

# Finding a Job: On Your Own or With Help

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# Finding a Job: On Your Own or With Help

- For anyone, finding a job can be very difficult.
- It is more difficult if you do not have a high school diploma or GED.
- It is really difficult if you are an ex-offender, especially one whose conviction was within the past 10 years.
- Recognizing these conditions, we have put together some materials which will hopefully increase your chances of finding a job.
- We are particularly trying to help those people with no vocational training and no high school diploma or GED, because they have the most difficulty in finding a job.
- People who have a high school diploma or GED, and who have vocational training, have more options and an easier time finding a job. If you are one of these lucky people, you should still read through the following material, because there is information here which will help you too.

## What You Should Do As Soon As You are Released

### Get a Driver's License

- There are many jobs available which require a driver's license (*even some which really do not require you to drive*).
- Getting your license will increase your chances of finding suitable and rewarding employment.
- This requires that you plan in advance by contacting relatives and/or friends who would be willing to let you use their car to practice your driving skills and to take the road test.
- You may also want to line up a friend or relative who will lend you the money to get your license .
- Once you obtain your regular driver's license, you should study for and plan to apply for the Commercial Driver's License (CDL). This will further increase your chances of finding a higher paying job.
- If you are unable to obtain a driver's license, get a non-driver's ID which you can use as identification.

## Creating Your Resume: A Chance to Put Your Best Foot Forward

- A resume is your chance to let a prospective employer know all about your strengths and skills. It is better in many ways than an application, which is more interested in facts (*names, dates, places*).
- A resume should be typed and printed on plain white paper. If you do not have a computer or typewriter, do not worry.
- The hardest part of putting together a resume is describing your skills and strengths. A skill is something you have been taught, like nursing, typing, drywall repair, or bricklaying. A strength (or weakness) is what you are, like funny, industrious, articulate or friendly.
- It is easy to identify our skills, but a lot harder to identify our strengths. That is why brainstorming is good for this part with someone who knows you well, perhaps a friend, family member, or someone that you have worked well with in the past.
- Once you have identified your skills and strengths, you need to find the best way to describe them concisely. On a resume, it is important to say things as precisely as possible in the fewest words. For example, if you get along well with others, have a positive attitude, and have a ready smile (and believe me, these things count!), it might be well to say, “excellent interpersonal skills.”
- To give you some ideas, we have listed some strengths that employers are always seeking in prospective employees. Try to fit your strengths into some of the descriptions listed below, and then use these phrases on your resume (only if they are true, of course!).

Use This Phrase	For These Attributes
Excellent interpersonal skills	Gets along well with others; Has a positive attitude; Has a ready smile
Excellent oral communication skills	Speaks clearly and articulately; Does not slur words, Has a good vocabulary
Highly motivated	Eager to succeed; High energy, Strong desire to do well
Follows directions well	Listens attentively, Respects authority, Copies the way a procedure is demonstrated
Strong initiative	Willing to do things independently; Sees what needs to be done and does it without being told
Dedicated	Loyal; Can focus on the assigned tasks without being distracted
Dependable	Can be counted on to be at work everyday, and on time

Once you have identified your strengths and skills, you are ready to prepare the draft of your resume. Have lots of paper ready and pencils with erasers, because you will be doing a lot of writing, evaluating, revising, and rewording. Or be prepared to do a lot of editing on the computer.

- There are two options for preparing a resume:
  - Listing your job experience starting with the most recent and going back five years
  - Listing your skills and strengths
  
- For people who have been in prison, it is best to use the second approach, because it puts the focus on the positive, and does not immediately call attention to the interruption in your job history which was caused by prison.
  
- The second approach is also better for people who have had jobs with different employers, or even no jobs at all.
  
- Yes, you should list jobs that you had while you were incarcerated, even if you think that they are not relevant to any prospective employers on the outside. If you were in charge of the prison library, you have shown that you are organized, have leadership skills, and work well with others (fellow inmates and the staff). These things count!
  
- No, you should not hide the fact that you were incarcerated:
  - Employers need to know what kind of person you are in order to make a decision whether to hire you. If you are honest, they will probably appreciate your honesty and regard it as a strength, which will go a long way toward overcoming the negative aspect that you were incarcerated.
  - Of course, you need to explain why you were incarcerated, how long ago the crime happened, and why you are a better and different person now. If you can add the various jobs (paid or not paid) that you had while you were in prison, it may actually increase your chances of being hired.
  
- One thing is certain: If you purposely hide the fact that you were incarcerated, and then your employer finds out, it is highly likely that you will be fired. Being fired will look much worse to the next prospective employer than the fact that you were once in prison.

- Resumes require that you list your address and telephone number. That is so the prospective employer can contact you about a possible job. If you do not have an address, or telephone which will be answered during the day, then find a friend or family member that can serve this function for you.

Included are a few sample resumes. They focus on experiences, skills and strengths. They describe how these individuals could contribute to a potential employer. Note that the sample resumes have several things in common:

- They use short sentences.
- They are written with a specific job in mind.
- They describe skills, strengths and experience as they relate to the desired job.
- They explain what the individual could do for the prospective employer immediately, without further training.
- They use wide page margins and have a lot of white space.
- They are only one page.
- They do not include any information that is not related to the job (such as age, height, weight, or marital status).
- They do not include references.
- They include work performed in prison.
- They include work for which the individuals were not paid as well as work for which they were paid.

# **JAMES A. WALTERS**

2617 W. Ogden  
Chicago, IL 60608  
(773) 555-3295

**JOB OBJECTIVE:** To obtain a position as a groundskeeper

## **QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE**

### **• Experience as a groundskeeper**

- Mowed, trimmed, edged lawn
- Pruned, shaped, trimmed bushes and shrubs
- Planted and fertilized bushes, shrubs and flowers
- Trimmed and pruned trees
- Used fertilizers and pest treatment
- Weeded and mulched
- Did snow removal

### **• Skills**

- Can operate various mowers, trimmers, prunes and snow removal equipment
- Have driver's license and can operate truck-mounted plows

### **• Strengths**

- Love the outdoors
- Understand plants and what makes them thrive
- Work well with others
- Very dependable

## **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

1988 - Present Grounds Maintenance - IL Department of Corrections, Dixon, IL

1986 - 1988 Grounds Maintenance - Superb Lawncare, Chicago, IL

## **EDUCATION**

Morton Community College - Equivalency certificate, 1998

Simeon High School - Completed 10th grade, 1986

# **LINDA K. DAVENPORT**

3316 N. Ashland  
Chicago, IL 60647  
(773) 555-1896

**JOB OBJECTIVE:** To obtain a position as a secretary

## **QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE**

- **Experience as a secretary**

- Typed letters, memos, reports and policies, for groups as large as 15 people
- Maintained paper and computer files
- Answered phones, directed calls, and took messages
- Maintained correspondence logs
- Created presentation vu-graphs and slides

- **Skills**

- Proficient with all aspect of Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Microsoft Access
- Type 80 words per minute
- Proficient with other equipment, including slide production, facsimile and reproduction machines

- **Strengths**

- Excellent oral and written communications skills
- Friendly manner and positive attitude
- Industrious and dependable
- Extremely organized and can handle multiple tasks simultaneously

## **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

1992 - Present Secretary to Warden - IL Department of Corrections, Dwight, IL  
1989 - 1992 Secretary - Bell Atlantic, Chicago, IL

## **EDUCATION**

Strayer University - Classes in computer skills and office management 1988-1989  
Lakeview High School - Graduated 1987

## **What Kind of Job Should You Be Seeking?**

- Your objective should be obtaining sustained, stable, legal employment.
- If you are able to obtain this objective, you greatly increase the probability that you will succeed on the outside and keep from returning to prison.
- In addition, having a sustained, stable, legal job will give you a sense of accomplishment; you will feel proud, and your self-esteem will be gratified by your successes and the positive feedback which you receive at work.
- By surrounding yourself with people who have a positive outlook on life, and who do not use drugs or alcohol, you will minimize the chances of falling back into your old patterns of drugs and/or crime which lead to self-destruction.

### **The best jobs are those which:**

#### **Are Well Matched to Your Skills and Desires**

- If you like to be with people, you will not be happy working in a warehouse moving stuff around, with little contact with other people. Instead, apply for a job as an airline ticket agent or a ramp agent.
- If you enjoy tinkering with or fixing cars, then you should look for a job at an automotive dealership.
- If you are an expert at store security (and how to get around it), you should look for a job with the stores as a security or risk management person. Turn your crime into an asset by using your knowledge to work on behalf of the store to prevent losses.

#### **Play to Your Strengths**

- You may have the kind of outgoing and sociable personality which would make you a wonderful salesperson. Look for jobs selling big ticket items (cars, stereos, appliances) and which pays you a commission.
- You may have leadership skills where people respect you, and look to you to provide advice and direction. If so, you may be an excellent supervisor. Apply for supervisory jobs or take an entry level job and plan to become a supervisor as soon as you can.
- You may be extremely articulate and have an outgoing and personable nature. If so, you would be well suited for customer service representative positions. There are two kinds:
  - *By telephone (for example, when a customer calls the cable company to request HBO, the person he or she speaks with is a customer service representative); or*
  - *In person (for example, you could be a ticket agent for an airline at the airport, or a host/hostess at a restaurant in a local hotel, or a front desk clerk at a hotel).*

## **Pay a Living Wage**

- There is no sense in taking a job which pays you less than you need to support yourself and your family. There are many jobs available, even for people with no vocational training which pay twice the minimum wage.
- Before even starting your job search, you need to identify the absolute minimum hourly wage which you can accept and still support yourself. Do not forget to include in your considerations the cost of having the job such as:
  - Clothes (if uniforms are not provided)
  - Transportation Farecards (this can be as much as \$10 per day)
  - The cost of lunches at work (if meals are not provided)
  - The cost of taxes and social security which will be deducted from your wages automatically by your employer each payday
  - The cost of any employee benefits for which you have to pay a portion (or all)
- It is smart to prepare a budget so that you will anticipate all the costs which you may incur. Many costs are incurred over which you have very little control; other costs are discretionary.
- You may want to use the “Budget Worksheet” at the end of this chapter to assist you in your planning.

## **Provide Personal and Professional Growth and Development**

- Most employers look to their current employees when a vacancy occurs for a more responsible (and better paying) position. Prepare yourself mentally to be one of those considered!
- Many employers offer specific vocational training and/or leadership training. These training courses cost a great deal of money. As a result, they often select participants based upon the work habits and characteristics which the employees have demonstrated since being on the job. For example, a supervisor may say to himself/herself: “Sharon has been here six months and has done a terrific job. She is eager to get ahead, and wants to learn as much as I will teach her so that she can improve her skills. I want her to stay with our company because she is such a pleasant and productive employee. I think I will send her to a computer course for three days so that she can learn the new database software.”

- It is important, therefore, that you look for a job with a company which has:
  - Positions with more responsibility than the one for which you are applying so that you can aspire to be promoted
  - Ongoing training and development so that you may improve your skills (at their expense!) and therefore you will become a more valued employee
  - Of course, none of these great things will just be given to you; you have to earn them.

#### **Are Located Along Readily Accessible Public Transportation Routes**

- Few recently released ex-offenders have their own car. Some halfway houses will not let you use your own car, even if you have one.
- It is important that you choose a job which you can get to by public transportation days, evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays.

#### **Do not Require an Extensive or Expensive Wardrobe**

- Some jobs require that you dress in a very fashionable manner, which can be very costly. For example, if you become a salesperson of clothing, you may be expected to dress in the same style of clothing, shoes, and accessories as that which you sell. Unless the store gives you a huge discount or lends you clothing to fit their style, this type of job would not be good for you to accept right out of prison.
- Such an extensive wardrobe also carries an increased cost of dry cleaning, laundry, etc.
- Also, many of these types of sales jobs do not pay on commission and you might be an excellent salesperson.

#### **Provide Some Employee Benefits**

- Employee benefits can be an important contribution to your standard or style of living.
- Each individual had different needs, and some employee benefits are highly desired by some people but not others.
- Remember to ask your potential employer in the application and/or interview process what their benefits are, and what proportion of the cost, if any, you have to pay.

## JOBS THAT REQUIRE NO VOCATIONAL TRAINING

### Potential Jobs Depending Upon Your Skill Level

#### If You Have No Vocational Training

- Even if you have no vocational training, you can still get more than a minimum wage job, and one that includes benefits and job security. (Beware, though, that hotel and hospital jobs are less likely to be given to ex-offenders.) Here are some examples:

Type of Job	Potential Employers Category
<p><b>Maintenance, janitorial or custodial</b> <i>(sometimes called environmental engineering)</i></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Washing and waxing floors, cleaning restrooms, emptying trash, polishing, sweeping, vacuuming</p>	<p>Hotels Hospitals Shopping centers Car Dealers Restaurants Airlines Federal Government Metro The Smithsonian</p>
<p><b>Housekeeping</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Making beds, distributing clean towels and sheets</p>	<p>Hotels Hospitals</p>
<p><b>Porter</b> <i>(sometimes called laborer)</i></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Doing errands, carrying, transporting things from one place to another, miscellaneous tasks as assigned</p>	<p>Shopping Centers Stores Hospitals National Zoo Federal Government The Smithsonian</p>
<p><b>Laundry and Dry Cleaning</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Operating commercial washing machines, dryers; folding and pressing clothes</p>	<p>Commercial Cleaners Hotels Hospital</p>
<p><b>Warehouse</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Stock shelves with inventory, move products from one location to another, maintain records of how many of each type of products are in the warehouse at all times</p>	<p>Stores</p>

Type of Job	Potential Employers Category
<p><b>Stocking Clerk</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Obtain products from storage (or boxes) and put them out in the customer area, maintain the neat appearance of the items on display.</p>	<p>Grocery Stores Stores</p>
<p><b>Food Service Worker/Dietary Aide</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Assemble food selections for patient trays, transport trays filled with food to nursing units and distribute them to patients; pick up trays when the meal is over and return them to the kitchen.</p>	<p>Hospitals Nursing Homes</p>
<p><b>Grounds Maintenance</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Mowing lawns, trimming bushes, applying fertilizer and weedkiller, snow removal</p>	<p>Hotels Hospitals National Park Service National Airports National Zoo Federal Government The Smithsonian Landscaping Companies</p>
<p><b>New and Used Car Preparation</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Cleaning inside and outside of cars, “detailing” cars, bringing cars to the customer after service work has been done <i>Note:</i> These jobs can often lead to being trained as a mechanic, which can be very high paying.</p>	<p>Car Dealers</p>
<p><b>Quick Copy/Reproduction Machine Operator</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Operate reproduction machines (for example, Xerox machines) to make copies of customer documents.</p>	<p>Quick Copy Shops Printing Companies</p>

Type of Job	Potential Employers Category
<p><b>Bell Person</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Escort guests to room, bring guests' luggage to room upon check-in, bring departing guests' luggage to entrance upon checkout, load luggage in the car and/or taxi, bring dry cleaning from hotel laundry to guests' room</p>	Hotels
<p><b>Kitchen Utility Worker</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Wash pots, pans and dishes; clean up kitchen area behind cooks; get needed items from storage (for example, a 50-pound bag of potatoes) and bring it to the kitchen work area.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> This position can often lead to a higher-paying position as a food preparation worker (the person who slices tomatoes, chops onions, etc. for later use by the cooks).</p>	Hotels Hospitals Restaurants
<p><b>Trucker's Helper</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Ride on delivery trucks with the driver; assist the driver to unload and deliver materials (especially hardware of building supply stores, furniture stores, and lumberyards)</p>	Stores Newspapers Package Delivery
<p><b>Doorman</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Stand at the hotel entrance, greet people upon arrival, open doors for people exiting cars and/or taxis, hold an umbrella over people during rain, calls taxi or valet for departing guests</p>	Hotels
<p><b>Banquet Set-up</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Set-up tables and chairs in banquet rooms and meeting rooms; take down and put away tables and chairs after banquets or meetings</p>	Hotels

Type of Job	Potential Employers Category
<p><b>Barback</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Assist the bartenders by obtaining clean glasses from the kitchen and storing them at the bar; obtaining new bottles of liquor from the supply room and bringing them to the bar; obtaining new kegs of beer from the supply room and bringing them to the bar; carrying away and disposing of empty bottles and kegs; taking used glasses to the kitchen to be washed.</p>	<p>Hotels Restaurants</p>
<p><b>Transporter</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Bring patients in wheelchairs and/or gurneys from their rooms to other areas of the hospital for testing, therapy, etc.; return patients to their rooms at the end of their scheduled activity</p>	<p>Hospitals</p>
<p><b>Garage Attendant and Cashier</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Take parking stubs from departing guests, calculate the amount of parking fees, take guests' money and make change</p>	<p>Hospitals Hotels Parking Lots</p>
<p><b>Cabin Cleaner/Equipment Service Technician</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Clean airplane cabins after flight: remove trash, vacuum seats and floors, scrub restrooms; clean outside of aircraft and ramp area</p>	<p>Airlines</p>
<p><b>Baggage/Cargo Handler</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Load baggage and cargo on and off airplanes Note: This position may require a driver's license so the employee can operate the vehicle which transports baggage and cargo from the terminal to the airplane</p>	<p>Airlines</p>
<p><b>Special Events Worker</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Load and unload trucks; set-up and breakdown exhibits and equipment for special events</p>	<p>Universities Sports Arenas</p>
<p><b>Loading Dock Worker</b></p> <p><u>Examples of duties:</u> Load and unload trucks</p>	<p>Stores Universities Hospitals Hotels</p>

### **If You Have Vocational Training**

- If you have vocational training, such as a bricklayer, a butcher, an upholsterer, secretary, a computer repair technician, a painter, etc. you already have ideas where to work. It will impress a potential employer if he or she thinks that you spent time in prison in job training programs, or had the foresight to do so while in high school.

### **Other Possibilities**

- Periodically, large employers offer training programs for complex jobs. For example, grocery chains may recruit people to be part of their meat cutter training program, and newspapers have recruited people to be part of their press operator training program.
- These possibilities should be sought and pursued with vigor and speed. They have many applicants and few available slots to be filled.
- The advantages of accepting this type of opportunity are numerous:
- If you do well at the first step, you will be able to advance to a higher-paying job.
- You will have learned a trade which will increase your chances of finding employment at a later date with other employers.
- Many of these programs offer entry into union apprenticeship programs and pay union scale.

### **Hospitals and Hotels**

- When you call hospitals and hotels, the recorded message can be very long and it lists many, many jobs in which you are not interested.
- Here is a listing of the jobs for which you may be qualified, depending upon whether or not you have vocational training (like keyboard or computer skills, etc.).
- Some of these jobs require higher literacy levels (ability to read and write) than others.
- Some of these jobs require people with excellent communications skills—good diction, very friendly and outgoing, and a warm smile.

## Hospital Jobs, Entry Level

### No Vocational Training & Limited Literacy Levels

- Food Service Worker/Dietary Aide
- Garage Attendant and Cashier
- Grounds Maintenance
- Housekeeping
- Kitchen Utility Worker
- Laundry
- Maintenance, janitorial or custodial (sometimes called environmental engineering)
- Porter (sometimes called laborer)
- Transporter

## HOSPITAL JOBS, ENTRY LEVEL

### Vocational Training; Literacy, Oral Communication & Interpersonal Skills

*(Jobs ~~lined through~~ are less likely to be given to ex-offenders)*

Type of Job	Examples of Duties
<b>Accounting/Billing/Records</b>	Enter information into a computer; respond to questions by retrieving information
<b>Admitting</b>	Prepare records when patients enter the hospital; obtain insurance and payment information; assigns patients to rooms
<b>Clerk</b>	Type, file, make photocopies, send and receive faxes; work with billing records, supply invoices, and/or personnel records; may work on medical/surgical unit or administrative areas throughout hospital
<b>Cook</b>	Prepare food for patients, staff, and visitors
<b>Receptionist</b>	Greet visitors and staff; answer phones; clerical support ( <i>see clerk</i> )
<b>Switchboard Operator/ PBX Operator</b>	Answer telephone calls to hospital; forward calls to patients or hospital employees; answer calls from patients' rooms and direct them to the appropriate party

## Hotel Jobs, Entry Level

No Vocational Training & Limited Literacy Levels  
 (\*-Job is less likely to be given to ex-offenders)

- Banquet Set-up
- Barback
- Bell person
- Doorman
- Garage Attendant and Cashier
- Grounds Maintenance
- Housekeeping\*
- Kitchen Utility Worker
- Laundry and Dry Cleaning
- Maintenance, janitorial or custodial (sometimes called environmental engineer)
- Porter (sometimes called laborer)

### HOTEL JOBS, ENTRY LEVEL

**Hotel Jobs, Entry Level**  
*(Jobs ~~lined through~~ are less likely to be given to ex-offenders)*

**Vocational Training; Literacy, Oral Communication & Interpersonal Skills**

Type of Job	Examples of Duties
<del>Bartender</del>	Prepare mixed drinks; serve wine, beer and other beverages to guests; prepare drinks for wait staff to deliver to guests; keep bar area clean and tidy
<b>Busser</b>	Clear tables in the dining and bar/lounge areas; take dirty dishes, glassware and linen to appropriate place; put clean linen, dishes and glassware on the tables; fill guests' water glasses; respond to guests' requests
<b>Clerk</b>	Type, file, make photocopies, send and receive faxes; work with billing records, supply invoices, and/or personnel records
<b>Cook</b>	Prepare food for hotel restaurants or room service
<b>Fitness Assistant</b>	Assist guests using health club and/or fitness equipment; assure guests' safety; show guests proper use of equipment; obtain towels or water for guests' comfort
<b>Lifeguard</b>	Serve as a lifeguard at a hotel pool; miscellaneous duties
<b>Room Service Order Taker</b>	Answer guest's calls to room service; write-up their orders from the Room Service menu; give orders to the cook
<b>Switchboard Operator/ PBX</b>	<b>Operator</b>
Answer telephone calls to hotel; forward calls to	guests or hotel employees; answer calls from guests' rooms and direct them to the appropriate party
<del>Wait Person</del>	Serve food and beverages to guests; take orders for food and beverages and turn them into the chef or bartender; deliver food and beverages to guests

## **How to Determine if Job Vacancies Exist**

- You need a touch tone telephone, a desk or table, a chair, paper (or spiral binder), and pens or pencils in order to hunt for a job.
- Plan to spend hours as soon as you are released calling the numbers listed in the next section to determine what job vacancies exist.
- If a potential employer does not have any vacancies in which you are interested this week, call again next week. Try not to get discouraged.
- Most employers with a 24-hour recorded Job Hotline update the recording weekly—some every Friday, some every Monday. Listen carefully and write down the effective date of the recording. Therefore, you will know when to call again, and you will not have to listen to the same recording more than once.
- The reason you need a touch tone telephone is because most of the companies make you press “1” if you want to listen to one type of job, “2” if you want to listen to a second type of job, “3” if you want to listen to a third type of job, etc. Without a touch tone phone, you can’t use most of the Job Hotlines.
- The reason you need a desk (and a chair!) is because some of the recordings go on forever! For example, if you are calling a hospital to find out about housekeeping, janitorial, laundry, or kitchen utility jobs, you may have to listen first to all the nursing and administrative jobs which are vacant! In some cases, this may take 10 or 15 minutes for each call.
- You can make calls to the 24-hour Job Hotlines anytime day or night. It would be the best use of your time to make the calls on off hours (late at night or before 5:00 AM) and then you can make the arrangements to go apply for the vacancies during regular business hours.
- Some of the Job Hotlines ask you to enter your SSN, and ask you to answer “yes” or “no” to a series of questions. You enter the information by pressing numbers on the telephone keypad. If your answers are acceptable to them, the recording will give you further information about arranging for an interview.
- The reason you should keep a permanent record of the calls you make is that you will be able to compare what vacancies are available each week. If you call a certain employer and write down the address, for example, you only need to do it once, the first time you call. Each week you call thereafter, you do not need to write it down, but can refer back to what you wrote in your previous week’s research.

- Note that many employers do drug tests on job applicants, and perform random drug tests on employees in order to ensure that they maintain a drug-free workplace.
- In general, you want to listen for jobs which on these recordings are called:
  - Wage grade jobs in the federal government
  - Hourly jobs
  - Non-management jobs
  - Bargaining Positions by non-government employers
- Of course, not every business has a 24-hour Job Hotline recording. Some businesses have a main number; if no other directions are listed in the following chart, you should ask to speak with Human Resources or Employment. Tell the receptionist that you are interested in job vacancies, and are seeking employment, and he or she will connect you to the person responsible for hiring.
- Note that there are three different types of jobs available:
  - Full Time jobs—generally 37.5 or 40 hours per week; usually have some employee benefits, like health insurance, paid vacations, or sick leave
  - Part Time jobs—generally less than 32 hours per week; usually have no employee benefits
  - Temporary or Seasonal—Can be full time or part time; job only lasts for a specific period of time, such as hiring during the Christmas holiday season. Two examples would be: stocking clerks in department stores or drivers' helpers on delivery trucks.

## **What To Do If You Have Problems Finding a Job**

- Occasionally, someone will have a problem finding a job, even after a long search (for example, after applying to 30 employers in an eight-week period).
- This problem might be because there are not many jobs available, or you are applying for the wrong jobs, or you are not presenting yourself in the best possible light, or they just do not want you. If the latter is true, it could be because:
  - You do not have the skills the employers are looking for.
  - Your criminal record makes you undesirable as an employee.
  - Your speech is not sufficiently articulate to work with customers.
- Another alternative is to visit an agency which assists people to find jobs.

- Call these agencies before going to their offices. That way, you can explain your situation and they can tell you over the phone whether they can assist you. Do not squander your fare card or walk a long way, only to discover that, for some reason, they cannot assist! Work smarter, not harder!

- These organizations provide a wide variety of services. Some organizations perform more than others. Here is a summary of what services these organizations may perform:

- Interview—They will interview you to find out about your education, vocational training, jobs skills, work history, and what it is you enjoy doing. They will also ask you about your needs, such as how much money you need to earn in order to support yourself and your family.

- Assess—They will test you in order to determine what your reading and math levels are. Some tests also include reasoning ability, vocabulary, problem-solving, and general intelligence testing. The purpose of these tests is for the organization to determine your skills and abilities so that they can predict how well you would perform on various jobs. Many employers do pre-employment testing as well. That is because they've determined that people who perform well on their tests also perform well on the particular jobs for which they are hired.

- Recommend—They will recommend which types of jobs are well suited for your particular skills and abilities, and would be a good match with what you like to do.

- Coach—They will prepare you for the job search, job application, and job interview process by giving you guidance with one (or all) of the following issues:

- How to fill in an application
- How to prepare a resume
- What to wear when you apply for a job
- What to say when you apply and during an interview
- What types of questions will be asked during an interview and how you should answer them
- How to present yourself: how to walk, how to shake hands, how to act, how to talk
- How to search for a job through job hotlines and newspapers

The coaching may be one-on-one, or it may be in classroom, workshops, or seminar

- Create Resume—They will assist you with creating a resume, giving you guidance on what should be included, what to emphasize, how it should look, etc.

- Type and Print Resume—They will type and print copies for you to give to potential employers.

- Identify Vacancies—They will show you a book which includes job vacancy announcements; you must review them to determine which ones appeal to you, then write the information down so you can go to each prospective employer to apply. Alternatively, they may make photocopies for you of the job vacancy announcements which interest you.
- Provide a Desk and Telephone for Calling Job Hotlines—They will allow you to use their desks and telephones to call job hotlines. Some may also provide you with pencils and paper to write down information about the vacancies which appeal to you.
- Arrange Interviews—They will call prospective employers on your behalf and make an appointment for you to apply for a vacancy which they've identified.
- Provide Clothing—They will provide you clothing which is suitable for a job search and interview; alternatively, they may direct you to an organization where you can get clothing for free, or to a thrift store where you can purchase it for minimal cost.
- Provide Carfare—They will provide you with cards so that you can go to prospective employers and apply for jobs.
- Follow-up—They will meet with you regularly (for example, weekly) after you start your job. The purpose of these meetings is to help you adjust to the world of work (if it is new to you) and to assist you with adapting to the culture of the workplace. You will be able to talk over and find solutions to things which you may not understand about your boss, your job, or the expectations your boss has about your job performance. In addition, they will assist you in resolving personal problems which might arise, such as how to open a checking account, getting back and forth to work, finding child care, obtaining appropriate clothing, etc.

### **How Applying for a Job Works . . .**

- Many employers place their vacancies in the newspaper "Want Ads," especially in the Sunday edition.
- Many other employers have recorded "Job Lines" which you may call 24 hours a day. The Job Lines list the vacancies as of that date and provide instructions on how to apply.

- Most employers will accept applications ONLY for jobs that are vacant. Other employers will accept applications even though they do not have any current vacancies. It is important to know which is which. Otherwise, you will make a trip to an employer, thinking that you will be able to complete an application, and you will be turned away—a wasted trip.
- Most employers have specific days and specific hours during which they accept applications. It is important to know how the Human Resource department of the employer you are interested in works. For example, one employer will accept applications only on Monday and Wednesday, 9:00 AM and 12 Noon. If you arrive, for example, on Thursday, or at 4:00 PM on Monday or Wednesday, you will be turned away—another wasted trip.
- Some employers request that you send (or fax, or hand deliver) a resume before you complete an application. A resume gives you a better chance to stress your strengths and skills. The following section gives you complete directions on how to put together a resume.
- When you visit a prospective employer to complete an application, be prepared to be interviewed at the same time. This means that you should:
  - Be rested, refreshed, and alert (*do not “stop by” on the way back from three other places, looking tired, worn out, and sweaty...*).
  - Dress appropriately for the job for which you are applying (*even if you have to borrow clothes*). Many jobs have uniforms, so you do not need to wear your “interview clothes” every day you go to work!
  - Look confident without looking arrogant. Hold your head high. Know that you have a lot to offer. Look the person in the eye. Introduce yourself with a firm handshake. When you leave, extend your hand to the person you have been talking with, shake his/her hand, and thank him/her for considering you for the position.
- After you have submitted the application, wait several weeks to see if they contact you. If they have not, call the employer and ask if they’ve made a decision. If they say that they have, and that you weren’t selected, thank them for considering you. Ask whether they would consider you for another position if one becomes vacant. That way you will know whether or not you should go back to apply at that company at a different time.

## **The Job Interview: How to Impress Them and Get Hired**

### **Get Clothes Suitable for Interviews**

- The old saying “the clothes make the man” is very true, especially in applying for a job. Potential employers will judge you on their first impression, which is generally made in the first two seconds of their meeting you or seeing you.
- The best plan is to wear a suit and tie if you are a man, and a dress if you are a woman, no matter what type of job you are applying for.

- If you do not have a suit and tie/dress, borrow one or buy a nice outfit from a thrift store, such as The Salvation Army.
- If you are a man and you can't get a suit and tie, then wear a nice pair of slacks (*not jeans or sweats*), with a long sleeve dress shirt and tie, and dress shoes (*not sneakers*).
- Why is this so important? Let us be realistic. As an ex-offender you know that you have a number of handicaps in obtaining a job. A lot of that employer-uneasiness can be overcome if you present yourself well, and if you have a neat, attractive appearance.
- One example of a success story: A new resident of a halfway house obtained a suit, dress shirt, tie, and eyeglasses. Several staff members at the halfway house told him he looked like an attorney. People in turn treated him as if he deserved the respect of an attorney. Several potential employers complimented him on his outfit, and thanked him for respecting them enough to dress for the occasion. The best part? The next time he saw his attorney, the attorney said, "You look just like an attorney!" So this advice works . . .

#### **Behave Suitably for Interviews**

- The standards of behavior in the companies where you will be seeking a job are very different from the standards of behavior in the prison community or perhaps the community where you resided before going to prison.
- The way you carry yourself, your posture, the way you present yourself are all important.
- Remember to stand up straight, shoulders back, and give the potential employer a firm hand shake. Also, introduce yourself, and give lots of eye contact.
- Answer all questions honestly and directly. If you delay, or seem distracted, or ramble, the potential employer will count you out, because he or she will assume that you will behave that way on the job, and therefore not be a good employee.

#### **Preparing for Possible Interview Questions**

- The best preparation for the job interview is to understand that there are certain answers which the interviewer wants to hear. If you know beforehand the points that you want to get across, it will be easier to use those answers to the questions you will be asked. Here is what they want to hear:
  - You are reliable; you will be there on time every single day.
  - You want to be there.
  - You are willing to learn and work hard.
  - You will gladly accept the starting hourly wage.
  - You want to stay with the company for at least five years. (*This may not be true, but you want to give this impression*)

- Attitude counts more than experience! If you were doing the hiring, would you rather hire a person who has eight years experience and a bad attitude, or a person with no experience who is eager to learn and wants to do the job well?

- As long as you express to the interviewer that you are friendly, well motivated, and eager to learn, you will have an excellent chance of getting hired.

- Here are the specific questions you may be asked, and some answers that will work well:

- **Why did you apply for this job?**

- Hint: Say something nice about the company, or how much you like the type of work in the job for which you are applying.

- Example: “Your company has so many opportunities. I hope to learn the (position applied for) area and eventually become a valued employee so I can be considered for positions in your company with more responsibility.”

- **What do you know about this particular job?**

- Hint: Read the job description. Call Human Resources ahead of time and ask that it be mailed to you.

- Example: “I know that this job involves (*name some major tasks, e.g., detailing cars*). I really like doing that, and am very good at it. I’m looking forward to doing it full time and advancing my skills so I can become a more valuable employee.”

- **What do you know about this particular company?**

- Hint: Another opportunity to say something nice about the company. Do not make this up; talk first to people who know something about the company. You wouldn’t want to say something which wasn’t true—that would look bad, and could cost you the job.

- Example: “Your company is known for treating its people well, and for providing opportunities for people who work hard and do well. I’m interested in working for a company where I can stay, show my abilities, and progress to positions of more responsibility.”

- **Why are you choosing this career?**

- Hint: Tell them how this job fits in with what you are good at and what you enjoy doing.

- Example: “The reason I’m applying for the groundskeeper position is that I love to work outdoors and have a talent for growing things. Therefore the groundskeeper job combines what I love to do with what I’m good at—which would make me a very good employee!”

- **Why should I hire you?**

- Hint: You have to be confident. Give the interviewer a reason (*or more than one!*) to hire you! After all, if *you* can’t give a good reason why they should hire you, then you probably *will not* be hired.

- Example: “You should hire me because I’m dependable, hard working, and I work well with others. I will show you that you can rely upon me to get the job done well, and on time.”

- **How would you describe yourself?**

- Hint: Stress the positive. Give examples.

- Example: “I love people and go out of my way to help them. It makes me feel good to bring a smile to someone’s face. I know that the smiles I give to some people might be the only smiles they will get that day.”

- **What would you like to tell me about yourself?**

- Hint: Here is a good time to say that you have been in prison, it made you grow-up and become more self aware, and you want to turn your life around. It is also a good time to reiterate that you have experience.

- Example: “You may be hesitant to hire me because I’m an ex-offender. I can understand that. But I ask you to please consider that it was a long time ago when my crime occurred, and many years have passed during

which I've been reformed and away from that lifestyle. Prison was a good thing because it made me examine the direction in which my life was headed, and decided to change. I'm hard working, learn new things fast, am eager to do a good job, and get along well with other people. I think I would make a good employee."

**• What are your strengths?**

Hint: Be honest. This is a good time to brag about yourself. Be sure to relate your strengths to the job for which you are applying.

Example: "I'm hard working, learn new things fast, am eager to do a good job, and get along well with other people. I really enjoy doing (*whatever the job is, e.g., car detailing, cooking*). I look forward to going to work because I enjoy being with people and helping them."

**• What are your major weaknesses?**

Hint: This is a difficult question. If possible, try to take one of your strengths and make it sound like a weakness.

Example: "Some people say I work too hard, that I should slow down a bit so I do not make the other employees doing this work look bad. But I just can't do that. I'm being paid to do the best that I can, and that is what I'm going to do."

**• What do you like doing best?**

Hint: Use this question to let the interviewer know about your other strengths. Take the things you like to do best and translate them into how that demonstrates that you will succeed on the job.

Example: "My favorite pastime is to tinker with car engines. I can take apart an engine, find what's wrong, and fix it almost every time. All my friends bring their cars to me because they know I will do a good job. I love trying to figure out why things do not work the way they should. It makes me feel great to fix something that other people couldn't."

**• What are your interests outside of work?**

Hint: The interviewer is trying to find out if you are well rounded. Try to mention things that show skills that are valuable at work.

Example: "My main interest is children. I spend as much time with my three as I can. I'm also a Sunday School teacher at my church. I teach one class of three year olds every Sunday."

**• What type of work do you like to do least?**

Hint: If there is something you really do not like, please tell them. It would be horrible to get hired for a job only to find that you are required to do something you hate.

Example: "I'm afraid of heights. I wouldn't want to do any work which would require me to climb ladders or go onto the roof of the building."

**• What accomplishments are you most proud of?**

Hint: This is a good time to reiterate that you turned your life around because of having been incarcerated. This shows your determination and motivation.

Example: "I'm most proud of how I turned my life around after being sent to prison. It is like I got a second chance, and I was determined to use it well. I got my GED in prison, and now I will be able to get a better job and support myself and my family."

**• What was your worst mistake?**

Hint: This is another good opportunity to show that you are a different person than the individual who was sent to prison. No matter what your mistake was, you must tell the interviewer what you learned from it.

Example: "My worse mistake was hanging out with the wrong crowd when I was a teenager. That led me to criminal activity. I know now that I have to be careful about who I hang out with. As my grandmother used

to say, “If you lie down with dogs, you get fleas.”

• **What would you change in your past life?**

Hint: This is another good time to let the interviewer know that you have reformed, and how.

Example: “If I had to go back and live my life over, I would never have used drugs. At first, I thought it was something I could control. Then I found out that the drugs controlled me. The addiction caused me to do a lot of stupid things that I wish now that I hadn’t. I’m glad that I went to prison because there I got the substance abuse treatment that I needed. I’ve been clean now for six years.”

• **What courses did you like best in school?**

Hint: If you can, tailor the answer to the type of job you are applying for.

Example: “I especially liked art, because I’m good at it and it is something I do as a hobby. I like designing posters and displays. I printed several murals which are still there. That is why I think I’d do well as a sales associate in women’s fashions, because I have a good eye for color.”

• **What did you like best about your last job?**

Hint: Be honest. Perhaps it was the people with whom you worked. Maybe you liked the benefits or pay.

Remember, your answer will say a lot about *you*.

Example: “I liked the teamwork. It was great working with people who had such a cooperative attitude. We were all focused on making our clients satisfied. Everyone pitched in and did whatever it took to meet the clients’ needs.”

• **Why did you leave your last job?**

Hint: Try to put a positive spin on your answer.

Example: “I didn’t like the fact that there were no opportunities for advancement. I’m interested in advancing to positions of more responsibility and higher pay.”

• **Why did you leave your last job?**

Hint: Again, do not be negative. Whatever the reasons for your leaving your last job (*or wanting to leave the one you have now*), you need to express them in a positive way. Do not say bad things about your last employer.

Example: “My last job was part time, and I’d like to work full time. In order to support my family, I need to work a 40-hour week, and I’m interested in overtime as well.”

• **Why were you fired?**

Hint: Use this as an opportunity to show something you have learned. Do not defend yourself. Let the interviewer know that it will never happen again!

Example: “I was fired because I didn’t come to work one day and I didn’t call in and let my supervisor know. I recognize that my action was irresponsible, and I put them in a difficult position because it caused them to be shorthanded that day. I’ve learned from my mistake and it will never happen again.”

• **How does your education/experience relate to this job?**

Hint: Make it work-related again. It is another opportunity to explain how you have been reformed as a result of your incarceration. Let the interviewer know that you can start out being productive immediately after being hired.

Example: “While I was in prison, I worked as the secretary to the Associate Warden. I’m proficient with office procedures. If you hire me as a secretary, I can be productive immediately.

• **What are your short-term goals?**

Hint: Give the interviewer a goal or two which relates to the job you are seeking.

Example: “I’m interested in learning new skills. (Name skills that are related to the job.) I’m hoping that, if I’m hired by your company, I will be able to learn how to perform the responsibilities for other positions as well.”

- **How do you plan to reach them?**

Hint: Make it work-related again. It is another opportunity to let them know you are willing to work hard in order to do well.

Example: "I want to be an important part of your work force, and I'm ready to work hard to show you that you can rely upon me to be fast, accurate and dependable."

- **What salary do you expect?**

Hint: Always let them ask. Leave money discussions for the end. Remember, what's really important is getting the initial job. Once you are working for that company, you will be eligible for regular raises. As you demonstrate that you are a dependable employee, you will be considered for other jobs which have more responsibilities and more pay. Generally, if you have no experience, you should expect to start at the lower part of the pay range. For example, a specific job might pay from \$ 7.00 to \$ 8.00 per hour to start. If you have no experience, expect to start at \$ 7.00. If you have experience, expect to start at \$ 7.50. If you have experience and are very good at what you do, ask for \$ 8.00.

Example: "I realize that I do not have any direct experience as a garage attendant, but I'm confident that I can do a good job. I'm happy to take \$ 7.00 per hour, and I look forward to showing you that you can rely upon me to be fast, accurate and dependable."

## **How to Handle Telling Your Potential Employer the Truth About Your Incarceration**

- It is important that you tell the truth about your incarceration.
- Most applications ask whether or not you have been convicted of a felony. Some qualify it by asking if the felony was within the last five years.
- The application form usually provides a place to explain the situation.
- Some application forms ask you to sign in order to grant permission for them to do a police background check on you in order to verify what you have told them. If you have lied on the application form, you will not be hired, even if everything else about you made you a desirable potential employee.
- In the explanation section, please tell them:
  - What the crime was
  - How long ago it happened
  - If there were any justifiable reasons (for example: "I was on drugs at the time and my judgment was impaired," or "I was depressed and not on my medication, and my judgment was impaired")
  - That you are a different person now as a result of your rehabilitation and/or the length of time which has elapsed since the crime was committed. This is a good place to include information about:
    - Any substance abuse treatment you received while incarcerated
    - Any mental health counseling and/or therapy you received while incarcerated

- What volunteer activities you have taken part in while incarcerated (for example: worked in the prison library, taught other inmates to read)
- What prison industry or other job(s) you had while incarcerated, and for how long.

This is very important because it shows that you have self-discipline and persistence in order to maintain the job. In addition, if your supervisors in those jobs wrote evaluations of your performance, you can tell your employer how well you were rated (for example: “on a scale of 35 points, I received a 35 in the last six of my eight quarterly evaluations”).

- Read the application very carefully before you answer. For example:
  - Many applications ask whether you have been convicted of a felony; if you have been convicted of a misdemeanor, you do not need to put it down.
  - Some applications ask if you have been convicted of a crime within the last seven years (or five years, or some other period of time); if your conviction was before that time, you do not need to write it down.
- *The point here is that, while you do not want to lie about your past, the wording on the application may permit you to not list your prior conviction(s).*

### **When the Interview is Over**

- When the interview is over, and you are ready to leave, look them in the eye, thank the interviewer by name, ask for a business card, and give the interviewer a firm handshake. Most people goof up this part. Unless the interviewer gives you a date by which he or she will call you, tell him/her that you will call in three or four days to check the status of your application. Keep the business card, write on the back of the card the date and the job for which you applied, and call when you say you will.
- Write a “thank you” note. If you do, you have done more than many job-seekers. That shows the interviewer that you are more than serious and better motivated than most other applicants for the same job. It keeps your name on the interviewer’s mind when he or she has several applications on his/her desk. It also gives you another chance to sell yourself.
- The note has to be neat and free of spelling and grammar mistakes. Practice on plain paper until it is right and has no errors.
- Using the suggested format, write your note on a simple note card or “thank you” card with matching envelope.

- Use the interviewer's full name and title when addressing the envelope. It is on the business card you asked for!
- Mail it no later than the morning after the interview!
- Here is a sample "thank you" note:

January 30, 2002

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today to discuss the groundskeeper position. I enjoyed talking with you and I look forward to the possibility of working with your company. As I mentioned, I enjoy working outdoors and have a "green thumb." I welcome the chance to work extra shifts if available, and I'm happy to fill in on short notice.

I will call your office on Thursday to learn the status of my application.

Thank you again,  
John Jones

### **How Employers Will Consider Your Incarceration in Their Decision as to Whether to Hire You**

- An employer would more likely prefer to hire someone who has never been incarcerated rather than an ex-offender.
- It is your job to prove to potential employers that you are the correct person for their vacant job.
- The potential employer will consider how long ago the crime was committed, and whether you have shown that you have been rehabilitated. This is where the letters of recommendation are extremely important.
- If all other things make you a desirable potential employee, the employer may be willing to take a chance on hiring you. But make no mistake—he or she is taking a chance. Once you are hired, you need to work extra hard to prove that you are twice as competent as the employees who are not ex-offenders.

- It is important that the potential employer know for what crime(s) you were incarcerated. This will help him/her to place you in an appropriate job which does not cause undue pressure on you and/or put excessive risk to the employer and its customers. For example:
  - If you committed a robbery, the employer will probably not place you in a position where you would handle money.
  - If you committed a rape or sex crime, the employer will definitely NOT place you in a position where you would be alone with females or children (like as an installer or repair technician who enters peoples' homes).
  - If you have committed a murder, you have got to prove to the employer that you are truly rehabilitated.
- It is important to remember that being an ex-offender does not automatically rule you out from being hired. You must have confidence that you will find a job suitable to your skills and desires.
- Large companies are often more or less willing to hire ex-offenders, but some small companies feel that they have a religious directive to help their fellow man, including those who were once in prison.
- Employers who hire ex-offenders pay less federal tax than they would pay if they hired someone who is not an ex-offender. The program is called Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

### **What an Employer Expects From You After You are Hired**

- Go to work every day that you are assigned to work
- Be on time for work (including when you come back from breaks and lunch).
- If you are going to be late, are sick, or cannot go to work, call your supervisor as soon as your shift starts (or earlier) and explain the situation that has caused you to be unable to come to work. This courtesy will enable the employer to try to find someone else to cover for you.
- Be industrious; do more than is asked of you; volunteer for additional work.
- Volunteer for overtime; aside from making you look like an eager employee, it will increase your take-home pay (most employers pay time-and-a-half for overtime hours).
- Be pleasant, courteous, and cooperative with everyone with whom you come in contact.
- DO NOT USE DRUGS OR ALCOHOL; many employers insist on a substance-free workplace, and routinely test their employees.

- If you do not understand what your supervisor is asking you to do, ask him/her immediately for clarification. This is far better than assuming something, having your assumption turn out to be incorrect, and having to do the task all over again. This wastes the employer's time and money, and may cause other problems if other organizations were depending upon your completing a task by a certain time.
- If you have a problem of any kind at work, talk to your supervisor and ask him/her for recommendations on how to deal with it. Your supervisor will appreciate the fact that you are trying hard to succeed and demonstrate appropriate behavior.
- Dress appropriately. For females, do not wear revealing clothes, such as bare midriff tops or see-through attire. Both males and females should avoid wearing tee-shirts, jeans and sneakers (unless you work in a job suited for it, such as construction or grounds keeping). You do not need to wear a different outfit every day of the month; just make sure that what you wear is clean and pressed.
- When you do not know something, say "I do not know." When you make a mistake, say "I'm sorry." And when you are asked to do something, say "I will try."

### **Employee Benefits: What They Are, and Why They are Important**

- Employee benefits are things which employees receive which are not part of their "take home" wages, but nevertheless make it more financially attractive to work for that company.
- Employee benefits are a form of compensation.
- The more employee benefits an employer provides, the more attractive the company should look as a prospective employer.
- Sometimes companies which have good benefits have lower wages—but that is not always bad. Such a job may be very attractive to you, depending upon your personal and/or family situation. For example, an employer may pay for medical and dental insurance. This might well be more important to you than receiving an additional 50¢ an hour in your pay (*which, after all, is only \$20 more per week*). This should be part of your decision-making when you are attempting to decide for which of several employers to work.

Here are some typical employee benefits:

Benefits	Description
<b>Vacation</b>	<p>A period of time when you do not need to report to work, and the employer will pay you. Generally, employers start new people off with one week of vacation in the first year. For each year you work there, you gain more vacation days, so it is good to work for the same employer for a long time rather than switch employers.</p> <p>Some employers let you take vacation one day at a time, while others insist you take vacations in weekly increments.</p>
<b>Sick Pay and Disability Leave</b>	<p>This is when an employer will pay you for a day during which you did not work because you were ill. Like vacation, the number of days for which the employer is willing to pay you will increase as you have been on the job longer. For example, one employer will pay someone who has 25 years of service for one year of illness before separating them from the payroll.</p>
<b>Medical Insurance</b>	<p>This is when an employer lets you participate in their medical plan. Medical plans differ greatly. The two most common plans are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An insurance plan in which you pay a percentage of all your medical costs (<i>for example, 20 percent</i>) and the insurance company will pay the rest (<i>for example, 80 percent</i>). Usually a deductible must be satisfied, which means that you have to pay all the costs for the first several hundred dollars, and after that the insurance company will pay their percentage.</li><li>• A health maintenance organization (HMO), where you must use specific medical practitioners, and pay only a small fee for (or co-pay) each visit (<i>for example, \$5</i>).</li></ul> <p>Some employers offer you an option as to which of the two plans you may choose. Usually, one is more attractive than the other as a result of your family's particular needs.</p>

Benefits	Description
<b>Dental Insurance</b>	This is when the employer allows you to participate in its dental insurance plan. Typically, this coverage will pay for all preventive dentistry (for example, having your teeth cleaned twice a year), and will pay some fixed amount for all other dental work (like fillings, x-rays, crowns, or orthodontia).
<b>Uniforms</b>	Employer-provided uniforms are great in that they will save you money—you do not have to buy as many clothes, or wash as often! (You still have to wash your uniform.)
<b>Profit Sharing</b>	This means that when the company makes a profit, they share a portion of it with all of the employees. It is like a “bonus” for good performance.
<b>Savings Plans</b>	Many employers offer a 401K plan which allows you to save money and defer paying taxes on that money until much later—when you withdraw it, which is usually not before age 59. The good thing is that it allows you to accumulate money for retirement, and the interest accrues on a tax-deferred basis, so your money grows faster. Another excellent feature is that many employers contribute to it on your behalf. For example, one employer contributes 60 cents for each \$1 the employee contributes. This is a great return on your money!
<b>Pension</b>	Many ( <i>not all</i> ) employers put away money on behalf of all employees in order to provide a pension for their employees when they retire. Each company has different rules of eligibility—an employee must work a certain number of years and be a certain age. For example, if you work 25 years and are 60 years old, you may be eligible for a pension from that company. The longer you work for the company, the larger your pension will be. In some companies, if you retire after 25 years of work and are 60 years old, your pension might be as much as 50 percent of your pre-retirement wages.

Benefits	Description
<b>Tuition Assistance</b>	Many companies want to encourage their employees to improve their skills and knowledge. These companies will pay a portion ( <i>sometimes all</i> ) of the cost attending an approved course outside of work hours. These courses are typically connected in some way with the job, and reimbursement is dependent upon the grade which the employee gets. Many people decide to work for an employer long enough to obtain a college degree, at the employer's expense.
<b>Stock Purchase</b>	A few companies allow employees to purchase stock in the company ( <i>that is, become owners</i> ). In some cases the stock is sold to employees at a reduced price.

### **What to do with Your First Paycheck**

- Of course, when you get your first paycheck, you need to cash it so you can pay bills and have money to get back and forth to work.
- You do not need to use a check cashing store. In fact, you shouldn't use them because they charge too much! Besides, if you convert your paycheck to cash, you will need to purchase money orders to pay bills such as rent.
- A more economical and convenient easy way to handle the first paycheck (and all the others which you will earn) is to open a checking account at a local bank.
- With a checking account, you deposit your check and write checks to pay your bills. You may deposit your paychecks 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at an ATM (Automated Teller Machine) at the bank locations. When you need cash, you can use the ATMs to withdraw funds from your account—but try not to withdraw too often, because ATMs charge withdrawal fees.
- Because you can use ATMs, the only time you need to go inside the bank is to open your account.
- It is best if you open the checking account before you get your first paycheck. This is because the bank is only open during certain hours (although some are open during evenings and on Saturdays), and it may not be convenient for you to open your account immediately after you get your first paycheck. For example:
  - If your employer gives you your paycheck after your lunch hour, you probably will not be allowed to leave work and go to the bank to open your account.

That would mean that you would have to go to the bank that evening or the next Saturday.

- If your employer gives you your paycheck before your lunch break, and you go to the bank during your lunch hour to open your account, you may not be able to go to the bank, open your account, and get back before your lunch break is over. That would mean that you would be late for work, which is very bad (and may even get you fired).
- Some banks will allow you to open a checking account with any amount of money—meaning there is no minimum amount to open the account, and no minimum balance you must maintain. So you will be able to open the account before you start work and get your first paycheck.
- To open a checking account, you will need a photo ID. The bank will give you a few checks to use until your personalized checks are mailed to you. They will also give you a card to use at the ATMs.
- Of course, you will need to pay for your personalized checks (about \$13 for a box of 200; the cost depends on how fancy you want the checks to be).
- Banks charge fees. In general, they have several types of accounts. Each person has individual needs, so one type of account could work well for one person and not well at all for another. Sometimes banks charge a monthly fee for having the account, and sometimes they charge a fee for each check you write. The bank fees will cost you less than the fees charged by check cashing stores.
- “Direct Deposit” is when your employer sends your wages directly to the bank. You have immediate access to the funds. Your employer gives you the paycheck stub so you have a record of your wages and deductions, but no paycheck is attached. Direct Deposit is a wonderful service, because it saves you from having to go to the bank each payday to deposit your check. Your wages arrive immediately. You will only need to go to the ATM to withdraw cash. At some banks, people who use Direct Deposit are not charged any fee for their checking account, so it is a good deal in addition to being convenient.
- With all checking accounts, you need to do some work. You need to record each check in your checkbook register, and subtract it from your previous balance. You will also need to record each deposit and add it to your balance, that way you will always know how much money you have in the account. At the end of each month, the bank will send you a statement of your account. It will include a list of all deposits and checks which have cleared. You will need to follow the simple instructions to balance your checkbook register with the bank statement. If you do this faithfully each month, you will always have accurate records.

## BUDGET WORKSHEET

Item	Description	Estimated Monthly Amount Needed
Car, Insurance		
Car, License & Registration		
Car, Operating Costs	Includes gas, oil, tires, maintenance & repair	
Car, Personal Property Tax	Virginia residents only	
Car, Purchase	Car payment or lease payment	
Child Care or Child Support		
Clothing	Include shoes. If you wear uniforms, this could be lower than otherwise.	
Commuting, Food	Lunches at work ( <i>you save money and eat better if you bring a bag lunch from home . . .</i> )	
Commuting, Transportation	Metrorail and/or bus fare, or gas fare.	
Food	Include toiletries and cleaning supplies.	

Item	Description	Estimated Monthly Amount Needed
<b>Income Tax, Federal</b>	Multiply your gross wage (before taxes) by .15 (15 percent) (single, no dependents)	
<b>Income Tax, State or DC</b>	Multiply your gross wage by .10 (10 percent) (single, no dependents)	
<b>Insurance, Dental</b>	Perhaps your employer will pay some or all of this cost	
<b>Insurance, Life</b>	Perhaps your employer will pay some or all of this cost	
<b>Insurance, Medical</b>	Perhaps your employer will pay some or all of this cost	
<b>Lodging</b>	Rent or Mortgage	
<b>Medical &amp; Dental</b>	Costs not paid by insurance	
<b>Other Expenses</b>	Anything else not listed, such as a church tithe	
<b>Personal Hygiene</b>	Washing clothes, dry cleaner, haircuts	

Item	Description	Estimated Monthly Amount Needed
<b>Saving, General</b>	For a “rainy day” such as when the washing machine breaks down, or the refrigerator needs to be replaced, or you need a security deposit and three months rent in advance in order to move to a different apartment	
<b>Savings, Retirement</b>	This is the account that you shouldn’t withdraw from ever until you retire. Accumulating money in this account will allow you to retire at some point (after all, no one wants to work until they die....)	
<b>Social Security (OASDI)</b>	Multiply your gross wage by .0625	
<b>Social Security Medical Tax (Medicare)</b>	Multiply your gross wage by .0145	
<b>Grand Total Monthly Expenses</b>	LINE A	
<b>Required Weekly Rate of Pay</b>	LINE B (Source: Line A divided by 4.35)	
<b>Required Hourly Rate of Pay</b>	LINE C (Source: Line B divided by 40)	

**For Example, if your Grand Total Monthly Expenses is \$1,200, then your Required Weekly Wages would be \$ 276, and your Required Hourly Rate of Pay would be \$6.90**

Keep in mind that finding a job is the cornerstone to your success on parole. Gainful employment will enable you to pay your rent and pay for the basic necessities such as food and clothing. Employment will also give you a sense of purpose and build your self-confidence. Putting in a full day’s work is honorable and will help keep you on the “straight and narrow.” Having a job and building a good work history goes a long way in restoring the community’s faith in you as a trustworthy person deserving of a second chance in life. Good Luck!