.
  - ◊ You will need to show proof of identification such as a driver's license, passport, marriage or divorce record or a certification from the prison.
  - ◊ Mail the completed form with a copy of your identification to your local social security office. You can get the address for your local social security office when you call and request a form or go online. Go to: http://www.ssa.gov and click "Find a Social Security office."

## Birth certificate

Your birth certificate will be helpful when you are trying to obtain other forms of identification, like a state identification (ID) card or driver's license, after your release. A fee is required to get an official copy of your birth certificate and it varies by state.

- Write a request to the Bureau of Vital Records in the state where you were born. Note that the name of this office may very slightly from state to state in some states it is called the Office of Vital Records, the Division of Vital Statistics, or something similar.
- In your request, include the name on the certificate, your date of birth, the city and county where you were born, and your mother's full maiden name. You should also include your father's full name if it appeared on the original certificate.
- You will also have to include proof of identification. You can usually use a prison ID and documentation of the prison address.

**Notes:**

## Rap sheet/criminal record

Getting a copy of your state rap sheet/criminal record history will allow you to make sure the information on it is correct. Also, if details of the offense(s) should have been sealed or expunged, you can make sure the information is not available. It is important that this information is accurate because employers and landlords will see it if they conduct a criminal background check. It is also important because some colleges have started conducting criminal background checks as part of the application process.

- If you are in prison, visit the facility law library to learn more about the procedures for getting a copy of your state rap sheet/criminal record history. Law libraries may have fee waiver forms.
- If you are no longer in prison, you can identify where to get a copy of your rap sheet/criminal record by visiting the National H.I.R.E. Network's website at: http://www.hirenetwork.org.
    - ◊ Click on "Resources & Assistance."
    - ◊ Click on your state.
    - ◊ The contact information for a number of resources in your state will appear. Locate the agency listed under "Criminal Record Repository."

## GED certificate/high school diploma or transcripts

Copies of your diploma, GED, or transcripts will be important when applying to education programs and for jobs. If you are in prison, staff of the education department at your facility may be able to help you get these documents.

- If you graduated from high school, contact the central office of the school district where your high school is located.
- If you earned your GED, contact the GED office where you took the GED test.

## State identification card (ID)/driver's license

In some states you will not be able to get a state ID card, including a driver's license, while you are in prison. Procedures for which forms of identification are required and how to apply for a state ID vary from state to state.

- If you are in prison, check with your counselor or case manager to find out the best way to get a state ID or driver's license.
- If you are no longer in prison, go to the state agency responsible for issuing driver's licenses or visit its website for more information. Typically, this agency is called the Division or Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Transportation, or Department of Public Safety.
    - ◊ Search the Internet using terms like "Department of Motor Vehicles" and "Department of Transportation." Be sure to include the name of your state as a search term. The state website usually includes a directory of local offices.

## Resume

A resume is a document that tells people about your education and work experience. Your resume will be a useful tool in applying for jobs and to colleges.

### Include the following information in your resume

- Your full contact information including phone number and email address. We recommend using an address outside of the correctional facility.

**Notes:**

- Your education experience
- Licenses and certifications you hold
- Work experience
- Volunteer/community leadership experience
- Related skills/hobbies
- References

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *To give you an idea of what a resume should look like, we have provided an example in Appendix C.*
- *Guidebooks on developing resumes and applying for jobs will provide more detailed information on creating a resume and additional examples. If you are in prison, check your facility's library and education department for these guidebooks. These resource guides will also be available at the public library. See page 12 for information on locating your local library.*
- *One-Stop Career Centers and libraries may have computer programs called "resume builders" to help you create a resume easily. See page 12 for information on locating your local library and One-Stop.*
- *We advise that you include work experience gained in prison in your resume. The sample resume in Appendix C shows you one way of describing it.*
- *Once you have completed the first draft of your resume, ask someone to trust to review it and give you feedback on the format and text, including spelling and grammar. This person should have experience working in a professional environment. Because your resume is the first impression an employer will have of you, it is very important that it not include mistakes.*

## Reference lists and letters

When you apply for a job or to a college program, you may be asked to include the names of up to three "references." References are people who can speak positively about your skills, abilities, and interests. A common way to provide references is to create a list of names, titles, and contact information (telephone number and email address). In some situations, you may also be asked to have your references provide **letters of recommendation**.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Your references should be people who know you well. Typically, these people are former employers, teachers, or mentors. If you are in prison, academic or vocational instructors, work supervisors, religious leaders, and volunteers are examples of people who could serve as your references.*
- *Family members should not be used as references.*
- *You should always ask permission before listing someone as a reference.*
- *If you need to have your references write letters of recommendation, you should ask for them several weeks before they are needed. Be sure to provide your references with information about the program to which you are applying and the address where the letter should be sent.*

**Notes:**

## Selective Service (males only)

If you are between the ages of 18 and 25 and live in the United States, you are required to register for **Selective Service**. The Federal Government uses Selective Service registration to draft individuals for military service.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *You can verify your registration by going to: http://www.sss.gov or calling 1-847-688-6888.*
- *If you did not register with Selective Service and are now over the age of 25, you may be barred from receiving certain federal or state programs and benefits, including federal student aid. Information on appealing these bars to federal programs and benefits is included on pages 23-24.*
- *If you did not register for Selective Service, are in prison, and are under the age of 26, you may have to wait until you are released to register for Selective Service or appeal the bar to accessing federal programs and benefits. Because the Selective Service System does not have a standard policy for people who are in prison, your best option is to write Selective Service System office to explain your situation and ask for guidance:*

  Selective Service System
  Registration Information Office
  P.O. Box 94638
  Palatine, IL 60094-4638

### Registering for Selective Service

Registering for Selective Service is easy and can be done in a number of ways.

***Using the Internet:***

- Go to: http://www.sss.gov.
- Click "Register Now."
- Complete the form that appears on the next page.
- Click "Submit Registration."

***By mail:***

- Pick up a "mail back form" from your local post office.
- Complete the card and mail it to:

  *Selective Service System*
  *Registration Information Office*
  *P.O. Box 94638*
  *Palatine, IL 60094-4638*

***On the FAFSA:***

You can register for Selective Service if you are applying for federal student aid. Simply check "yes" for the related question. The U.S. Department of Education will provide you information to the Selective Service System. For detailed information about filling out a FAFSA, see pages 41-46.

**Notes:**

### If you didn't register

If you did not register for Selective Service and are over the age of 25, you may be able to go through an appeals process to maintain your ability to access federal programs and benefits, including financial assistance. You can also request an application for appeal over the Internet or by written request.

***Using the Internet:***

- Go to: http://www.sss.gov
  - ◊ From the **drop down menu**, select "Request for Status Information Letter." You will be required to attach documentation that proves you were in prison during the time when you should have registered for Selective Service. Your **prison release papers** can serve as acceptable documentation.

***Written requests:***

- Mail a written request to:

  *Selective Service System*
  *P.O. Box 94638*
  *Palatine, IL 60094-4638*

- Ask for a "Status Information" letter. You will have to describe in detail the circumstances that prevented you from registering and provide copies of documents showing any periods when you were hospitalized, institutionalized, or incarcerated between your 18th and 26th birthdays. Your prison release papers can serve as acceptable documentation.

## Student loan debt

Part III of this guide provides detailed information on how to access **grants** and **student loans**. If you already had student loans before you went to prison and have not been paying them, there are several things you can do to address your outstanding student loan(s):

- Find out if you have an outstanding student loan or how much you owe on a loan:
  - ◊ Contact the U.S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-621-3115. You will be asked to provide your social security number. The Department of Education can tell you who is holding the loan, how much you owe, and the address and phone number of the holder of the loan.
  - ◊ Your **Student Aid Report (SAR)** also provides information on whether you have outstanding loans and who is holding them. See page 46 for more information about the SAR and how to obtain it.
- Contact the holder of the loan. If you are still in prison, you can ask a family member, counselor or case manager, or another person to get information about you loan. To do this, you will need to write a letter giving that person permission to speak to the agency holding your loan. This letter must be **notarized** and sent to the loan holder.
- Once you or a designated persona have contacted the loan holder, tell the loan holder you would like to set up a payment plan to get out of debt.

**Notes:**

## *Important Tips* ★★★★★★★★

- *The minimum amount you have to pay each month for your loan depends on the type of loan. For example, a **Federal Perkins Loan** requires that you pay a minimum of $40 per month, while a direct loan usually require a minimum of $50. However, the holders of your loan are generally looking for consistency of payment, not the amount that you are able to pay. It is essential that you make a payment each month, even if you only pay the minimum amount.*
- *To be eligible to receive financial aid again, you do not have to pay off your old loans completely. Usually once you have made six payments in a row (small or large), you can be considered for re-certification. From the moment you start making monthly payments you may be re-certified and able to apply for new loans in approximately nine months.*
- *Contact your loan holder to explain why you have not been paying back you loan. Telling them that you are or were in prison will not decrease the amount of money you owe, but it lets them know you are aware of the loan and are planning to repay it.*
- *If you also owe child support, fines, court costs, restitution, or other loans, be sure to figure your student loan repayment into your other debts so you have enough income to support yourself. Keep in mind that some lenders may require that you address existing debt before providing you with student loans, especially if you owe a significant amount of money. The following sources can help you address other financial obligations:*
    - ◊ ***Community-based organizations:*** *See page 13 for information on identifying community-based organization in your city or neighborhood.*
    - ◊ ***Local legal services offices:*** *Search on the internet using terms like "legal services office" or "legal services provider." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.*

# Making Use of a GED

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

## Why did you decide to continue your education?

By the age of 16, I was a runaway, selling drugs and hustling to survive. I dropped out of high school and moved to the upstate area. I started to see that my friends had jobs during the summer and their parents were so proud of them. So I went and applied for jobs at the mall, but no one would hire me. Until one day a woman told me the reason why I wasn't hired yet. She said, "Amanda, you need to have that diploma to do anything girl!"

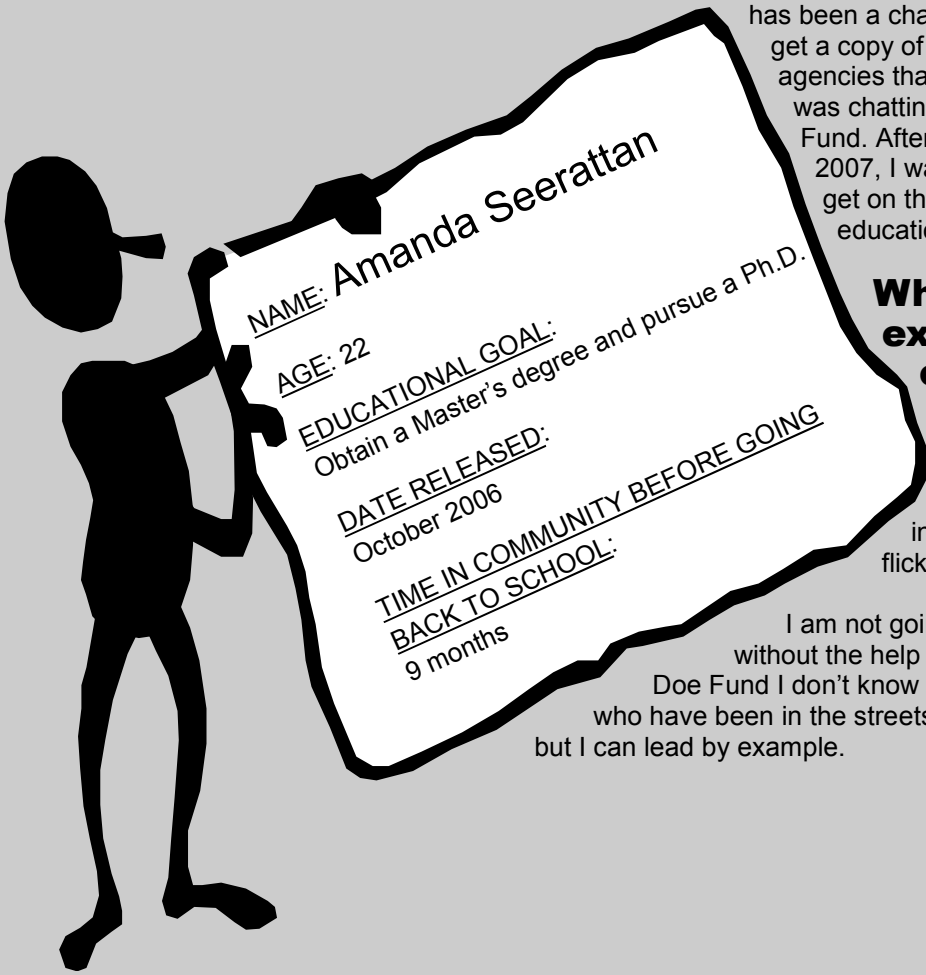
In October of 2005 I took and passed the GED. However, my past caught up to me and unfortunately less than two months after receiving my GED, I was incarcerated, looking at a sentence of two to six years.

## What are your educational goals?

At the age of 20 I was a convicted felon with a charge of criminal sale of a controlled substance. I was sent to an alternative to prison military boot camp as a first time offender. While there, I was always asked how to handle personal situations with other inmates and I enjoyed giving the advice. It was like an epiphany! Upon completion, I wanted a career in social work, and it wasn't going to stop there. I wanted to have my own business, become a director and run my own non-profit organization.

## How has earning a GED helped you achieve your goals?

With my release from prison, I was ready to use my GED to further my education and start my career in social work. So far it has been a challenge, primarily because I didn't know where to get a copy of my GED. That's when I started to seek out agencies that could help me with my employment issues. I was chatting with a friend and he told me about The Doe Fund. After I was accepted into the program in March of 2007, I was assigned a case manager who has helped me get on the right path towards college with advice on higher educational options. I will be starting college in the fall.




## What challenges have you experienced in pursuing your education?

The application process was a little frustrating, but it taught me a great deal about patience. So it was a challenge, but nothing that you can't overcome. My educational advisor assisted me in filling out the application. This helped me see a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel.

I am not going to say that things have been easy because without the help of my case manager and all the other staff at The Doe Fund I don't know where I would be today. Some of my old friends who have been in the streets are still there or dead or sick. I can't save them but I can lead by example.

**Knowing Where to Start: Educational Assessment**

**Finding Services for Your Skill Level: Adult Basic Education**

**The GED Test**

**Adult High School Diploma**

**Notes:**

# Part II: EARNING YOUR GED OR DIPLOMA

### Did you know…

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, a high school graduate earns about $9,000 more per year on average than a person without a diploma.

A **General Education Development credential (GED)** or high school diploma can open the door to new educational opportunities and increase the amount of money you bring home. If you have already earned credits towards a high school diploma, it probably makes sense to work towards the diploma rather than the GED. If you haven't earned many high school credits, earning a GED is probably a better option. Also, some community colleges offer **dual enrollment programs**, which allow you to earn college credit while also earning credits towards your high school diploma or working on your GED. To find out if the **community college** in your area provides a dual enrollment program, contact the admissions office.

If you didn't complete a basic education, high school diploma, or GED program while in prison, many educational opportunities are still available to you. This section will direct you to resources that can help you earn a high school diploma or GED after you are released. Many of them are available free of charge.

In Appendix G you will find a list of contact information for state adult education program offices. These departments will be able to provide you with information specific to your state on the topics included in this section.

## Knowing Where to Start: Educational Assessment

The first step on the path to earning your GED or diploma is identifying which skills you need to improve. Otherwise, you could end up taking a class that covers topics you have already learned, or you could spend time and money taking the GED test without being fully prepared.

### Getting assessed

Many agencies can help you identify you skill level by providing an educational assessment. Some organizations will ask you questions on intake forms or in an interview. Others will ask you to take a placement test. These assessments are designed to identify your basic skill level in the areas of reading, English, and math.

***Important Tips ★★★★★★★★***

- *If you are still incarcerated and are enrolled in a GED course, check with your GED instructor to see if you can get a "progress report" prior to your release. This progress report will tell you where you are in your GED preparation and help you figure out what services you need to access after you are released.*
- *Keep your progress report and all information related to your educational assessment in your portfolio.*

**Knowing Where to Start: Educational Assessment**

**Finding Services for Your Skill Level: Adult Basic Education**

**The GED Test**

**Adult High School Diploma**

**Notes:**

### How to find agencies that provide assessments:

- Search for your local community college at the American Association of Community Colleges' website. Go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu and scroll down to the heading "Find Your Community College."
- Find community-based organizations using the information on page 13.
- The public library in your area provides information on the local organizations and agencies providing educational assessment. See page 12 for information on finding your local library.
- Search on the Internet using terms like "educational assessment" and "placement testing." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.

## Preparing for placement tests

If you are interested in preparing for placement tests, the following are common tests used to measure basic skill level for adults. Books and materials to help you prepare for these tests may be available at the library or education department at your correctional facility. They are also available in public libraries and bookstores.

- TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education)
- ABLE (Adult Basic Learning Exam)
- CASES (Comprehensive Student Assessment System)
- AMES (Adult Measure of Essential Skills)

# Finding Services for Your Skill Level: Adult Basic Education

## Services

- Literacy/basic skills: Courses provide skills needed in everyday life including reading, writing, problem solving, math, and computer skills.
- English as a Second Language (ESL): Courses help people learn to speak and write English. ESL courses also sometimes have a component to help students gain U.S. citizenship.
- GED preparation: Programs provide courses, tutoring, and pre-tests to prepare students for the GED test. Subject areas covered include writing, reading, social studies, science, and math.

## Cost

Usually free. Typically programs offered at adult schools, One-Stop Career Centers, libraries, or community colleges will be free or charge a small fee. For-profit agencies like Kaplan and ESL Language Centers charge higher fees.

## How to find agencies that provide ABE services

- If you are incarcerated, check with the education department at your facility or your counselor or case manager about organizations that provide ABE services in your community.
- Locate basic skill, ESL and GED programs in your area at the National Institute for Literacy's website: http://www.literacydirectory.org.
- Search for your local community college at the American Association of Community Colleges' website. Go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu and scroll down to the heading "Find Your Community College."

**Knowing Where to Start: Educational Assessment**

**Finding Services for Your Skill Level: Adult Basic Education**

**The GED Test**

**Adult High School Diploma**

**Notes:**

- Locate One-Stop Career Centers in your community that can guide you to basic skills and GED preparation. See page 12 for information on finding your local One-Stop.
- Search for ESL programs by state at: http://www.esl.com.
- Search for local literacy and adult education centers at your local public library. See page 12 for information on finding your local library.
- Search on the Internet using terms like "literacy program," "English as a Second Language," "adult education," and "adult basic education." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Keep in mind there may be waiting lists or only certain times in the year when you can enroll in these programs. For this reason, it's important to research your option and contact programs as soon as possible. You won't necessarily be able to start the first time you visit a program.*
- *If your schedule does not allow you to take a formal GED preparation course, you can prepare on your own. Many books are available to help you get ready to take and pass the GED test. You can find these resources at your local public library or bookstore. They usually include at least one GED practice test. You can also find free sample tests online at: http://www.acenet.edu or http://www.testprepreview.com.*
- *Joining or forming a study group can be helpful in studying for the GED, particularly if you prepare on your own. Study groups can help keep you motivated to continue working and provide you with support during the process.*

# The GED Test

The GED test provides adults who have not completed high school the opportunity to show they have mastered the knowledge and skills associated with a traditional high school diploma. The GED test is made up of five different subject tests:

- Writing
- Reading
- Science
- Math
- Social Studies

## Cost

Varies by location and usually ranges between $35 and $75

## How to find agencies that administer the GED test

- Information on official testing centers in your state is available from the American Council on Education. Go to: http://www.acenet.edu or call 1-800-626-9433.
- Contact your state GED office. Search on the Internet using terms like "state GED office" and "state GED administrator." Be sure to include the name of your state as a search term.
- Search for your local community college at the American Association of Community colleges' website. Go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu and scroll down to the heading "Find Your Community College."
- Search for local GED testing centers at your local public library. See page 12 for information on finding your local library.
- Search on the Internet using terms like "GED and "GED test." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.

**Notes:**

## How to find agencies that administer the GED test

- Contact your local testing center or state GED office for an application. Complete the application and return it as instructed (in person or by mail).
- Your eligibility will be confirmed and you will be assigned to a test date and time. You can provide your scheduling preference in the application.
- You will receive an Admissions Notice in the mail telling you when and where you need to go to take the test.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Keep your Admissions Notice in your portfolio. You must bring it with you to the testing center to take the test.*
- *Some states might require you to take the GED at a testing center in the county where you are living while other states will allow you to take the GED at any testing center in the state. Check with your testing center to learn about the relevant restrictions that might exist in your state.*

# Adult High School Diploma

Adult High School Diploma (AHSD) programs allow people ages 18 or older to earn a high school diploma. You earn an AHSD based on course work, much like a traditional high school education.

## Cost

AHSD programs usually charge tuition and may require that you have some prior high school credit to participate.

## How to find AHSD programs

- Search for your local community college at the American Association of Community colleges' website. Go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu and scroll down to the heading "Find Your Community College."
- Search for local AHSD programs at your local public library. See page 12 for information on finding your local library.
- Search on the Internet using terms like "Adult High School Diploma." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.

***Important Tip*** ★★★★★★★★

*If you're planning to enroll in an AHSD program, verify whether the program is "accredited." Accredited programs tend to provide better quality services. Also, the diplomas offered by non-accredited programs may not be recognized by other schools and colleges. For more information on* ***accreditation****, see pages 33 and 34.*

# The College Life

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

## Why did you decide to continue your education?

Attending college give me a credibility that I wouldn't normally have. Starting out with sentences like, "Hi, I'm a Junior at SFSU. I would like to…" makes all the difference in the world.

## Did you have fears or anxiety about returning to school after your release?

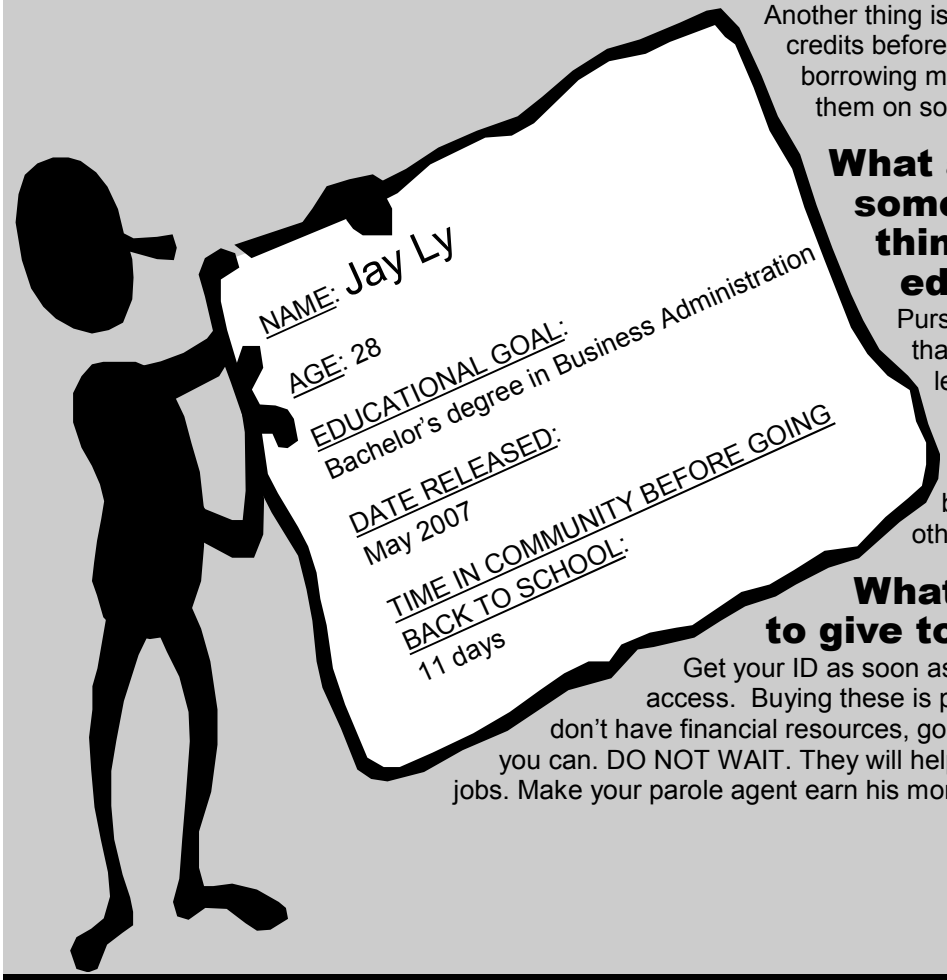
I took college courses while I was in prison. The courses were pretty easy…I thought that the professors were taking it easy on us and I worried that it would be tough in a "real" university. But after attending class at a university, I realized that the majority of students in prison were very dedicated and focused. On the other hand, most of the students on the outside just want to get the class over with.

## What challenges have you experienced in pursuing your education?

The first challenge was getting an MMR (Mumps, Measles, and Rubella) shot. I didn't know there was a transition clinic, so I had to go around looking for a low-income clinic that gives MMR shots. Second was the computer. In order to register for classes, I had to do a lot of things that required a computer and online access. Plus, all of my classes so far have required computer access to do homework.

Jason, the director of a community-based reentry program, helped me get enrolled in school. When I got out, it was too late for me to register for classes. We went to see the admissions counselor at the university and explained my situation. All I had with me was a letter from my parole officer. If Jason wasn't there talking to them, they would've probably sent me away.

Another thing is that I didn't know that I had to be enrolled in six credits before my student loans could be disbursed. I was borrowing money from my friends and telling them that I'll pay them on so and so date. Of course, they understood.




## What advice would you give to someone still in prison who is thinking about pursuing their education?

Pursue your education from inside. Get a clerk job that has computer access. Go to the help file and learn everything you can. I wouldn't be able to do what I do today without the computer knowledge that I have. When you get out, look for programs and someone who's been through it because s/he knows the nitty-gritty details and others you can contact.

## What concrete advice would you to give to someone just released?

Get your ID as soon as possible. A cell phone. A computer with Internet access. Buying these is practically impossible without good friends. If you don't have financial resources, go to a program. Ask your counselor as soon as you can. DO NOT WAIT. They will help you take care of your room and board and find jobs. Make your parole agent earn his money.

**Important Considerations and Advice**

**Vocational Programs**

**Academic Programs**

**Transferring Credit**

**Money for College**

**Notes:**

# Part III: EARNING A COLLEGE EDUCATION

If you already have your high school diploma or GED, the next step on your educational path is to enroll in a vocational or academic college program. You may think that college degrees are only appropriate for recent high school graduates, but this is not the case!

### Did you know…

- In the year 2000, almost half of all students enrolled in an Associate degree program had taken at least one year off after high school (according to the national Center for Education Statistics).
- Many schools offer **remedial courses** that allow students to improve their skills in certain subject areas before enrolling in **credit-bearing courses**.
- In fall 2000, 28% of first-year students were enrolled in a remedial course in reading, writing or math (according to the National Center for Education Statistics).
- Many college programs that qualify you for skilled employment can be completed in one year of full-time study.

This section gives you important information to consider when making decisions about enrolling in college. It provides you with an overview of the vocational and academic programs available once you've earned your GED or high school diploma and information on getting financial aid to help you pay for it.

## Important Considerations and Advice

Once you have decided to enroll in a college program, the first step is to select the program that best fits your educational goals, schedule, and preferences.

The U.S. News and World Report's website allows you to search for schools by location, campus information, majors, financial aid and costs, and sports and activities. To search for schools, go to: http://www.usnews.com.

- Click "Education."
- Click "Student Center."
- Look for a box labeled "Tools for Students."
- Click "College Search."

Another great resource for information about the schools and programs in your area is your local One-Stop Career Center. See page 12 for more information about locating your local One-Stop.

Following is information on some of the key issues and options to familiarize yourself with when making decisions about your enrollment.

**Notes:**

## Part-time vs. full-time enrollment

### What you need to know

- When you enroll in a college program, you can choose to be a full-time student or a part-time student. Full-time students take 12 **credit hours** (usually four of more courses) while part-time students take fewer credit hours.

### Why

- Enrolling in school on a part-time basis is ideal for students who are juggling additional responsibilities, like work and family.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Part-time enrollment might affect the amount of financial aid you receive. To receive financial aid, you must be taking at least six credits (usually two courses).*
- *Many schools offer courses in the evenings and on the weekends, allowing students who work full-time during the week to attend classes.*

## School size

### What you need to know

- Colleges come in all sizes, from less than 2,000 to more than 10,000 students.

### Why

- Small and large schools each have benefits and drawbacks. Here are some issues to consider when deciding which school might be the best fit:

| *Smaller schools* | *Larger schools* |
|---|---|
| • Smaller classes. | • Larger classes and usually a larger selection of classes. |
| • Easier for you and your professors to get to know each other. | • Professors are accessible but it might take more effort to get to know them. |
| • Typically have fewer services for non-traditional students. | • Usually have many services for students, particularly non-traditional students. However, the process of finding and accessing them can |
| • Usually are private and more expensive. | • Usually are public and less expensive. |

## Ensuring quality: accreditation

### What you need to know

- If a school is accredited, it has met the requirements of an outside organization with regards to the quality of the services and education it provides.
- There are thousands of schools that allow you to earn a certificate or degree, but the quality of the education they provide can vary widely. While you should research the quality of a school in a variety of ways, the best starting place is to make sure it is accredited.
- Some schools graduate as many students as they can in order to increase their profit. They may offer degrees for a fee without requiring that you complete any credits. These schools are sometimes referred to as “diploma mills.”

**Notes:**

**Why**

- If you earn credits from a school that is not properly accredited, those credits cannot be transferred to other accredited schools. If you would like to transfer credits from one school to another, it is important to attend an accredited school. See pages 40-41 for information on transferring credits.
- Employers generally respect the credentials of a job applicant with a certificate or degree from a well-regarded accredited school more highly than an applicant who attended a non-accredited school.
- While at any school you may have to wait several terms before the course you need to take is offered, getting the classes you need at a diploma mill can be particularly difficult. This waiting period can cause you to use up your financial aid and go into debt, which might make it difficult for you to access financial aid in the future.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Be sure that the schools you are interested in are accredited by an organization that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Some schools will say that they are accredited, but the accrediting agency is not officially recognized.*
- *To learn more about accreditation and find out if the school you are interested in attending is accredited, go to the following sources:*
  - ◊ *For general information on accreditation and diploma mills, go to the Council for Higher Education's website: http://www.chea.org.*
  - ◊ *Extensive information on accreditation, nationally recognized accreditation associations, and accredited schools is provided by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Post Secondary Education. Call 1-888-247-8269 or go to: http://www.ed.gov.*
    - *Click "About Ed."*
    - *Click "Offices."*
    - *Under the heading "Office of the Under Secretary," click "Postsecondary Education Homepage."*
    - *Click "Accreditation."*
- *The Better Business Bureau cautions against enrolling in schools with the following characteristics:*
  - ◊ *They offer degrees that can be earned in less time than at a traditional college. Typically, it will take at least four years to complete a Bachelor's degree at a traditional college.*
  - ◊ *Websites and materials list accreditation by organizations that are not recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. When in doubt, check with the Council on Higher Education Accreditation at: http://www.chea.org.*
  - ◊ *The programs place heavy emphasis on offering college credits for lifetime or real world experience. If a traditional school will accept life experience credit, credits provided will be limited.*
  - ◊ *They offer payment plans on a per-degree basis or discounts for enrolling in multiple degree programs. Traditional colleges charge by credit hours, course, or school terms (semester or quarters).*
  - ◊ *The names of the schools are similar to well known universities.*
  - ◊ *The addresses include post office box numbers or suites.*
- *Tips for identifying and avoiding diploma mills are available at: http://www.ed.gov/students.*
  - ◊ *Click "Prepare for My Future."*
  - ◊ *Click "Plan for College."*
  - ◊ *Click "Accreditation and Avoiding Diploma Mills."*

**Notes:**

## Internships

### What you need to know

- Internships are part-time jobs (usually between five and 15 hours per week) designed to provide real world experience in your field of study.
- While some internships are unpaid, some pay a small hourly wage or can be completed for school credit.
- To learn more about the internship programs available at your college, contact the internship office (often housed in the career development department).

### Why

- Internships help you decide whether you will enjoy working in a particular field.
- If you want to work at a specific organization, agency, or business, an internship can help you get your foot in the door.
- Internships improve your resume.

## Online courses and degrees

### What you need to know

- Many colleges now offer **distance learning** through the Internet.
- Courses are conducted by an instructor at the college and require you to submit assignments over the Internet.
- Online courses can be taken along with regular classroom courses or you can earn a degree online.

### Why

- Online courses and degrees may be useful if you are an advanced student whose schedule or location does not allow you to attend regular classes.

***Important Warnings*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Online courses require students to be self-directed and motivated, skilled with computers, comfortable with using web browsers and email, and well-versed in word-processing programs.*
- *It is difficult to get direct assistance form your instructor when you need help with an assignment. Contact with instructors occurs over email or the telephone.*
- *Online courses and degrees are often offered by schools that are not accredited. See pages 33 and 34 for information on accreditation and why it's important.*
- *Participation in online courses prevents you from taking advantage of the benefits of being in a classroom. These benefits include getting to know your classmates, developing relationships with your instructors, and having your views and opinions challenged and expanded through class discussion.*

**Notes:**

# Vocational Programs

Vocational programs provide you with a specific set of skills required for a specific job. They are also referred to as occupational, votech, or career and technical education programs. Vocational programs combine textbook theory with hands-on training, allowing you to learn the ideas and the practical skills for a trade at the same time. The following list includes some of the trades and professions for which vocational programs can prepare you:

- Agriculture
- Animal Science
- Auto Body Repair
- Business Administration
- Construction and Carpentry
- Computer Repair
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Custodial Management
- Electrical Occupations
- Graphic Design
- Hazardous Waste Management
- Horticulture and Landscaping
- HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, Refrigeration)
- Machining
- Masonry
- Plumbing
- Substance Abuse Counseling
- Welding and Metal Arts

## Important facts about vocational programs

- They take less time to complete than academic college degree programs.
- They are available through public community and technical colleges, as well as private trade schools.
- They generally offer a vocational certificate upon completion of the required courses.
- Some community colleges and professional schools award an Associate of Arts or Associate of Sciences degree. These programs can take from several months to several years to complete, depending on the type of program you choose and whether you enroll on a part-time or full-time basis.

### Cost

Varies by location, school and program. Community colleges are usually the least expensive option.

### How to find programs that offer vocational certificates and degrees:

- If you are in prison, ask the education department at your facility or your counselor or case manager to help you identify vocational programs in your community.
- For a listing of schools that offer vocational programs, go to: http://www.careerinfonet.org.
    - ◊ Click “Training and Education.”
    - ◊ Click “Find Educations and Training.”
    - ◊ Search for programs by occupation, instructional program title, or the name of the school.
- Search for your local community college at the American Association of Community Colleges’ website. Go to: http://www.aacc.nche.edu and school down the heading “Find Your Community College.”
- One-Stop Career Centers can guide you to vocational programs in your area of interest. See page 12 for information on locating your local One-Stop.

**Notes:**

- Search on the Internet using terms like "vocational training," "vocational program," and the field you might be interested in studying, like "plumbing," "masonry," or "business." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.

### To enroll:

- Vocational programs usually have an "open door policy" for admissions. This means that if you meet the education requirement you are automatically admitted as long as space is available. The requirement is usually having a high school diploma or GED.
- When you have found a college or program that looks right for you, you will need to submit an application. Applications are usually available on the school's website or you can call or write to the admissions office to ask them to send you an application by mail or email.
- Most schools require a non-refundable application fee to process you paperwork. Check with the school's admissions office to see if you qualify for a fee waiver.
- Keep a copy of your completed application and all related paperwork in your portfolio.

## Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are another way to gain hands-on training in a trade or profession. Apprenticeships allow you to earn a salary while gaining valuable knowledge and experience in a specific profession. They are usually offered through trade unions. For more information on the apprenticeship programs in your area, go to: http://www.careervoyages.gov.

- Click "Student."
- Click "Apprenticeship."

## Vocational Rehabilitation

The **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** program helps people with physical or mental disabilities get jobs and live more independently. Addiction may qualify as a disability.

### Services:

- Counseling
- Medical and psychological services
- Job training
- Other individualized services

### How to find VR programs:

- To learn more about VR programs, call 1-202-245-1488 or write to:

  *Rehabilitation Services Administration*
  *400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.*
  *Washington, DC 20202-2800*

- You can locate VR offices in your state at: http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM
- Search the Internet using terms like "vocational rehabilitation" and "voc rehab." Be sure to include the name of your city or neighborhood as a search term.

**Notes:**

## Job Corps

Job Corps is a great opportunity for young people ages 16-24 to earn a free vocational education while receiving a monthly allowance. Typically, participants live at a Job Corps residential center while receiving training. To learn more about Job Corps and to find the Job Corps center nearest you, call 1-800-733-5627 or go to: http://jobcorps.dol.gov.

# Academic Programs

Community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities provide you with the opportunity to pursue an academic education. Most academic programs don't prepare you for a specific job or profession. Instead, they are designed to give you a wide variety of skills that will help you to succeed in whichever career you choose. These skills include writing, research, critical thinking, and communication. The following is a brief list of some common academic majors:

- Biology
- Business Administration
- Economics
- Education
- English Literature
- Ethnic Studies
- History
- Legal Studies
- Music
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Religious Studies
- Sociology
- Urban Studies
- Visual Arts
- Women's and Gender Studies

## Important facts about academic programs

- If you decide to pursue an academic education, you can choose to work toward an Associate's degree (60 credits/two years of full-time course work) or a Bachelor's degree (120 credits/four years of full-time course work).
- For students who haven't been in school for a while, the most common path towards an academic degree begins at a community college. Many community colleges offer **dual enrollment programs**, which allow you to earn an adult high school diploma or GED and college credits at the same time. Also, by enrolling in a community college, you can earn an Associate's degree and then transfer to a four-year college or university to earn a Bachelor's degree. Because of the low cost of **tuition** and the variety of programs they offer, community colleges are the ideal starting place for a college education for many students.

## Community colleges

### Services

- Inexpensive, high quality college courses
- Dual enrollment programs
- Associate degree programs
- Opportunity to earn **general education requirements** you can transfer to a four-year college or university
- Extensive **remedial courses** and courses geared towards students with **learning differences**
- Agreements with four-year colleges and universities that guarantee you can transfer credits to those schools

**Notes:**

### Cost

Varies by state. In 2007, community college students paid an average of $2,272 for tuition and fees for the school year (according to the American Association of Community Colleges). See pages 41-47 for more information on getting help to pay for college.

### How to find community colleges

- If you are in prison, ask the education department staff or your counselor or case manager to help you identify community colleges in your community.
- Search for your local community college at the American Association of Community Colleges' website. Go to: http://www.aac.nche.edu and scroll down to the heading "Find Your Community Colleges."

### To enroll

- Usually community colleges have what is called an "open door policy" for admissions. This means that if you meet the education requirement you are automatically admitted as long as space is available. The requirement is usually having a high school diploma or GED. However, based on your scores on placement tests, you may be required to enroll in remedial courses to improve your skills in English and math.
- When you have found a college that looks right for you, you will need to submit an application. Applications are often available on the school's website or you can call or write to the admissions office to ask them to send you an application by mail or email.
- Most schools require a non-refundable application fee to process your paperwork. Check with the school's admissions office to see if you qualify for a fee waiver.
- Keep a copy of the completed application and related paperwork in your portfolio.

## Four-year colleges and universities

Four-year colleges and universities include both public and private institutions where you can earn a Bachelor of Sciences or a Bachelor of Arts degree upon completion. To earn a Bachelor's degree, you can begin your coursework at a community college and transfer to a four-year college or university, or you can apply directly once you earn your GED or high school diploma.

### Cost

Varies by school. Private colleges and universities will be more expensive than public colleges and universities. See pages 41-47 for more information on getting help to pay for college.

### How to find four-year colleges and universities:

- For a list of four-year colleges and universities near you, go to: http://www.collegeboard.com and click "College Boards free college search tool."

### To apply:

- When you have found a college or university that looks right for you, you will need to submit an application. Applications are often available on the school's website or you can call or write to the admissions office to ask them to send you an application by mail or email.
- In the application packet, the school will provide you with a list of materials to submit. The school will review these materials in order to decide whether to admit you as a student. In addition to an application fee, four-year colleges and universities might also require an official copy of your high school or GED transcript, a **personal statement**, a **letter of recommendation** and **immunization records**.

**Notes:**

- If you are applying directly as a first-year student, these schools may also require test scores from the ACT and/or SAT, which are standardized aptitude and achievement tests. You can get more information on the SAT at: http://www.collegeboard.com and on the ACT at: http://www.actstudent.org.
- Keep a copy of the completed application and related paperwork in your portfolio.

***Important Tip*** ★★★★★★★★

*Many people choose to transfer from a community college rather than apply directly to a four-year college or university. They select this option because public college and university systems usually guarantee a certain number of spots for students who transfer from community colleges. Since the application process for four-year colleges and universities tends to be very competitive, you might have a better chance of being accepted if you transfer from a community college.*

## Advanced degrees

Some professions, such as social work, require an advanced degree (Master's degree or Ph.D.). If you are interested in furthering your education beyond a Bachelor's degree or in pursuing a career in a field that requires an advanced degree, universities provide graduate programs where you can earn a Ph.D. or Master's degree. The Princeton Review provides information on graduate programs across the country and discusses which programs are appropriate for your field of interest. Go to: http://www.princetonreview.com.

# Transferring Credit

## Prior college credit

If you earned vocational or academic credit while in prison or before, you might be able to apply those credits toward the degree you are planning to earn.

### Requesting your official transcripts

During the application process, the school to which you are applying will ask you to provide **official transcripts** from the college(s) you attended in the past.

- Contact the admissions and records office of the school(s) you attended to find out how to request official transcripts. There is usually a small fee ($2-$10) associated with getting official transcripts.
- If you earned college credit while incarcerated, contact the school that provided the course or program to request a copy of you official transcripts.

### Applying the credits towards your degree

School policies will determine whether credits you have already earned can be applied toward your degree. To find out more about the school's policies, contact the registrar's office. Common policies are as follows:

- You must have earned a "C" or better for a course to be transferrable.
- You can't transfer credits from a non-accredited program to an accredited program. See pages 33 and 34 for more information about accreditation.

**Notes:**

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Because you never know which courses they may accept, you should send all official transcripts to the school to which you are applying.*
- *If you owe money to your previous school, your transcripts will not be released until you have paid them back. Contact the admissions and records office to find out whether and how much you owe and to ask them about setting up a payment plan.*
- *Keep a copy of your transcripts in your portfolio. You can request an unofficial copy of your transcripts by contacting the registrar's office of the school(s) you attended. Unofficial transcripts are usually free.*

## Life-experience credit

Some programs will grant credit for experience you have gained outside the classroom. To learn about the opportunities available at your college for earning life-experience credit, contact the advising office.

### Requesting your official transcripts

- The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) are tests that allow certain requirements to be waived. For example, native Spanish speakers can take a test for Spanish ability that will allow them to satisfy a program's foreign language requirement.
- A portfolio program allows you to demonstrate life experience by pulling together documents and evidence of activities and experiences that relate to your degree.

# Money for College

While education programs through high school and the GED are usually free, a college education can be expensive. Finding the funds to pay for your education is a challenge. Where do students get the money? Generally, the dollars come from one or more of the following sources: family resources, wages from full– or part-time work, support from your employer, and financial aid (including **grants**, **student loans**, **work-study**, and **scholarships**).

You may assume there are too many barriers in the way of receiving financial aid, but this is not necessarily the case. Here are some facts you may not know about your eligibility and the application process:

- Applying for federal student aid is free.
- Financial aid, including Pell Grants, state grants, work-study and loans, is available to students on probation and parole.
- The amount of financial aid you receive depends primarily on your financial need. Your past history with creditors does not automatically disqualify you.
- There is a federal law that limits some people with criminal records from being eligible for federal student aid. One restriction only applies if you were convicted of a drug offense (a misdemeanor or felony) *while* you were receiving financial aid. And, even if you have a drug conviction that occurred when you were receiving financial aid, the law may not apply to you if a certain period of time has passed since the conviction or if you have completed drug treatment. For more information, see Appendix E. Another restriction applies to an individual subject to an involuntary civil commitment after completing a period of incarceration for a forcible or non-forcible sexual offense. Such individuals are ineligible to receive Pell Grants.

**Notes:**

This section contains essential information on the different forms of financial aid that are available. It will also give you instructions and tips for applying for financial aid awards and scholarships.

***Important Warnings*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Applying for financial aid can seem complicated if you've never done it before. Ask for guidance from a person who knows the ins and outs of the financial aid application process. Staff of the education department at your correctional facility or the* ***financial aid office*** *at your school are a good starting point.*
- *If a grant, loan, or scholarship offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Like diploma mills, there are many for-profit companies that take advantage of people who are looking to finance their education. The process of applying for financial aid should be free, and you should research the agency or company before applying.*
- *And remember to keep copies of all applications and related paperwork in your portfolio.*

## Applying for federal student aid

The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** is the starting point for accessing all federal student aid. This is the government form you use to apply for a number of sources of federal student aid including **Pell Grants**, **Stafford Loans**, **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)**, and **work-study**. Most states and schools also use information from the FAFSA to award other types of financial aid.

You can find FAFSA online at http://www.fafsa.gov, or you can request a paper copy (which is harder to fill out and takes longer than the online version) from 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). For a useful checklist that will help you through the whole application process, see Appendix F.

### Types of federal student aid

Once your FAFSA has been processed, you may be able to receive funding in the form of grants, loans, and/or work-study. Here is some information on each type of financial aid:

| Type of aid | Do you have to repay it? | Amount of aid | Other information |
|---|---|---|---|
| Grants | No, unless you:<br>• Withdraw from school, or<br>• Fail to maintain an acceptable **grade point average (GPA)**. | Varies by grant program. Federal Pell Grants, the largest grant program in the U.S., are given to students based on financial need. The size of a Pell Grant award for one year varied between $609 and $5,500 in 2010-11. | |
| Student Loans | Yes. You will also have to pay **interest** on your loan. | Varies and is based on the cost of attendance at your school, your FAFSA result, and other financial aid you'll receive. Common loans include:<br>• Federal Perkins Loans (up to $5500 per year for **under-graduate students** and $8000 for **graduate students**).<br>(*cont'd on next page*) | The availability of loan programs depends on the school. Check with the school's **financial aid administrator** for more information on the availability of loan programs and…(*cont'd on next page*) |

| Type of aid | Do you have to repay it? | Amount of aid | Other information |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student Loans (cont'd) | | • Stafford Loans ($3,500 to $20,500 depending on academic level). | ...to learn about your rights and responsibilities as a borrower of student |
| Work-Study | No. | At least the current federal minimum wage, but the amount might be higher depending on the type of work and the skills required. Your total work-study award depends on when you apply, your level of need, and the funding level of your school. | Work-study is a federal program that allows you to earn money through part-time employment (on and off campus) while you are enrolled in school. It is available to part-time and full-time students. If you are interested in work-study, contact the school's work-study coordinator. |

**Notes:**

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *Applying for financial aid can seem complicated if you've never done it before. Ask for money you receive through grants and loans is sent directly to your school to pay for your **tuition** and fees. If there is money left over, you will receive it only after these costs have been deducted.*
- *You usually receive money from loans after the **school term** begins. If you are not earning an income, you will have to rely on other sources (like savings or borrowing money) to cover your living costs until your loan arrives. Contact the financial aid administrator at your school to find out when your loan will arrive.*

## Eligibility requirements

To be eligible to receive federal financial aid, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Have earned a GED or high-school diploma or pass an approved **ability-to-benefit (ATB) test**.
- Have registered with **Selective Service** (for males only). See pages 23-24 for more information on Selective Service.
- Have no **defaulted student loans**. See pages 24-25 for more information on addressing student loan debt.
- Be enrolled in a degree or certificate program that participates in the federal student aid programs.
- Be making **satisfactory academic progress (SAP)**.

## Gathering essential information

Most financial aid is need-based, meaning that it is intended to help people who don't have enough money to meet their expenses. To prove your level of need, you generally have to provide a lot of personal information.

**Notes:**

- You must provide the following information to have your FAFSA processed:
  - ◊ Social security number
  - ◊ School codes or addresses. To find the code(s) for the school(s) where you are applying, go to: http://www.fafsa.gov or contact the school's financial aid office.
- You must provide the following information if you have it:
  - ◊ Federal income tax returns for the previous calendar year
  - ◊ W-2 forms (wage earnings)
  - ◊ Records of untaxed income
  - ◊ Bank statements and records of savings and investments

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *If you are married, you must provide the information for you and your spouse.*
- *If the FAFSA considers you to be **dependent** on your parents, you must provide the above information for you and your parent(s). To find out whether you would be considered dependent by the FAFSA, visit http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/pubs and read "Am I Dependent or Independent?" or call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). You cannot declare yourself "independent," but if you have special circumstances (such as having left home due to abuse and are no longer in contact with your parents), contact the financial aid administrator at your school to explain your situation.*

## Where to find the FAFSA

FAFSAs are available in English and Spanish, through the Internet and in paper.

***Applications through the Internet:***

You can access the FAFSA on the web at: http://www.fafsa.gov.

***Paper applications:***

You can obtain a paper FAFSA at the following places:

- Any financial aid office at a college or university.
- The public library. See page 12 for information on finding your local library.
- The U.S. Department of Education. Call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) or write to:

  *Federal Student Aid Information Center*
  *P.O. Box 84*
  *Washington, DC 20044*

## Filing the FAFSA

If you have Internet access, it is best to file your FAFSA online. When you file over the Internet, you make fewer mistakes because the website does not let you continue if it identifies a problem with your application. Also, filing on the Internet allows for a faster processing time.

***Filing your FAFSA through the mail:***

- Complete the FAFSA. See Appendix E for instructions to help you answer the question that asks you whether you have been convicted of possession or sale of illegal drugs.
- Sign the **Affirmation Statement**. If you are considered a dependent, one parent must also sign this form.
- Make a copy of the entire package for your portfolio.
- Send the original by first-class mail to the address indicated on the paper FAFSA.

**Notes:**

- You will receive a **Federal Student Aid PIN** in the mail or by email, depending on whether you entered an email address on your FAFSA. This PIN can be used to correct your FAFSA information over the Internet, file a renewal FAFSA for the coming year, and gain access to other parts of the U.S. Department of Education's website. Be sure to keep your PIN in your portfolio.
- 2-3 weeks after your FAFSA is received, you will be sent a **Student Aid Report (SAR)**. Information on the SAR is provided in the next section, on page 46. If you answered "yes" to the question regarding conviction of the sale or possession of illegal drugs, you will receive a Student Aid Eligibility Worksheet for that question in addition to your SAR.

***Filing your FAFSA on the Web:***

- Go to: http://www.fafsa.gov.
- Follow the on-screen instructions to get your PIN and complete your FAFSA. See Appendix E for instructions to help you answer the question that asks you whether you have been convicted of possession or sale of illegal drugs.
- 3-10 days after you submit your form online, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR), either by email or postal mail, depending on whether you provided an email address on your FAFSA.

***Important Warning ★★★★★★★★***

*There are serious repercussions if you are caught providing inaccurate information on the FAFSA. The warning on the FAFSA reads: "If you get federal student aid based on incorrect information, you will have to pay it back; you may also have to pay fines and fees. If you purposely give false or misleading information on your application, you may be fined $20,000, sent to prison, or both."*

***Deadlines for filing the FAFSA:***

- You can file a FAFSA anytime between January 1 preceding the school year when you'll be enrolled, through June 30 at the end of that school year. For example, if you are planning to enroll in college for the 2011-12 school year, you must submit your FAFSA between January 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012.
- State and individual college deadlines vary and usually require that you file your FAFSA much earlier than the federal deadline. State deadlines are on the FAFSA. To find out the deadline at a school, check the school's website or call the financial aid office.
- You should complete and submit your FAFSA as soon as possible because some financial aid funds are first come, first served.

***Important Tips ★★★★★★★★***

- *The FAFSA must be completed and submitted each year by current and prospective college students (both undergraduate and graduate) in order to apply for aid.*
- *If your financial situation changes after you have completed the FAFSA whether due to unemployment, change in family status, serious injury, or natural disaster, contact your school's financial aid administrator. He or she may be able to adjust your aid package because of this new information.*
- *If you transfer to a different school mid-year, you must have your FAFSA information sent to your new school. You do not have to resubmit the FAFSA. Be sure to inform the financial aid administrators at both schools that you are transferring.*

**Notes:**

### The SAR: Making sure your information is correct

After you submit your FAFSA for processing, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). The SAR is a document that lists all the information you provided on your FAFSA. Review the information on the SAR to be sure that all your information is accurate. The SAR will be sent electronically to all schools listed on your FAFSA. Schools will use the information on the SAR to calculate the size of your financial aid package.

***Important Tips*** ★★★★★★★★

- *If you have not received your SAR within 10 days (for an online FAFSA) to 3 weeks (for paper FAFSA), you can check the status of your application at: http://www.fafsa.gov or call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).*
- *The schools you listed on the FAFSA may contact you to verify your income. You can use **prison release papers** to demonstrate why your income for the previous year was low.*

## State financial aid

In addition to federal student aid, states often provide assistance to students to finance their education. To learn more about the programs available in your state, contact your state Department of Education.

- See Appendix G for a list of state adult education program offices' contact information. If the offices listed in Appendix G cannot provide you with this information, they should be able to direct you to the appropriate office.
- Search online using the term "state financial aid." Be sure to include the name of your state as a search term.

## Financial aid from individual colleges and universities

Colleges and universities often offer their own need-based and non-need-based scholarship, grant, loan, and work programs, including athletic scholarships. For information on the scholarships available at the school(s) to which you are applying, contact the financial aid administrator at the particular school(s).

***Important Tip*** ★★★★★★★★

*If you are applying to a private college, it is important to complete the College Board's CSS/Financial Aid Profile application. This form is used by many private colleges and universities to determine eligibility for non-governmental aid. Call 1-305-829-9793 or go to: http://profileonline.collegeboard.com.*

## Scholarships

Private organizations and other agencies sometimes offer scholarships that reflect their mission. For instance, the United Negro College Fund grants scholarships to qualified African-American students.

### How to find scholarships

- The financial aid office at your chosen school can help you organize a search for outside scholarships and can usually provide you with information on many available scholarships.

**Notes:**

- Catalogs such as *Scholarships, Fellowships and Loans* and *Peterson's Scholarships and Loans for Adult Learners* are available at your local public library. See page 12 for information on finding your local library.
- Information on a wide variety of scholarships is available at the following websites:
  - ◊ Broke Scholar: http://www.brokescholar.com
  - ◊ College Board: http://www.collegeboard.com
  - ◊ College Net: http://www.collegenet.com
  - ◊ College Toolkit: http://www.collegetoolkit.com
  - ◊ Fast Web: http://www.fastweb.com
  - ◊ Fin Aid: http://www.finaid.org
  - ◊ Go College: http://www.gocollege.com
  - ◊ Sallie Mae Scholarship Service: http://www.salliemae.com
  - ◊ Scholarships.com: http://www.scholarship.com
  - ◊ Scholarship Experts: http://www.scholarshipexperts.com
  - ◊ Scholarship Resource Network Express: http://www.srnexpress.com
  - ◊ Wired Scholarships: http://www.wiredscholarships.com
- Information on scholarships for specific populations or offered by specific organizations are available at the following websites:
  - ◊ American Indiana Movement: http://www.aimovement.org
  - ◊ Aspira: http://www.aspira.org
  - ◊ Bureau of Indian Affairs: http://www.oiephr.bia.edu
  - ◊ Coalition of Asian Pacific American Youth: http://www.capaymovement.net
  - ◊ Jackie Robinson Foundation: http://www.jackierobinson.org
  - ◊ Qualified Minority Scholarship Search: http://www.molis.org
  - ◊ Scholarships for Hispanics: http://www.scholarshipsforhispanics.com
  - ◊ United Negro College Fund: http://www.uncf.org
  - ◊ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): http://www.gibill.va.gov

## Free resources

The following resources provide detailed information about federal student aid and additional tools and resources to help you through the process.

- Comprehensive information on student aid from the U.S. Department of Education is provided in *Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid.* Go to: http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/guide or write to:

  *U.S. Department of Education*
  *Federal Student Aid Information Center*
  *P.O. Box 84*
  *Washington, DC 20044-0084*

- Information, resources, and tools to help you complete the FAFSA are provided on the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' website. Go to: http://www.nasfaa.org and click "Parents and Students."
- General information on financing your education and a FAFSA pre-application worksheet are available through the U.S. Department of Education. Go to: http://www.studentaird.ed.gov or call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). To access the worksheet online, go to http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/worksheet.

# Final Thoughts

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Make the decision to enroll in school with your eyes open to the challenges you will face. Working towards a certificate or degree requires planning, hard work, and dedication. Remember, you ***earn*** an education.

One of the most frustrating parts about being in school can be dealing with administrative offices and processes. Schools are large institutions and paperwork will get misplaced. You will encounter people who can't provide you with the information or support you need. However, you will also find people who are willing to make an investment in you by guiding you through the process, helping you with your school work, and mentoring you. This support network will be a tremendous resource as you continue your education and achieve your goals. Try not to let glitches get you down and remember that the payoffs are priceless.

Also remember that the classroom, especially the college classroom, allows you to exchange your thoughts and ideas with a group of people who represent diverse life experiences and points of view. Depending on the subject, classroom discussion can get intense, and you ideas and opinions may be challenged by your classmates. These discussions will help you to strengthen your views and gain the skills to support your ideas. It is important to realize that these interactions are part of the learning process.

## As you go back to school, keep these points in mind:

- Be proactive. Seek out people who have your best interests in mind and don't be afraid to ask for help.
- One-Stops, public libraries, and community colleges are usually the best places to start.
- Beware of scams. Find out as much as you can before making important decisions. If a program or service sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Make and keep copies of all paperwork related to your education.

## GOOD LUCK!

# Completing the Journey

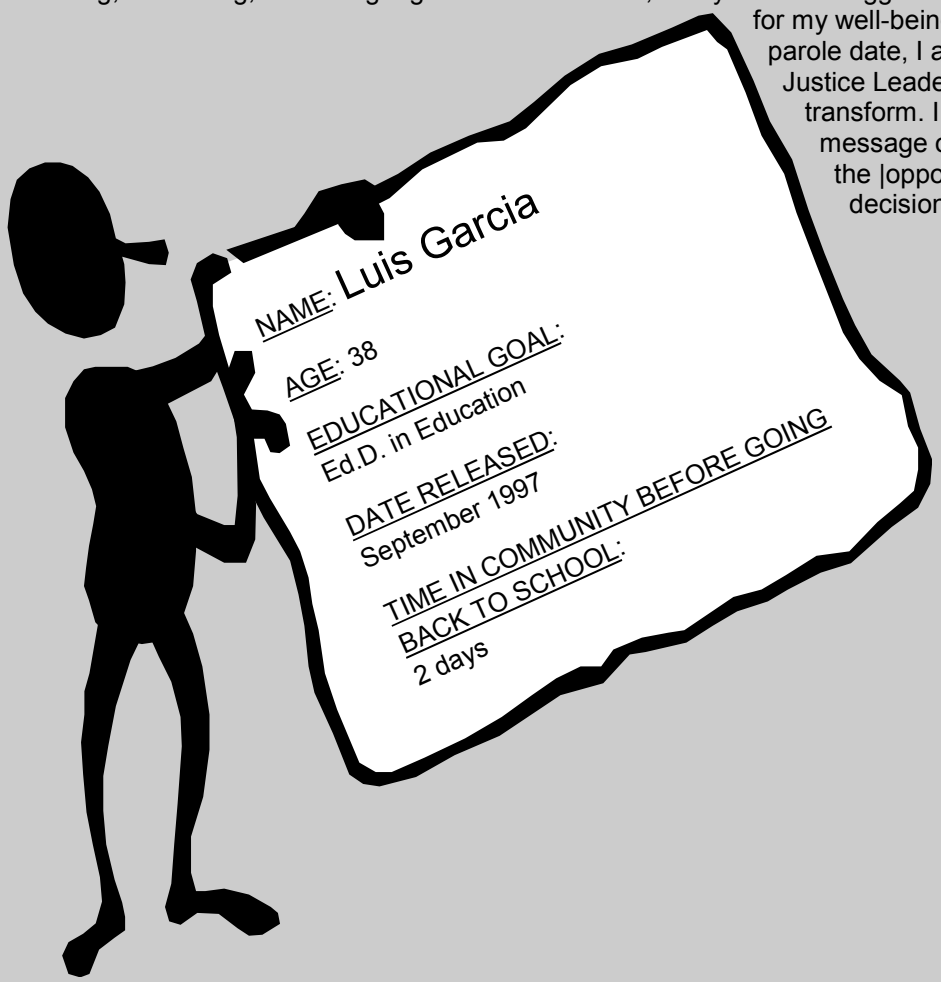
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Many people on parole have pledged never to return to prison. That's what I pledged on September 25, 1997, when I paroled from state prison. I was a "three-time loser," a parole violator returning home.

When I was previously incarcerated in county jail, I attempted to complete my adult high school diploma and attend community college, but to no avail. Eventually, I was convicted of my first felony offense and sentenced to a three-year prison term. Pursuing an education became a distant goal. Years later, after a second felony arrest, I made a decision to complete my high school education. Just prior to being sentenced to state prison for a two-year term, I earned my adult high school diploma in the Los Angeles County Jail. However, I could not gather enough inner desire to change my life situation, and shortly after release from my second prison stint I violated parole and was returned to custody.

It was during this period that I began the process of transforming my life. After this release, I returned to community college and I developed a great relationship with an academic counselor who gave me the confidence to imagine attending a university. In the fall of 1998, I transferred to Loyola Marymount University, and in the summer of 2000 I finally discharged my state parole number. In spring of 2001, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Theology and a minor in Psychology. In May 2007, I earned my Master's in Social Work from the University of Southern California.

In retrospect, the greatest support through this process came from the many professionals who assisted me by simply listening, motivating, and being a guide. To be honest, many times I struggled and made personal choices that were not good for my well-being. However, today, nearly 10 years from my last parole date, I am pursing my doctorate in Education Social Justice Leadership. I believe education has the power to transform. I hope my experience provides inspiration and a message of hope to any person reentering society about the |opportunities that will come your way if you make the decision to pursue an education.



# Appendix A:
# CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

If you already have a GED or high school diploma and have some time before your release from prison, you might consider earning college courses while incarcerated. If you are housed at a prison that does not provide college courses, your only option for earning college credit is through correspondence courses.

Perhaps the best resource to turn to if you are interested in enrolling in correspondence courses is the *Prisoners' Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the United States and Canada* by Jon Marc Taylor. This is a comprehensive handbook on correspondence courses that are available to people in prison. The handbook is a helpful tool that provides detailed program overviews and contact information. The most recent edition of the handbook is the 3rd edition published in 2009. You can search for it with the International Standard Book Number (ISBN): 978-0981938509.

If your correctional facility library or education department does not have a copy, you can find out more about ordering a copy by writing to the following address:

*Biddle Publishing Company*
*13 Gurnet Road*
*Brunswick, ME 04011*

Also, check with the staff in your correctional facility's education department. They can help you research programs and make sure you enroll in an accredited correspondence course. See pages 33 and 34 for more information on accreditation and why it's important.

# Appendix B:
# SAMPLE WEBSITE FOR AN INTERNET SEARCH ENGINE

# Appendix C:
# Sample Resume

## JOHN DOE

Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City, State, Zip Code
Telephone: (xxx)xxx-xxxx
Email: JohnDoe@gmail.com

*Remember to choose a professional username for your email address.*

**WORK EXPERIENCE:**

2002-2205 **Substance Abuse Program Facilitator**
*NYS Office of Alcohol and Substances Abuse, Naponach, NY*
Facilitated daily group sessions. Held clients accountable for program requirements. Oversaw weekly meetings of groups leaders

1993-2002 **Inventory Clerk/Textile Issue**
*Corcraft Industries, Plattsburg, NY*
Received and counted stock items and recorded data. Stored items in an orderly and accessible manner. Issued textile material to workers.

*Note the way work and volunteer experience gained in prison is listed in these sections*

**VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE:**

1995-1998 **HIV/AIDS Peer Educator**
*AIDS Council of North Eastern New York, Plattsburg, NY*
Gave presentations on the perils of the disease, with an emphasis on prevention and risk reduction.

1992-1993 **Tutor**
*Literacy Volunteers of America, Westchester, NY*
Tutored functionally illiterate adults in reading, writing, and math.

**EDUCATION:**

2000-2003 **Clinton Community College (SUNY)**, Plattsburg, NY
Associate in Science Degree, Social Science/Humanities, GPA: 3.9

1998 **Clinton Adult School**, Plattsburg, NY
High School Equivalency

**CERTIFICATIONS:**

1995 **AIDS Council of North Eastern New York**, Albany, NY
HIV/AIDS Peer Education, 120 Hours

1992 **Literacy Volunteers of America (Tutoring Program)**, Westchester, NY
Basic Reading/Math/Writing—ESL Workshop

**ADDITIONAL SKILLS:**

**Computer skills**
Knowledge of Microsoft Office programs including Word, Excel, and Publisher
**Conversational in Spanish**

*References available upon request*

# Appendix D:

# WEEKLY SCHEDULE

| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7am | | | | | | | |
| 8am | | | | | | | |
| 9am | | | | | | | |
| 10am | | | | | | | |
| 11am | | | | | | | |
| 12pm | | | | | | | |
| 1pm | | | | | | | |
| 2pm | | | | | | | |
| 3pm | | | | | | | |
| 4pm | | | | | | | |
| 5pm | | | | | | | |
| 6pm | | | | | | | |
| 7pm | | | | | | | |
| 8pm | | | | | | | |
| 9pm | | | | | | | |

# Appendix E:
# FINANCIAL AID BAN FOR PEOPLE WITH DRUG CONVICTIONS

## How does my conviction record affect my ability to receive financial aid?

According to federal law, students are unable to receive any federal aid, including grants, loans, and work-study, if they were convicted of a drug-related offense while receiving federal financial aid if a certain period of time has passed since your conviction(s) or if you have completed drug treatment

## How long will I be unable to receive financial aid if I was convicted of a drug related crime while receiving financial aid?

It depends on the type and frequency of your offense(s).

### Drug Possession

- First-time convictions: one year of ineligibility
- Second offenses: two years of ineligibility
- Third offenses: indefinite ineligibility

### Sale of a Controlled Substance

- First-time convictions: two years of ineligibility
- Subsequent offenses: indefinite ineligibility

## If the type and frequency of my conviction(s) make me unable to receive aid, what are my options?

### You can still receive financial aid if:

- The convictions have been removed from your record;
- You complete an acceptable drug treatment program; or
- You pass two unannounced drug tests administered by an acceptable drug rehabilitation program.

### An acceptable drug treatment program must include two random drug tests. It must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Be qualified to receive funds from federal, state, or local governments.
- Be qualified to receive funds from a federal or state licensed insurance company.
- Be administered or registered by a federal, state ,or local government agency or court.
- Be administered or recognized by a federal or state licensed hospital, health clinic, or medical doctor.

Drug treatment programs offered in prison often meet the above criteria. To find out whether a program qualifies as an acceptable drug treatment program, as the program staff.

## How should I answer the question that asks whether I have been convicted of possession or sale of illegal drugs?

One question on the FAFSA asks "Has the student been convicted for the possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred while the student was receiving federal student aid (grants, loans, and/or work-study)?" To view more information from the U.S. Department of Education about this question, go to: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/before013.htm. DO NOT LEAVE THIS QUESTION BLANK.

### Paper applications

If you answer "yes" on a paper form, you will receive a Student Aid Eligibility Worksheet in the mail along with your SAR. You can use the worksheet to determine whether the conviction affects your eligibility for federal student aid. Once you have made the changes, send back your SAR to the address provided.

### Online applications

If you answer "yes" on the internet form, you will immediately be asked a series of questions that will determine your eligibility for aid. Until you answer the questions, you will not be allowed to move on to the next FAFSA question.

***Important Warning*** ★★★★★★★★

*The warning on the FAFSA reads: "If you get federal student aid based on incorrect information, you will have to pay it back; you may also have to pay fines and fees. If you purposely give false or misleading information on your application, you may be fined $20,000, sent to prison, or both." We strongly advise you to provide accurate information when completing the FAFSA.*

# Appendix F: FAFSA CHECKLIST

*Adapted from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administration*
*Financial Aid Application Checklist (2006)*

**Date Due**

- ☐ _____ Requested financial aid information from the school(s) where you are planning to apply. Ask for information on both need-based an non-need-based grants and scholarships
- ☐ _____ Request information from your state about all state student aid programs.
- ☐ _____ Check your local library for private sources of financial aid. Also, see the list of websites supplied on page 47 of this guide for scholarship search engines.
- ☐ _____ If you plan to file your FAFSA via the Internet, go to: http://www.pin.ed.gov to obtain a Personal Identification Number (PIN). You will use this number to identify yourself throughout the federal financial aid process.
- ☐ _____ File your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible. Be sure to complete and submit information for any financial aid you are applying for from your state or school(s).
- ☐ _____ Respond quickly to any requests you receive from your school regarding your application. You might be asked to provide additional information.
- ☐ _____ Ensure your Student Aid Report (SAR) is accurate. You will receive your SAR after you have submitted your FAFSA.
- ☐ _____ Carefully read all application materials and financial aid notifications for due dates and conditions for receipt or renewal of award.
- ☐ _____ Promptly sign and return your financial aid award letter if your school requires your signed acceptance of the aid being offered. Contact the financial aid office if you have any questions about your award.
- ☐ _____ If you applied for assistance but no longer wish to attend the school, notify the financial aid office as soon as possible.
- ☐ _____ Complete the promissory note for any loan(s) you are offered and wish to accept. Before you sign the promissory note, make sure you read and understand all of your rights and responsibilities. Check with the financial aid office regarding any loan counseling you must complete before you may receive the loan proceeds.
- ☐ _____ If you have been awarded work-study assistance, find out from the school's work-study coordinator how students are placed in work-study positions and what positions are available, including descriptions of job responsibilities and wages.
- ☐ _____ Notify the financial aid office of any outside or private scholarship, grant, or other types of student aid you have received or expect to receive.

**Keep copies of all application materials and loan papers in your portfolio.**

# Appendix G:

# STATE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM OFFICES

**ALABAMA**
Adult and Community Education Program
Department of Postsecondary Education
P.O. Box 302130
Montgomery, AL 36130-2130
Phone: (334)353-4886
Toll-Free: (800)392-8086
Toll-Free Restrictions: AL residents only
Website: http://www.acs.cc.al.us/aed/Overview.aspx

**ALASKA**
Alaska Adult Basic Education
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
P.O. Box 115509
Juneau, AK 99811-5509
Phone: (907) 465-8714
Website: http://www.labor.state.ak.us

**ARIZONA**
Adult Education and GED Testing
Department of Education
Bin 26
1535 West Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007
Phone: (602)258-2410
Website: http://www.ade.az.gov/adult-ed

**ARKANSAS**
Arkansas Department of Workforce Education
Luther Hardin Building
Three Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201-1083
Phone: (501)682-1970
Website: http://ace.arkansas.gov/adultedpage.html

**CALIFORNIA**
Department of Education
Secondary, Postsecondary, and Adult Leadership Division
1430 N Street, Suite 4503
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916)322-2175
Website: http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae

**COLORADO**
Office of Student Support
State Department of Education
Adult Education & Family Literacy
201 East Colfax Avenue, Room 300C
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: (303)866-6914
Website: http://ace.arkansas.gov/adultedpage.html

**CONNECTICUT**
Adult Education Department of Education
25 Industrial Park Road
Middletown, CT 06457
Phone: (860)807-2050
Website: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/taxonomy/ct_taxonomy.asp?DLN=45426&sdeNav=|45426|

**DELWARE**
John W. Collette Education Resource Center
35 Commerce Way, Suite One
Dover, DE 19904
Phone: (302)857-3340
Website: http://www.acenetwork.org

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**
Adult and Family Education
Office of the State Superintendent of Education
Division of Education Excellence
51 N Street NE, Seventh Floor
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 741-5531
Website: http://osse.dc.gov/seo/cwp/view,a,1222,q,561753,seoNav,|31195|.asp

**FLORIDA**
Adult and Vocational Education
State Department of Education
Division of Workforce Development
Suite 644, Turlington Education Building
625 W. Gaines St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
Phone: (850)245-0450
Website: http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/AdultEd/

**GEORGIA**
Office of Adult Education
Technical College System of Georgia
1800 Century Place, NE, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30345-4304
Phone: (404)679-1635
Website: http://www.tcsg.edu/forAdultLearners.php

**HAWAII**
Adult and Community Education Office
State Department of Education
Community Education Section
475 22nd Avenue, Room 209
Honolulu, HI 96816
Phone: (808)733-4777 x101
Website: http://adulted.k12.hi.us/index.html

**IDAHO**
Adult Basic Education Office
State Division of Professional-Technical Education
650 West State Street
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 23720-0095
Phone: (208)334-3216
Website: http://www.pte.idaho.gov/ABE/Home.html

**ILLINOIS**
Adult Education and Family Literacy
State Community College Board
401 East Capitol Avenue
Springfield, IL 62701-1711
Phone: (217)785-0171
Website: http://www.iccb.org/adulted.html

**INDIANA**
Office of Adult Education
151 W. Ohio St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798
Phone: (317)232-0522
Website: http://www.doe.in.gov/adulted/welcome.html

**IOWA**
Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Prep
State Department of Education
Bureau of Community Colleges and Career & Technical Education
400 E. 14th St.
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146
Phone: (515)281-3640
Website: http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1247&Itemid=2133

**KANSAS**
Adult Education
Kansas Board of Regents
1000 SW Jackson Street, Suite 520
Topeka, KS 66612-1368
Phone: (785)296-7159
Website: http://www.kansasregents.org/adult_ed/index.html

**KENTUCKY**
Kentucky Adult Education
Council on Postsecondary Education
1024 Capital Center Drive, Suite 250
Frankfort, KY 40601
Phone: (502)573-5114
Toll-Free: (800)928-7323
TTY: (800)928-7323
Website: http://www.kyae.ky.gov

**LOUISIANA**
Division of Dropout Prevention, Adult & Family Services
State Department of Education
P.O. Box 94064
1201 N. Third St.
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064
Phone: (225)342-3336
Toll-Free: (877) 453-2721
Website: http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/family/home.html

**MAINE**
Adult Education
Department of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023
Phone: (207)624-6752
TTY: (207)624-6800
Website: http://www.maine.gov/education/aded/dev/index.htm

**MARYLAND**
Division of Workforce Development & Adult Learning
Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation
1100 N. Eutaw St.
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: (410)767-0162
Toll Free: (888)464-3346
Website: http://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/

**MASSACHUSETTS**
Adult & Community Learning Services
Department of Education
350 Main St.
Malden, MA 02148-5023
Phone: (781)338-3801
TTY: (800)439-2370
Website: http://www.doe.mas.edu/acls

**MICHIGAN**
Adult Education Unit
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth
Victor Office Center, Third Floor
201 North Washington Square
Lansing, MI 48913
Phone: (517)373-8800
TTY: (888)605-6722
Website: http://www.michigan.gov/adulteducation

**MINNESOTA**
Adult Basic Education
State Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113
Phone: (651)582-8442
Website: http://www.mnabe.themlc.org

**MISSISSIPPI**
Adult Education Programs
State Board for Community and Junior Colleges
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211
Phone: (601)432-6338
Website: http://www.sbcjc.cc.ms.us

**MISSOURI**
Adult Education Office
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102
Phone: (573)751-1249
Website: http://www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/adult_ed_and_literacy_index.htm

**MONTANA**
Division of Adult, Basic and Literacy Education
Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
1227 11th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-2501
Phone: (406)444-4443
Toll-Free: (888)231-9393
TTY: (406)444-0169
Website: http://www.opi.mt.gov/ABE/Index.html

**NEBRASKA**
Adult Education
State Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987
Phone: (402)471-4807
Toll Free: (877)327-6433
Toll Free Restrictions: NE residents only
TTY: (402)471-2295
Website: http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ADED/home.htm

**NEVADA**
Career, Technical, and Adult Education Office
Nevada Department of Education
70 East Fifth Street
Carson City, NV 89701
Phone: (775)687-7289
Website: http://www.literacynet.org/nvadulted

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**
Bureau of Adult Education
Division of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation
21 South Fruit Street, Suite #20
Concord, NH 03301
Phone: (603)271-6698
Toll-Free: (800)735-2964
TTY: (800)735-2964
Website: http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/adultlearning/Adulted/adulteducation.htm

**NEW JERSEY**
One-Stop Programs and Services
Department of Labor & Workforce Development
P.O. Box 055
Trenton, NJ 08625-0055
Phone: (609)943-5921
Toll-Free: (877)652-2733
Toll-Free Restrictions: NJ residents only
Website: http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wfprep/edtrain/adulted/adultedindex.html

**NEW MEXICO**
Adult Basic Education
State Higher Education Department
2048 Galisteo
Santa Fe, NM 87505-2100
Phone: (505)476-8440
Website: http://hed.state.nm.us

**NEW YORK**
Adult Education Program
State Education Department
Room 319 Education Building
Albany, NY 12234
Phone: (518)474-8892
Website: http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/workforce/aewd

**NORTH CAROLINA**
Basic Skills Program
North Carolina Community College System
5016 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-5016
Phone: (919)807-7132
Website: http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Basic_Skills/index.html

**NORTH DAKOTA**
Adult Education Division
Department of Public Instruction
State Capitol Building
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Department 201
Bismarck, ND 58505-0440
Phone: (701)328-2393
Website: http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/adulted/index.shtm

**OHIO**
Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education
State Board of Regents
30 East Broad Street, Floor 36
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 466-5269
Website: http://www.uso.edu/able

**OKLAHOMA**
Adult Education and Family Literacy
State Department of Education, Lifelong Learning Section
Oliver Hodge Memorial Education Building, Room 115
2500 North Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4599
Phone: (405) 521-3321
Toll-Free: (800)405-0355
Website: http://sde.state.ok.us/Programs/LifelongLearn/AdultEd.html

**OREGON**
Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310
Phone: (503)947-2448
Website: http://www.oregon.gov/CCWD

**PENNSYLVANIA**
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education
State Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
Phone: (717)772-3737
Website: http://www.able.state.pa.us

**RHODE ISLAND**
Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education
Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903-3414
Phone: (401)222-8949
Website: http://www.ride.ri.gov/adulteducation/default.aspx

**PUERTO RICO**
Puerto Rico Department of Education
P.O. Box 190759
San Juan, PR 00919
Phone: (787) 773-3475
Website: http://www.de.gobierno.pr/

**SOUTH CAROLINA**
Office of Adult Education
Department of Education
1429 Senate Street, Room 902
Columbia, SC 29201
Phone: (803)734-8071
Website: http://ed.sc.gov/agency/Standards-and-Learning/Adult-Education/old/ace/

**SOUTH DAKOTA**
Adult Education and Literacy Office
Department of Labor
700 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501-2291
Phone: (605)773-3101
TTY: (605) 773-3101
Website: http://dol.sd.gov/workforce_training/ael_intro.aspx

**TENNESSEE**
Division of Adult Education
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
220 French Landing Dr.
Nashville, TN 37243
Phone: (615)741-7054
Toll-Free: (800)531-1515
Website: http://www.state.tn.us/labor-wfd/AE

**TEXAS**
Texas LEARNS
Division of Adult Education
6005 Westview Dr.
Houston, TX 77055-5419
Phone: (713)696-0700
Toll-Free: (866)696-4233
Website: http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/texasLearns/index.htm

**UTAH**
Adult Education Services
State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200
Phone: (801)538-7824
Website: http://www.schools.utah.gov/adulted/

**VERMONT**
Adult Education and Literacy
State Department of Education
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501
Phone: (802)828-3134
Website: http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_adulted.html

**VIRGINIA**
Office of Adult Education and Literacy
State Department of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120
Phone: (804)786-3347
Toll-Free: (800)292-3820
Website: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/adulted

**WASHINGTON**
Office of Adult Literacy
State Board for Community and Technical College
1300 Quince St. SE
P.O. Box 42495
Olympia, VA 98504-2495
Phone: (360)704-4322
Website: http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_abe.aspx

**WEST VIRGINIA**
Adult Basic Education
State Department of Education
Building 6, Room 230
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Charleston, WV 25305
Phone: (304)558-0280
Website: http://www.wvabe.org

**WISCONSIN**
Wisconsin Technical College System
P.O. Box 7874
4622 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53707-7874
Phone: (608)266-7983
TTY: (608)267-2483
Website: http://www.wtcsystem.edu/about.htm

**WYOMING**
Adult Basic Education Office
Wyoming Community College Commission
2020 Carey Avenue, Eighth Floor
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Phone: (307)777-7885
Website: http://communitycolleges.wy.edu/business/ABE.htm

# GLOSSARY

**Ability-to-Benefit (ATB) Test:** A test you must take if you want to apply for federal financial aid but do not have a high school diploma or GED. Samples of ATB tests are: American College Testing (ACT), ASSET Program: Basic Skills Tests, and Career Programs Assessment (CPAT) Basic Skills Subtests.

**Academic Year:** Period of instruction at a college or university. The academic year typically runs from September to June.

**Accreditation:** A quality assurance process through which a school's or institution's services and operations are examined by an independent agency to determine if it meets certain industry standards. If the institution meets the accrediting agency's standards, it receives "accredited" status from the agency.

**Affirmation Statement:** A statement on the FAFSA form indicating that the information you have provided is accurate to the best of your knowledge.

**Basic Skills:** Often referred to as life skills. Basic skills are skills needed in everyday life, including reading, writing, math and computer literacy.

**Case Management:** One-on-one assessment, planning, assistance, and support. Case managers can help you by providing options and services to meet your particular needs and challenges.

**Certificates of Rehabilitation:** A generalized term used to refer to orders granted by judges or administrative bodies like a state's parole board. These orders restore rights or remove automatic restrictions or bars arising from a conviction.

**Community College:** A public education institution that offers a wide variety of services which may include Literacy/Adult Basic Education programs, vocational programs, and two-year degree programs. Community colleges do not offer four-year or advanced degrees although some university use community college campuses as sites to offer their advanced courses.

**Credit-Bearing Course:** A course that can count towards earning a degree, diploma, or certificate (if you earn a passing grade).

**Credit Hours:** The number of weekly instruction hours for a course throughout the term. For example, a three-credit hour course will require you to participate in three hours of class time each week.

**Defaulted Student Loans:** Loans taken out for educational purposes that have not been repaid and are accumulating interest.

**Dependent:** A student who does not support him/herself financially. The parent or guardian of a dependent student must submit financial information on the FAFSA so the student can be considered eligible for financial aid.

**Diagnosis:** Determination or analysis of the cause or nature of a problem.

**Distance Learning:** Programs that allow you to earn course credit at off-campus locations through the use of television, internet, satellite classes, videotapes, or correspondence courses.

**Drop Down Menu:** A feature on a website that you click in order to display a list of items. You can click on the items in the list to access more information.

**Dual Enrollment Program:** A program that allows students who have not earned a high school diploma or GED to earn college credit while completing a high school diploma or GED. Typically dual credit programs are offered by community colleges.

**Federal Perkins Loans:** A low-interest loan provided by schools and available to undergraduate and graduate students. Perkins loans must be repaid to the school.

**Federal Student Aid PIN:** A sequence of numbers assigned to you after you file your FAFSA. Your PIN enables you to make FAFSA corrections online, file a renewal application for the next year, and view information online about loans and grants you have received. Other programs may issue you PINs for use only in their programs. Be sure to keep a confidential record of your PINs.

**Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG):** Federal grant funds made available through some schools to a limited number of undergraduate students with financial need.

**Financial Aid Administrator:** An individual employed by a college, university, or other school who prepares financial aid awards and works with students who have questions about financing their education.

**Financial Aid Office:** The office at a college or university that handles all aspects of financial aid for the school. The financial aid office can provide answers to questions concerning financial aid.

**Four-Year College:** A public or private academic institution that offers Bachelor's degrees. Generally four-year colleges do not offer advanced degrees.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** An application that must be completed to receive federal financial aid. States and colleges also use the FAFSA to award financial aid

**General Education Diploma (GED):** A certificate students receive if they pass an approved high school equivalence test. Note that the term "GED" is used to describe the certificate you earn when you pass the GED test, as well as the test itself.

**General Education Requirements:** Courses college students are required to complete to meet the basic requirements for a degree. General education requirements are usually completed during the first two years of college. Usually, students at a community college must complete the general education requirements before transferring to a four-year college or university.

**Grade Point Average (GPA):** A numerical average that reflects your performance in school. Each letter grade is given a value and you add those values together. Typically, a student's GPA is calculated by multiplying course credits by the value assigned to the letter grade received in each course (usually an A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, etc.). Then add up the grade points for each course to calculate the semester total and divide this total by the number of credits taken.

**Graduate Student:** A student enrolled in an academic program who is working towards a degree higher than a Bachelor's , such as a Ph.D. or Master's degree.

**Grants:** Money available from public and private sources that does not have to be repaid.

**Immunization Records:** Papers signed by your physician indicating you have received vaccinations that are required by the school where you are applying. Typically, colleges require proof of Measles, Mumps, and Rubella vaccinations. Some schools might require additional vaccinations.

**Interest:** An amount charged for borrowing money. Interest is calculated as a percent of the amount you owe.

**Learning Difference:** A neurological condition that interferes with a person's ability to store, process, or produce information. Learning differences can affect a person's ability to read, write, speak, spell, compute math, and reason. They can also affect a person's attention, memory, coordination, social skills and emotional maturity. Learning differences affect people of normal intelligence and are not the result of an emotional disturbance or physical impairment.

**Letter of Recommendation:** A letter that provides additional information about an applicant and recommends his or her acceptance to the program, college, or job.

**Notarized:** The certification of a document by a public officer who holds a current notary's license.

**Official Transcript:** A transcript that is received directly from the school that issues it. Transcripts include a list of courses taken and grades received. Typically, the transcript will have an official seal on in, a date, and will be signed by a representative of the institution. The transcript will arrive in a sealed envelope and must remain sealed until it is delivered the program or school to which you are applying to be considered official.

**Pell Grant Program:** The largest federal grant program in the United States. Eligibility and award amounts are determined by the school based on federal guidelines. With few exceptions, Pell grants are available only to undergraduate students.

**Personal Statement:** An essay explaining why you want to attend the college or program to which you are applying. Personal statements should focus on your interests and experiences as they relate to the particular program or college.

**Post-Secondary Education:** Education beyond a high school diploma or GED, including vocational certificates and degrees, academic degrees, and advanced degrees.

**Prison Release Papers:** Official documents issued to you by the prison when you are released. Prison release papers can sometimes be used as a form of identification. They can also be used as proof that you were in prison for such issues as Selective Service and financial aid (see pages 21 and 43 respectively).

**Remedial Courses:** Courses that help students reach the required education level to enroll in credit-bearing courses. Remedial courses are not credit-bearing and typically cover the subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics.

**Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP):** A requirement to receive federal aid. Satisfactory academic progress standards are established by each school. Usually they are based on your GPA.

**Scholarships:** Awards given to students based on academic performance or financial need. These awards are provided by public and private organizations and do not have to be repaid.

**School Term:** A division of an academic year during which a school, college or university holds classes. School terms may be called "semesters," "quarters," or "trimesters," depending on the institution. Semesters are usually four-month terms, each lasting between 15 and 18 weeks. A quarter or trimester (three-month term) lasts between eight and 12 weeks, and there are typically three per year.

**Selective Service:** The process by which the U.S. government administers involuntary military enrollment. Registration with the Selective Service is required for all males between the ages of 18 and 25.

**Soft Skills:** Often referred to as "people skills." Soft skills include communication and leadership skills.

**Stafford Loans:** Low-interest loans available to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in an accredited college or university at least part-time. Stafford loans are the most common form of financial aid.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** The report confirming the information you included on your FAFSA.

**Student Loans:** Allow students to borrow money for school. Loans are legal obligations which must be repaid with interest. Loan programs available depend on the school.

**Supplemental Security Income** (**SSI**): A federal income supplement program helping aged, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income and providing cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

**Tuition:** A fee charged for educational instruction.

**Undergraduate Student:** A student working towards a Bachelor's degree at a college or university.

**University:** An institution of higher education that grants advanced degrees in addition to other degrees and certificates.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR):** A federal program designed to help individuals with mental and physical disabilities find employment. Each state operates VR programs which provide services such as counseling, medical and psychological services, and job training.

**Work-Study**: A federal financial aid program that gives part-time or full-time students the opportunity to work up to 20 hours per week while enrolled in school.