

## **Introduction**

Any sincere discussion of restorative justice in this country would include the reintegration of prisoners released to rejoin American society after a period of incarceration. Petersilia (2003) cites this repatriation of over 1500 adults per day as among the greatest social challenges in the United States at present. Many former prisoners are confronted with daunting impediments to day to day survival as the result of limited resources. Options in securing the basic food, shelter, and employment upon which survival depends, become restricted as such individuals are marginalized. Disenfranchised ex-convicts are unlikely to receive adequate preparation to work and live on the outside as corrections budgets are increasingly strained. Rates of parole failure and recidivism provide sobering testimony to existing deficits in prisoner reentry programming (Richards & Jones, 1997). For those members of this population motivated toward legitimate personal development, support has characteristically been either inconsistent or nonexistent. Particularly for the growing number of former prisoners seeking to obtain undergraduate or graduate level college education as an avenue to a better life, prospects can appear discouragingly grim. An increasingly significant proportion of ex-convicts leave prison having attained college credit or degrees prior to prison, and in some cases while incarcerated, but are left without direction, support or encouragement after release. Indeed, it has become commonplace for universities to use criminal records to deny application for admission, financial aid, or employment (Richards & Jones, 1997).

It is important to recognize, however, that these former prisoners represent a potential and valuable resource, not only to larger society, but also to colleges and universities which can benefit from their specialized experience. Such contribution is evidenced in the work of the small but developing academic movement known as “Convict Criminology.” For years, ex-convict and non-convict academics have labored together to bring unique insight to bear on social issues, most notable the study of crime, its control and related social policy. As a group Convict Criminology describes itself as “...informally organized as a researching, writing and activist collective” (Convict Criminology.org, 2008). Its membership includes those convicts, exconvicts, and informed non-convicts, many holding advanced degrees, who research, teach and publish scholarly work on crime, corrections and associated topics. In addition, Convict Criminology members support and mentor evolving academicians who voluntarily find their way into its ranks (CC website), as well as creating educational opportunities for those still incarcerated through innovative programs such as “Inviting Convicts to college” instituted through the University of Wisconsin Osh-Kosh (Richards, et.al, 2006).

Richards and Ross (2004) cite the significant impact Convict Criminology has had in criminological inquiry through ethnography as seen throughout the published work of its membership. The pre-collective influence of researchers like Clemmer (1940/1958), who collected data on the convict social system as a sociologist employed by the Illinois DOC, have been profound. Perhaps the most noted convict criminologist, John Irwin, used his own experiences as an inmate in the California penal system to inform the study of jail admissions, and less visible processes within prison culture through a series of

published works (Irwin and Cressey 1962; Irwin 1970, 1980, 1985; Austin and Irwin 2001). McCleary (1978, 1992) a former state and federal prisoner, authored his “sociology of parole” through participant observer research with parole officers. Charles Terry (1997) who had been an inmate in both the Californian and Oregon state correctional systems, described the coping strategies used by prisoners in their interactions with prison officials. Richards and Jones (1997), both exconvicts, applied their “insider experience” to the study of inmate re-entry through community work release programs in Iowa ( *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, Vol.13). Finally, Richards and co-author Ross have published “Behind Bars: Surviving Prison” (2002) a detailed description of life inside prison; and “Convict Criminology” (2003), a textbook used in the “Inviting Convicts to College” program which offers chapters within by ex convicts who are former or current professors of Criminology/Criminal Justice across the country.

These are important examples of former prisoners employed as faculty at various universities creating their own literature ( Richards and Jones, 1997), contributions made by exconvicts to the advancement of social science research. Many more will come from established Convict Criminologists and those former prisoner students fighting their way through the maze of academia while bearing the label of ex-convict. Some will be lucky enough to find sympathetic and supportive faculty advisors to assist them on their journey. Regrettably, many more will give up on a college education due to frustration with structural impediments and/or a lack of useable resources. Ex-convict students bring with them an array of unique attributes and challenges to academic success. Similarly,

those charged with guiding these students through the undergraduate or graduate

4

college/university milieu, face a paucity of available resource material to draw on in their efforts to help such students find way.

Mindful of these precedents, and punctuated by personal experience, the idea for this project was born. Using our complimentary experiences as both graduate advisor to former prisoner students (Dr. Donna Selman), and ex-convict graduate student (myself), we set out to address the profound need for advisory resources in this area and fill the void.

In January of 2008 we sent out a survey from Eastern Michigan University, designed by Dr. Selman, consisting of four questions to provide direction in our quest. The aim was to draw on the experiences of faculty and students to determine the specific needs of former prisoner students and those involved with their advisement. The survey questions constructed to identify areas of concern, along with both successful and unsuccessful advising strategies included the following: 1) what are the most common problems you have encountered in mentoring and advising graduate students who are ex-convicts? 2) How do you overcome these barriers? 3) What are the most common questions you are asked by graduate students in your role as advisor/mentor? 4) What are your answers to these questions?

This invitation to share experiences and resources was sent out via e-mail to a pool of 263 academics through both the Convict Criminology and Critical Criminology list serves, along with other selected academic mailings. Responses were collected and collated from 138 participants (N=138). Follow up mailings, phone and in-person interviews, conducted by myself, provided depth and clarification to responses. In

addition to direct responses to the survey questions, we received significant , supportive anecdotal information reinforcing the need for such an advisory resource. Many respondents expressed frustration with the lack of centralized resource material. They were, however, able to provide us with key areas of concern and specific interventions that succeeded, or failed, from which a usable information base could potentially be constructed. The question by question synopsis of responses included here, identified consensus target areas of need and concern, which would ideally be addressed by such a Web-based resource. This proto-type could then be expanded, reconfigured, supplemented as needed, allowing for evolution into a comprehensive vehicle for the aspirations of exconvicts students and their advisors.

### **Survey Findings**

1) What are the most common problems you have encountered in mentoring and advising graduate students who are exconvicts?

- Financial aid, scholarship, fellowship, grants, assistantships, campus employment, housing, being denied to ex-con students, by universities.
- Convincing universities to invite ex-cons to apply for admission, and then to make them feel welcome once on campus. While most universities have staff trained to advise foreign students, racial/gender minorities, gays/lesbians, they have not begun to address the needs of ex-con students.
- Problems w/ parole officers who want them to work to pay fines, fees, costs, child support etc. Some P.O.s will support college, others will not.

- Persons currently incarcerated who want to continue their education.

Ex-con's status as "invisible minorities" (Richards): status may not be apparent w/o background check. Universities not prepared to counsel them about career choices.

- Many professions difficult, not impossible, to enter with a record, ex-cons may be enrolled in course of study, where upon graduation they will have problems finding employment.

- Issues involved with disclosure of status/record.

- Discussions of past misdeeds w/ faculty, peers, potential employers.

- The particularly low sense of self worth that ex-convict students have.

- Course of study as regards future employment, felony convictions may preclude students from working in a chosen field after graduation. This is a primary concern for ex-convict students in the application process, which itself, generates anxiety and confusion for these students.

- Providing adequate support to these special needs students, including creating user friendly classroom environs.

2) How do you overcome these barriers?

- Identify sources for funding and grants including assistantships/fellowships. Clarify to this student population that they do qualify for financial aid and other programs. In fact, ex-convict students are considered non-traditional students and therefore may benefit from priority eligibility. Further, the university financial aid office is the best source in seeking help and should be able to direct these students to appropriate funding sources such as FAFSA. Often, students with drug convictions incorrectly answer related

questions on their student aid report (SAR), not knowing that they are eligible, only convictions taking place while the student was receiving federal financial aid will disqualify them, and even then, those exclusions last only one or two years depending on the nature of the offense. Students can also be directed to federal student aid websites/hotlines (e.g. [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) or 1-800-4FED-AID) if they wish to enter or update their SAR on their own. Should these avenues be denied, private loans may be a viable option.

-Endorse the university hiring of ex-convict advisors to assist ex-con students with: feeling welcome on campus, problems or issues related to parole agencies, career planning, and future employment.

- Communicate that no state university system should allow discrimination by arrest or conviction record.

- Advocate transparency, criminal convictions are a matter of public record, disclosure will put ex-cons in a stronger position to receive the special mentoring/advising they might need and want. Such disclosure provides some protections in that once disclosed, graduate programs or employers won't be able to use that information to dismiss. Also, they do not want to give the impression that they have not really dealt with the harms they

may have caused and are hiding behind techniques of rationalization and **neutralization** which can backfire on them. Ultimately, it's up to the student.

- As regards any discussion of their past, take responsibility for ones past but don't let it devolve into personal. Rather, help students to focus on present and future professional aspirations, as well as important current policies/issues.

- Build up self-esteem, ex-con students need much special support and encouragement to believe they that they have a good chance of making it in college, even though public sentiment may suggest otherwise.
- Highlighting their experiences as non traditional students seems important.
- These students need to know that they can be a very positive force in helping others to understand that fear and unending retribution is harmful and unnecessary. Help them understand how they can take those types of questions/issues and refocus them into positive attributes that can build a better future for us all.
- Advocating criminology/criminal justice programming, as they will already be familiar with the material and can develop confidence and a sense of competence. They will become comfortable with a language in which other professionals discuss these issues and can get a sense of a larger context of their personal experiences.
- Encourage students to become familiar with the restorative justice perspective and labeling theory. Every human being has the right to voice and dignity and do not allow others to take that from you.
- Encourage students to develop an understanding of the positive insights they can bring from their experience. Having experienced the often arbitrary and capricious nature of our criminal justice system, they can utilize their life experience to bring insight into current social issues.
- Advise answering felony questions on admissions application truthfully (especially as they may relate to a declared major), as they can be guided early on to programs which offer the best chance of professional success.

- Make students aware of Convict Criminology and the network of supportive faculty as mentors/resources and encourage contact.
- create comfortable classroom environments for these students by engaging guest speakers (pro ex-con student) and through encouraging compassionate dialogue.
- Until such time as ex-convict advisors can be put in place, regular advisory staff will need to be especially attentive in order to integrate these students, particularly in regard to the admissions process. This will include diplomatic interventions with parole offices.
- Ex-convict students can be made aware that legal conviction expungement may be available to them.

3) What are the most common questions you are asked by graduate students in your role as advisor/mentor?

- Graduate students most often ask whether there will be a job available upon completion of their MA or PhD. Students are very concerned about the time and expense they devote to graduate study, and whether it will end with employment.
- How can funding be accessed?
- Do they disclose previous convictions when applying for admission or financial aid?
- Can ex-con students (or those still incarcerated) receive courses/credits by mail?
- How is the admissions process navigated/negotiated? From prison?
- How much information should be disclosed, and with whom?
- What is the best/right course of study?
- What are the options for additional support/resources?
- How will they fit in?

4) What are your answers to these questions?

Most of these questions are answered under # 2 above.

- Criminology/Criminal Justice programming is a biased, yet logical choice. However, student professional aspirations and advisor's ability to network with specific programs and professional fields will contribute significantly to course of study and career choices.

Working Convict Criminologists can provide inspirational examples of what can be achieved following prison.

- Students should be directed to the university's financial aid office, appropriate information sources, and they should be encouraged to apply for available assistantships or fellowships.

- As regards disclosure, transparency seems the best course of action.

- Credit by mail options vary by university and penal institution, advisors will need to research this, but Convict Criminology is an excellent resource.

- Advisors may need to correspond with, and run interference for, those still incarcerated, in addition to the extra attention they will need to provide through the admissions process, to those of ex-convict status.

- Again, transparency with a focus on present and future professional aspirations, as well as, current issues/policies, seems to offer the most protections in discourse. Individual advisors may direct students to faculty and peers which they deem most likely to be empathetic.

- Course of study addressed above.

- Additional support can be found in those faculty/staff who have and are, dealing with

mentorship/support. Again, the folks involved with Convict Criminology are a great resource.

- Ex-convict students will fit in to the degree that those of us who can, are willing to work to integrate them into our universities. They can bring unique perspectives/insights/experience to our programs, and they need to know that the punishment is over, that they have advocates.

This research indicates a genuine need for advisory resources as regards the growing population of former prisoner students in the social sciences. Further, it underscores the significant accomplishments and important contributions of ex-convict academics working in the fields of criminology and criminal justice. Such achievements in the future can only be secured through investments in time, effort and open dialogue on our campuses. It is hoped that these findings can be generalized to other disciplines which reflect increased college/university admissions of this specialized population. While this project was initially directed toward graduate students, it is likely that undergraduates (and non-students) will find useful materials within this resource as well. Finally, an invitation is extended to critique, suggest and generally explore ideas relevant to this Web resource. From the start, this project was intended to support and encourage ex convict students and their advisors, thereby improving the quality of life for all. To that end, input is gratefully accepted and greatly appreciated. Many thanks to all who supported this endeavor at every level.

## **Web Resources**

The proceeding prototype Web resource attempts to engage these concerns through categorical address of consensus target areas. Other identified areas of need were added as they presented themselves via discussion, or occurred to the researchers as the project progressed. Because the project originated in Michigan, some of the resource material reflects this. However, primarily federal resources have been included. The aim is to provide a national resource model, from which this and similar resources can grow.

Advisors and former prisoner students will make use of those resources which their own experience, particular universities/colleges/schools, and communities make available. To enable academic, and ultimately, life success, the idea is to support and supplement those already familiar and established resources. In that light we have, hopefully, anticipated many of the needs shared by ex-convict students and their families. No apologies for what has been overlooked. Point out to us what works, what doesn't, and what is missing, and we will sincerely and thoroughly consider changes. Best of luck to all.

## **Exconresources.com**

### **General**

These sites represent a good starting point in the quest for information and resources related to impending, or realized, release from incarceration.

[www.convictcriminology.org](http://www.convictcriminology.org)

Inspiration, published research, activism, social policy discussion, support and

encouragement for prisoners/former prisoners. Provided by ex-convicts and informed non-convict academics. Learn about the group, relevant published literature, innovative prison educational programming and the commitment to mentoring exconvicts academics. Be sure to check out links to Books and Relevant Articles and Chapters, Available additional links and related resources: The American Society of Criminology , National Policy Committee Papers, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, American Correctional Association, Fed CURE, Soros Foundation, Open Society Institute, Gorilla Convict Publications, and JFA Institute

[www.exoffender.org](http://www.exoffender.org)

This site posts a broad spectrum of services and resources available to former prisoners returning to Florida communities. It is included because sites of this type should be mandatory across state governments, as it contains comprehensive links. An excellent template for other states to follow.

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov) - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services site. This site provides supportive services, programs and resources for individuals or families. Information on: Aging, Disasters and Emergencies, Diseases and Conditions, Drug and Food, Families and Children, Grants and Funding, Policies and Regulations, Reference Collections, Resource Locators, Safety and Wellness and Specific Populations is available. Comprehensive info on safety and well being.

[www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs)

The Department of Human Services provides services and resources that can support former prisoner's transition back to community life. Family related services such as child care and support, domestic violence services, individual and family assistance

programs are highlighted. A variety of links can be accessed from this site to support ex-convict reentry. At [www.biblio.org/rcip/convicts.html](http://www.biblio.org/rcip/convicts.html), the Centerforce link provides information/resources for ex-convicts and those still incarcerated. Another comprehensive site offering support, educational guidance and advocacy for former prisoners/prisoners.

Access to information on: Parole Success, Education, Employment, Links/Resources, Finances, Health, Getting I.D., Driver's License and SSC, Substance Abuse and a host of directory info. Direct Services are provided in the following order: Children and Families Services, Transitional Services, Prisoner Services and Informational Services. Community based services and services to correctional facilities are included. Additional resources are available through links to: Resources for people in prison, Resources for prisoner's reentering society, Ex-offenders resources, Jobs for ex-cons at the Fortune Society, Books to read to children of incarcerated people, Critical records sites, Welfare Law Center, Stop Prisoner Rape, and more.

[www.impactpublications.com](http://www.impactpublications.com)

This site is a centralized resource for life skills and employment information of every description in preparing oneself to improve life after prison. From job skills/search to educational support, a great deal of published material is available. There is an Ex-Offenders link which offers resources on everything from Mental Health and Substance abuse/HIV, Community Reentry, Families/Relationships, Job Search and Life Skills, Women Ex-convicts and Housing/Financial Advice to Directives and Reference material.

Check out the available video: "After Prison: How the Ex-Convict Can Find A Place to

Live, Get Work and Stay Straight.”

[www.prisoners.com](http://www.prisoners.com) offers Parole Support Resources, a list of resources to support parole success. Each included section comes with its own list of links and materials specific to that area of interest. Employment Resources, Training Resources, Housing Resources, Counseling Resources and Financial Resources are included. Some sections are still in development as of this writing, but check out the links to the Parole Illusions menu and the Resources To Help In The Struggle menu.

By going to: [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov) , you can access government information sorted by topic. Various links will take you to resources for: Benefits and Grants (funding, financial aid, food stamps, etc.), Consumer Guides (credit reports, debt info, recalls etc.), Family/Home/Community (housing, human services), Health and Nutrition (Medical, health care, insurance, diet, food assistance, etc.) Jobs and Education (Employment, career and workplace info), and Reference and General Government (Libraries, forms, laws, etc.) among others. Also important here are links to Finding Federal Forms, Contacting Elected Officials and Replacing Vital Records.

**Reentry sites:** Supervision and support toward successful reentry into the community.

These sites represent the cooperative efforts of public and private entities, offering prisoners the resources necessary to successfully transition back into the community.

Michigan: [www.michpri.com](http://www.michpri.com), lists statewide sites and community coordinators with contact info. The 3 phase model Community Support Networking, Transition Planning/Services and Aftercare, Resource Links (includes bibliography) and MPRI

News are highlighted/outlined.

**Federal:** [www.doleta.gov/PRI/](http://www.doleta.gov/PRI/) , the U.S. Department of Labor has its own prisoner reentry initiative site. Assistance in Finding Employment, Services Referrals, Job/Life Skills, mentoring and educational support are provided through faith-based community organizations. Links to: ETA. Job and Career Info and Publications are available. Much of this site and the DOJ reentry site at: [www.reentry.gov](http://www.reentry.gov) , seems directed toward those involved with the supervisory or services provision end of reentry programming. There are some useful links however, for ex-cons via (DOJ) under: State Activists/Resources, Federal/National Resources, Training/Technical Assistance, and Publications.

**Support:** [www.prisonlinks.com](http://www.prisonlinks.com) , has 532 links in 121 categories, very useful resources across a wide range of subject matter including Reentry, Family Resources, National Support and Reform Orgs., Education and USA State links (resources categorized by state), also articles and publications by and for prisoners/former prisoners.

The above link can be accessed from [www.prisontalk.com](http://www.prisontalk.com) , an online community which provides a forum for former prisoners to discuss concerns and receive advice and support from those with similar experiences. It allows ex-cons to feel connected to someone who understands their situation, while providing dialogue, resources and advice for those faced with life after prison.

**Additional Resources:**

[www.womenandprison.org](http://www.womenandprison.org)

[www.ncsconline.org](http://www.ncsconline.org) - corrections and parole resource guide

[www.karisable.com/crpunres.htm](http://www.karisable.com/crpunres.htm) - punishment resources

[www.saferfoundation.org](http://www.saferfoundation.org) - Safer Foundation, providing reentry, parole, education

17

employment, support and advocacy services.

[www.prisonactivist.org](http://www.prisonactivist.org) - Prison Activist Resource Center, offering progressive

information on prisons and the criminal prosecution system. Check out the PARC's Prisoner Support Directory.

[www.liberationprisonproject.org](http://www.liberationprisonproject.org) - A social service project driven by Buddhist spiritual principles.

[www.fedcure.org](http://www.fedcure.org) - Federal Cure, advocacy for federal prisoners, system reform and information resources.

[www.prisonerlife.com](http://www.prisonerlife.com) - prisoner support and networking with links to prison related sites.

[www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org) - American Friends Service Committee, site driven by Quaker philosophy which is dedicated to social justice, service and peace.

[www.gorillaconvict.org](http://www.gorillaconvict.org) - Gorilla Convict Publications, where convict authors publish books and stories while incarcerated. This site is not for the meek.

[www.soros.org](http://www.soros.org) - Open Society Institute, promoting human rights and economic, legal and social reform related to policy issues.

[www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs) - wide range of resources available for ex cons and their families.

<http://safetyandjustice.org> - Western Prison Project has a listed national database of service and support organizations. Legal, Child and Family, Medical Resources and more.

### **Academic/Education Resources**

Since primary academic support must come from individual universities, colleges and career schools, much of this material addresses financial aid. Some educational

counseling and family education support information is included.

By going to <http://querynytimes.com> (education), access is available to multiple sites offering education assistance to felons/ex-cons. For example,

[www.myFreeDegree.com](http://www.myFreeDegree.com) will connect to Scholarships, Grants and other sources of federal financial aid. Also on this page, click on Ex Felon Education which will take you to vocational ed. resources and other job boards for ex cons. Ex Offender Funding provides additional sites for academic and employment related funding. A Tuition link offers multiple sites with tuition assistance programs as well as more sites for Ex Felon Jobs (Hiring Felons) and a Grants link.

[www.grants2008.com](http://www.grants2008.com) , has information on educational grants of \$10,000 to \$249,000.

Resource info and guidance is available on pursuing free government education funds.

Federal Student Aid - go to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) for the application for federal student aid with instructions, deadline and associated eligibility requirements. Note: there are similar Web sites which will require payment to submit the application. This site is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education which points out that the first “F” in FAFSA stands for free. Use this one.

[www.CourseAdvisor.com/Aid](http://www.CourseAdvisor.com/Aid) , provides information on schools offering federal aid assistance. This database contains resources/links with Colleges, Universities and Career Schools on: Federal Student Loans, Scholarships and Grants, Employer-Based Financial Aid, Tuition Reimbursement Programs, Direct Payment Through Third Party Billings and

FAFSA Applications.

[www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) , has blogs about education grants with related links: Government

Grants, Educational Grants, Government Grant Book, Government Grant Funding, Employment Training Grants, Free Grant Money and Federal Education Grants.

[www.scholarshipamerica.org](http://www.scholarshipamerica.org) - provides some scholarship information with a Student Resources section which outlines: Open Scholarships, Resources for Students and Application Tips.

At [www.cfti.jobs/education.html](http://www.cfti.jobs/education.html) , Certification For the Incarcerated. Go to Scholarships, Grants, Help, Loans and Links for information on a variety of financial aid for education including: FAFSA loans, Ex Offender Scholarships, Fast Student Loans, Free College grants and more resource material.

<http://www.education.washingtonpost.com/site> , provides access to information on more than 500 Online Accredited Colleges with additional resources.

[www.DiscoverStudentLoans.com](http://www.DiscoverStudentLoans.com) -Quick, Zero-Fee Student Loans with a rewards program for graduation.

[www.AssistanceGrantKit.org](http://www.AssistanceGrantKit.org) , has free applications and instructions on how to obtain federal government education grant funds.

[www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/research/dir1.html](http://www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/research/dir1.html) , under the Education link here, there is an excellent collection of universities/colleges, most with program descriptions.

[www.locategovernmentgrant.com](http://www.locategovernmentgrant.com) - Employment and training Administration sponsored site. A guide to finding and securing government grant money to finance Education as

well as: Housing, Debt Repair, Clothing, Gas, etc. This is a consumer advocacy group concerned with providing access to free government funds. Top rated grants and sites are reviewed with links to research guides, reviews of specific grant programs and ETA.

## **Additional Resources**

[www.aimiuwu.com](http://www.aimiuwu.com) , is a non-profit organization providing assistance to African

American children in math, science, drama and dance.

[www.upromise.com](http://www.upromise.com) , offers free services to help individuals to save money for education or to pay off existing student loans.

[www.collegepreprx.com](http://www.collegepreprx.com) , provides educational counseling for high school students.

[www.BoysAndSchools.com](http://www.BoysAndSchools.com) - educational support for young males.

[www.careersandcolleges.com](http://www.careersandcolleges.com) - grants for education

College Aid at [www.FastWeb.com/Financial-Aid](http://www.FastWeb.com/Financial-Aid), educational funding.

[www.FindTuition.com/Scholarships](http://www.FindTuition.com/Scholarships)

Student Loans - [www.usgrantsguide.com](http://www.usgrantsguide.com), educational grants.

[www.collegedata.com](http://www.collegedata.com) - info on aid programs and application.

Convict Criminology at: [www.convictcriminology.org](http://www.convictcriminology.org)

<http://usgovinfo.about.com> - Government Aid, Money/Grants and links to other national/local resources

## **Employment**

For employment assistance, go to: [www.cfti.jobs](http://www.cfti.jobs) for a broad spectrum of state and

federal employment resources for former prisoners including: How to Get Started, Job-Resources, Education and Certification, Starting a Business, Rehab/Drugs/Addiction.

21

Especially noteworthy are links to: Night Crawler(“1<sup>st</sup> job board for ex-convicts“), Felony

Friendly Temp Services, Permanent Felony Friendly Job Services, Discussions and Forums (Prison Talk), with books and links in each section.

At [www.communitydispatch.com](http://www.communitydispatch.com) , news and information is offered by the Employment and Training Administration (U.S. Dept./Labor) on: Government Grants and Ex-Convict Employment with links to: simplyhired, Newjobinfo.com, indeed, Job Search USA, Monster and Careerbuilder.com. Available employment is organized regionally by zip code. Sponsored links: [www.USAGovernmentGrants.org](http://www.USAGovernmentGrants.org) , [www.GrantsReady.com](http://www.GrantsReady.com) , Arbor.com. All provide resources for securing employment and/or education, technical training with additional funding resources. [www.hard2hire.org](http://www.hard2hire.org) , has job placement resources for ex-cons. [www.careerbookstore.com/ex\\_offender\\_resources.shtml](http://www.careerbookstore.com/ex_offender_resources.shtml) , provides resources on all aspects of achieving/finding employment success for ex cons. Career guidance and support is well covered including: Educational Guidance, Employment and Training, Career Counseling, Interviewing, Resume Writing, Job Search Tips, Searching the Internet and Networking, with workbooks, guides and directories available for assistance. [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) - offers online business chat which requires some digging to find out how the Small Business Administration can support ex -cons. However, there are resources available here for former prisoners interested in small business loans and services once parole is completed, as eligibility begins after that point.

[www.prisoners.com/parolere.html](http://www.prisoners.com/parolere.html) , has a great deal of national employment resources under Parole Support Resources. Go to Employment Resources for links to: Monster,

22

American Career Information Net, The American Job Bank Listings, American Service Locator, Career Advisor, Career Magazine Job Listings, Career Shop Job Listings, Employment Listings, Web Job Listings with a Training Resources section available.

At [www.ehow.com/how\\_2033874\\_job\\_on\\_parole.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2033874_job_on_parole.html) , information is available on “How to Find a Job If You’re on Parole.” There is a step-by-step guide with advice on seeking employment in specific fields including: Business, Health, Computers and more. Links to: “[www.JobsOnline.net](http://www.JobsOnline.net) , [www.career-finder.org/Employment](http://www.career-finder.org/Employment)” , as well as Videos and Articles (eg. “How to Find Information on the Benefits of the Parole System“) can be very helpful.

[www.job-hunt.org](http://www.job-hunt.org) , offers excellent job search resources. Sections on: Getting Started (job search advice and tips), Job Sites and Career Resources and State Employment Offices. (State by state contact information/resources, with a subsection on Unemployment Benefits) and Sponsored Links. There is a great subsection on Other Job Sites and Career Resources which includes: Employment Super Sites, General, Classified Ads, Resumes, Newspaper Searches, Recruiting Agencies, Job Fairs, Other Link Lists, and Reference Material. Be sure to check out the Networking and Support Groups link.

Go to [www.msnbc.com/id/24842903](http://www.msnbc.com/id/24842903) or [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) , for examples of tax credits available to employers who hire ex -cons. Former prisoners can point out to prospective employers who hire ex cons that up to \$10,000 in tax credit can be obtained by hiring former prisoners. By going to: <http://cchgroup.com> , a Business Incentives Guide can be accessed with details on how such credits work and how to apply for them. Similarly,

23

the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit program is outlined at:

[www.usdoj.gov/wotcddata.cfm](http://www.usdoj.gov/wotcddata.cfm) , with associated resource material.

The Northeast Midwest Institute at [www.nemw.org](http://www.nemw.org) is a non-profit research

organization which offers through listings of federal resources. A wide range of federal agencies and departments can be accessed under Federal Resources. The State Resources link will take you to state by state resources for employment such as state departments of labor as well as links to other reports/data/resources.

Also at: [www.doleta.gov/](http://www.doleta.gov/) , the U.S. Department of Labor Employment Training Administration has employment, training and credentials information with access to state and federal resource material through: USA.gov Sections include: Find Job and Career Info, Grants and Contracts, ETA Library and Regions and States, among others. Check out Find Job & Career Information for Self Assessments, Career Options, Worker Rights and Gaining Credentials, as well as other areas. By adding /pri to the URL, reentry services/resources are available.

In Michigan:

Go to: [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) , to access the Michigan Talent Bank, Michigan Jobs and Career Portal, JET (Jobs, Education and Training), Careers in Manufacturing, with additional Job related links to training and employment board sites. Similar websites exist in many states providing this kind of info, warranting further research.

From the above site one can go to: [www.michiganworks.org](http://www.michiganworks.org) , site allowing access to the Michigan Works! System. It is a network of service centers and resource information designed to prepare individuals for economic self sufficiency. A county-by-county

24

breakdown of services is available along with links to the Michigan Unemployment Website, ADA disability information, and Veterans and **Seniors** among others. Job training and assistance is the focus, with Site Map and Conference Info available .

The Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency can be accessed at:

[www.michigan.gov/uia](http://www.michigan.gov/uia) for information and resources on UI benefits, Contacting Departments and Agencies, Online Services, and most importantly, Forms and instructions for application. Check out the Publications section for detailed fact sheets on UI benefits, application and eligibility along with associated areas and resources.

**Additional Resources:**

[www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov) - state and federal resources across a variety of subjects including employment and career information.

[www.nemw.org/amc5.htm](http://www.nemw.org/amc5.htm) - info on the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), providing job training and associated assistance to economically disadvantaged adults. Most often training through JTPA is free, or comes with employer reimbursement of various degrees.

At [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) , enter key words “Job Finding” and get literally thousands of options in books which cover everything from resumes, interviewing, job search and career guidance to links for job opportunities and job search.

The Centerforce site/link at [www.ibiblio.org/rcip/convicts.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/rcip/convicts.html) , has employment resources, directories and reference material as well as a great deal of additional information to support former prisoners.

[www.impactpublications.com](http://www.impactpublications.com) - centralized employment and life/job skills resource.

[www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs) - former prisoner reentry support resources.

25

[www.myjob.education.com](http://www.myjob.education.com)

[www.ffp.org](http://www.ffp.org) - Federal Funding Programs

**Substance Abuse/Mental Health/**Domestic** Violence**

Resources for ex-cons in need of support and services for individual or family

issues of Addiction, Mental Health and Domestic Violence.

The most direct path to this information is via the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). The SAMHSA website at [www.samhsa](http://www.samhsa) is a clearinghouse for information on substance abuse/mental health treatment. Links to Programs, published material and a plethora of related links are available (eg. “Suicide Prevention Lifeline.org“). This is a comprehensive site with links and helplines (various) numbers available. The Facility Locator will allow access to current drug alcohol treatment programs across the country, along with a Mental Health Treatment tab and supplemental resources available for both areas.

Also useful is the **Help guide** at [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org) , originating in California, this site includes links and resources nationally, which address a variety of topics including: Addiction, Domestic Violence, Mental Health, Parenting, with related educational resources and associated professional directories.

### **Substance Abuse -**

Support for achieving and maintaining sobriety can be found at:  
[www.alcoholicsanonymous.org](http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.org) Information is available here for any and all aspects of sobriety support through a 12 step approach. The Service for Members link, provides general information necessary to becoming involved with AA, or expanding involvement.

26

The Media Resources link will take you to material for understanding and sharing AA’s message. How To Find AA Meetings directs you to locations of meetings across the country.

[www.na.org](http://www.na.org) , provides a slightly different take on supporting sobriety and recovery from

drugs/narcotics addictions. Similar services, literature and meetings locator available.

Faces and Voices of Recovery at [www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/resources) , support and resources are available through a nationally organized community of addiction recovery. Individual Stories, Mutual Support, Publications, Contact information for recovery community organizations, by state, Research, Events and Regional information can be accessed. Especially helpful is the Recovery Resources Links, which provides extensive state, national and federal government links to organizations, programs and information supporting recovery.

For help finding treatment facilities/programs, go to: [www.1800NoDrugs.com](http://www.1800NoDrugs.com) for a national rehab locator.

At [www.addictionsearch.com](http://www.addictionsearch.com) , current addiction/treatment/recovery information is available. This site has nationwide resources for chemical dependency including a “free 24 hour Addiction Helpline”. Other services/resources include: published literature on addiction and treatment (includes Recent Articles), national Statistics, Treatment Programs/Centers (with a search engine for treatment facilities and addiction info), Prevention info, links to information on Social Issues and associated Organizations. This is a centralized source for comprehensive substance abuse treatment and addiction research.

27

[www.soberrecovery.com](http://www.soberrecovery.com) , provides online recovery and mental health resources. Access is available to a wealth of addiction resources including: Detox Centers, Drug/Alcohol Rehabs, AA/NA, Al Anon, a Substance Abuse Glossary, Gambling Addiction Resources, articles and published literature and Forums. It also has a breakdown of treatment options categorized by: Key Links (financing, featured centers, resource directory,

professional, etc.), Treatment Phases (Detox, Extended Care, Outpatient, etc.), Client Type (Men, Women, Teens, adults, mature adults, etc.), Special Focus Programs (Faith-based, non-12 step, Holistic, Se addiction/eating disorders), Self help, Relapse Prevention etc.), by drug of choice (alcohol, cocaine, meth, etc.), and recovery resources by state and region.

Go to: [www.dmoz.org/Health/Addictions/Substance\\_Abuse/Resources/](http://www.dmoz.org/Health/Addictions/Substance_Abuse/Resources/) for extensive and comprehensive listing of links on addiction, recovery and mental illness. A wide range and variety of directories are available here with Organizations, **Help lines**, Libraries of Addiction and Treatment focused publications, Recovery Networks, and Support Groups. This is part of the Open Directory Project, a vast online resource in a dozen plus languages, maintained by volunteers. Most of the resource information in the directories search engine is up to date and edited regularly.

In Michigan, go to [www.michigan.gov/mdch](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch) for access to the Michigan Department of Community Mental Health which offers programs and services for mental health and substance abuse. Departments and agencies within the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Administration can be accessed through this website along with specific programming and resources for: Domestic Violence, Addiction, Mental Health and a

28

wide range of health treatment and prevention related issues. Links include Site Maps to virtually any health related concern faced by former prisoners and their families. This is also a good place to look for both marriage and death records if needed.

### **Additional Resources**

[www.way2hope.org/addiction.htm](http://www.way2hope.org/addiction.htm) - addiction management and recovery books.

At [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) , add to the URL: /Addiction-Recovery-Tools-Practical-Handbook/clp107619206760r,/Truth-About-Addiction-Recovery-Stanton/clpl/0671755207 , for practical handbooks on recovery from addiction. [www.hazelden.org/bookstore](http://www.hazelden.org/bookstore) - books and resources on addiction and recovery.

## **Mental Health**

[www.mental-health-matters.com/](http://www.mental-health-matters.com/) , provides information and resources on Mental Health, Self Help and Psychology. There are tabs which access info on: Disorders, Treatments, Articles, Self Help, Advocacy, Symptoms, Medication, Research, Books and Events. It offers a Therapist Locator and Site Map which takes you to an array of resources for Mental Health Education, Crisis Management, Support and other Websites associated with Get Mental Help Inc.

At [www.athealth.com/Consumer/tcenter/](http://www.athealth.com/Consumer/tcenter/), access to an extensive national directory for treatment centers and practitioners, with links to information on: Disorders, Related Issues/Articles, a Resource Center, Bookstore, Self Help and Medication. Information is organized nationally by state with a treatment center locator available.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) at [www.nimh.nihgov/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nihgov/index.shtml) , provides information and research on the treatment and prevention of mental disorders

29

and associated mental health issues. This site is largely directed toward mental health professionals, however, a great deal of valuable resource material for those trying to understand and address mental illness can be found here.

Be sure to check out the already mentioned SAMSHA site and link to the National Mental Health Information Center at [www.mentalhealth.samsha.gov/links](http://www.mentalhealth.samsha.gov/links) for extensive links to mental health treatment and recovery resources. Organizations, Online

Resources, a Mental Health Services locator, an MH dictionary, Professional Info, and FAQ's are available. Under Mental Health Links, related links to mental health resources on the internet, Federal Websites and Research, Technical Assistance and Training sites are provided for additional resource material.

A SAMSHA sponsored site, What A Difference A Friend Makes at [www.whatadifference.org](http://www.whatadifference.org) , provides national resources and information on mental illness. There is a Mental Health Services locator, as well as a Partner Resources tab which allows access to national support/resource organizations with contact info. The Support tab is especially useful for former prisoners struggling with a family members mental illness. The Learn tab will take you to resources and information on a broad spectrum of disorders and recovery options. Along with a Media Center tab (PSA's and published material), there is a direct link (under Suicide Prevention) to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline site with crisis intervention info and phone numbers available.

Mental Health America offers a site at: [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org) , which provides extensive resources for mental health intervention and information. A Crisis Line, Therapist and

Treatment locators are available. Under Information, find topical information, Disorders and Treatments, Medication info and FAQ's. The Help link offers assistance to those in crisis, where to look for treatment ASAP, advice/info about paying for care and guidance about approaches to treatment. An Action link gives you info on policy issues and advocacy relevant to needed change in the country, mental health policies and service provision.

Additional advocacy and policy resource material in this area can be found at [www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org) . The Treatment Advocacy Center (TAC), is a non-profit organization committed to the provision of quality psychiatric care. This is largely a discussion site but resources for those facing barriers to mental health treatment are available.

A useful site for former prisoners with stress, panic or anxiety issues is:

[www.stressrelease.com](http://www.stressrelease.com) , for Anxiety and Panic Recovery Resources. There is a Symptoms Checklist, Suggested Interventions, Workshops and Counseling Service links, and a host of resource material for those challenged by the stress of transitioning out of prison and into community life.

### **Additional Resources**

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) - supportive suicide prevention resources.

[www.usdirectory.com](http://www.usdirectory.com) - features mental health services locator (national), as well as Substance abuse and DV treatment locators.

In Michigan - visit [www.michigan.gov/mdch](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch) , for mental health and substance abuse resources, information and treatment. Health treatment (conventional), prevention, DV,

31

programs, and vital records services also available.

### **Domestic Violence/Abuse/Sexual Assault**

The Domestic Violence **Help guide** at:

[www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic\\_violence\\_abuse\\_help\\_treatment\\_prevention.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_help_treatment_prevention.htm) ,

provides extensive resources for domestic violence/battery/abuse help, treatment, intervention and prevention, Links for Emergency/Crisis Help including the National Domestic Violence Hotline, are available. Additional links take you to Information,

Organizations, Services and Publications related to issues of DV including a Shelter Locator.

At [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org) , a Family Violence Prevention Fund sponsored site, access to national/regional resources for intervention, education and information regarding domestic violence victims, perpetrators and treatment is provided. Under the Resources tab, extensive links are provided which address a continuum of issues related to battery/domestic abuse. Especially noteworthy is the Men and Fathers link which is directed toward those men interested in ending violence against women and children. Other tabs/links offer equally comprehensive resource material on DV.

The Stop Abuse For Everyone (SAFE) site at [www.safe4all.org](http://www.safe4all.org) , offers services publications, and training to those who are typically marginalized by conventional DV services. Straight Men, GLBT Victims, Teens, and the Elderly are the focus of this site. National resource material including a Finding Help Guide, Support Group locators, Resource List and published literature are provided as well as links to affiliated organizations.

32

[www.spr.org/en/resourceguides/amin.sap](http://www.spr.org/en/resourceguides/amin.sap) - Stop Prisoner Rape offers a Survivor Resource Guide for victims of prison rape and their families. National/Regional Resources, Legal and Psychological Counseling, Programs, Legal and Self Help resources, books and reports are available. A breakdown by state of counseling and support services with contact info is provided.

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org) - Rape Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN). This site provides access to the country's "largest anti-sexual assault organization". The Get Help/Get

Help Now tabs get you to the National Sexual Assault Hotline either by phone or online. There is a Victims Services link which takes you to more hotline and resource info, as well as the Rape Crisis Center Information page. Get Info tab allows access to additional sexual assault resources: Prevention, Recovery from Sexual Assault, Reporting, State/Fed. Resources and other Links.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) - enter "sexual abuse, domestic violence" etc. in the search window and find extensive literature on violence and abuse of most descriptions through both victim and offender P.O.V. with treatment and/or informational resources available.

At [www.stopviolence.com](http://www.stopviolence.com), a comprehensive site is provided, exploring solutions to a broad range of violence, sexual assault and hate crimes. This site offers a collection of resources to support individual and collective responses to violence in our society. Under About Victimization and for Survivors are Resources for Victims and Survivors a variety of resource material is available including: links to the U.S. Dept. of Justice Help for Victims Services. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault contains information for survivors of rape and sexual abuse, as well as a link to the National Clearinghouse on

33

Child Abuse and Neglect is provided. Additional resources on DV, Family Violence, Teen Dating Violence, Stalking and much more can be accessed by following the indicated links.

### **Additional Resources**

[www.mcadv.org](http://www.mcadv.org) - Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence provides excellent, comprehensive resources on this, and related topics through the Internet Gateway link. From the Michigan Resource Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence a multitude of resources and associations, both state and federal, can be

accessed. This includes organizations and clearinghouses related to DV, Battery, Rape and Abuse, both for survivors and perpetrators.

[www.emedicinehealth.com/sexual\\_assault.htm](http://www.emedicinehealth.com/sexual_assault.htm)

[www.mencanstoprape.org](http://www.mencanstoprape.org)

[www.safehousecenter.org](http://www.safehousecenter.org) - DV and sexual assault services/resources

### **Medical / Prescription Assistance**

These sites offer medical/medication support for former prisoners and their families. However, many universities/colleges provide medical care as part of enrollment.

[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) - This site provides access to information on health care and prescription drug assistance across the country. Links to Medicare/Medicaid enrollment, Eligibility, Prescription Drug Plans, Preventative Services, Health Records, Finding a Doctor or Medical Equipment/Services/Providers, Home Health Agencies, Nursing Facilities, Publications and helpful phone numbers and websites are available.

34

Outside of Medicare/Medicaid financial assistance with medical care and procedures can be found at the following sites:

[www.genome.gov](http://www.genome.gov) - this site, although part of the National Institute of Health Research, has links to: Assistance With Paying For Medical Care, Financial Aid For Medical Treatments, Assistance With Paying For Medications, Assistance With Insurance Issues, as well as links to the Department of Health and Human Services ( [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov) ), Government Benefits ( [www.govbenefits.gov](http://www.govbenefits.gov) ), Health Resources and Services Administration ( [www.mchd.hrsa.gov](http://www.mchd.hrsa.gov) ), Maternal and Child Health Bureau

( [www.ctibbs@hrsa.gov](mailto:www.ctibbs@hrsa.gov) ), Families With Children With Special Needs

( [www.mchb.hrsa.gov](http://www.mchb.hrsa.gov) ). These are federal assistance programs with a breakdown of service organizations and contact info for each section.

Free Rx drugs at: [www.myrxadvocate.com](http://www.myrxadvocate.com) (MI) and [www.scdn.org](http://www.scdn.org) (federal).

Rx drug assistance at: [www.pfizerhelpfulanswers.com](http://www.pfizerhelpfulanswers.com) - go to the Program Finder for Rx assistance programs.

At [www.thebeehive.org](http://www.thebeehive.org) , information about paying for health care, free and low cost assistance to those with limited resources. Resource material on: Medicaid, Medicare, Private Health Insurance, Free and Low Cost Clinics, Prescription Assistance Programs and Cobra are available through this national database. Associated links/resources: Health and Fitness, Find and Pay For Health Care, Free and Low Cost Health Insurance for Children, and an Information link are also provided.

About.com at [www.USgovinfo.about.com](http://www.USgovinfo.about.com) , lists a variety of federal resources for health care related assistance. In addition to Medicare/Medicaid and SSA programs, the Health

35

Care Financing Administration (HCFA), Health Insurance for Children - How to Apply, Veterans Administration - Health Benefits and Services along with links to info on Food/Nutrition and Children/Families as well.

[www.123healthplan.com/healthplans.aspx](http://www.123healthplan.com/healthplans.aspx) offers low cost, affordable health coverage info to those in need with a toll free number for questions and details.

In Michigan:

<http://healthinsuranceinfo.net> - this is a consumer resource for obtaining and maintaining Health Care Insurance in the state.

[www.michigan.gov/mdch](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch) - Michigan's Department of Community Health provides info,

programs and other resources for adults/seniors, children and families with links to: Departments/Agencies, Online Services, Health Care Coverage, Pregnancy, Mental Health/Substance Abuse, Prevention, Records and more with extensive links provided.

### **Additional Resources**

[www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov) - federal assistance for children and families.

<http://www.cancer.gov> - financial assistance and other resources for people with cancer

[www.medco.com](http://www.medco.com) - online pharmacy offering reduced cost prescription medications

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov) - federal public health and medical assistance

### **Legal Assistance**

Universities/colleges may or may not have legal services available for students. Here are some alternatives available, as there are a host of legal aid/assistance sites available either free, low cost or Pro Bono.

36

[www.equaljusticeworks.org/usmap](http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/usmap) , will get you to a state by state listing of participating attorneys.

The federal Legal Services Corporation [www.lsc.gov](http://www.lsc.gov) , provides a nationwide Legal Assistance Locator along with programs currently available through LSC.

[www.legalhelpwebsite.com/](http://www.legalhelpwebsite.com/) , has legal advisors prepared to answer questions in an outline format.

[www.getlegal.com](http://www.getlegal.com) , offers an Attorney Locator, as well as a Legal Information Center and a Legal Help, Tools and Resources link(s).

[www.Attorneylink.us](http://www.Attorneylink.us) - offers a free attorney locator (nationwide), with free evaluation

and consultation services.

LawHelp.org at [www.lawhelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org) , provides low and moderate income people with assistance in finding free legal aid programs in their own communities. Free legal aid referrals and information can be accessed by using the State List function. You will be directed to appropriate providers in your area.

The American Bar Association at [www.abanet.org/legalservices/findlegalhelp/home.cfm](http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/findlegalhelp/home.cfm) , provides a Consumers Guide to Legal Help with state by state assistance in finding an attorney or securing legal information. In addition to the Free Legal Help link, Court Information, Self Help, and Trouble With a Lawyer may be especially useful for former prisoners.

Through [www.ptia.org/services.htm](http://www.ptia.org/services.htm) , a directory of organizations which provide free legal assistance to eligible clients can be accessed.

At: [www.freeadvice.com](http://www.freeadvice.com) , free legal advice is available on a wide range of topics

37

including:

criminal law, business law, employment and family law, among others. There is also a Find a Lawyer function at this site which locates attorney services across the country.

In Michigan: [www.AffordableHelp.org](http://www.AffordableHelp.org) offers free legal assistance in matters related to child custody/concerned citizens looking for guidance.

[www.michiganlegalaid.org](http://www.michiganlegalaid.org) , provides assistance to low income residents with legal issues. There is an Attorney and Organization/Service finder organized by zip code, along with a search engine for Published Literature/Documents on a subject, and an Automated MI. Court Forms function available.

## **Additional Resources**

The American Civil Liberties Union at [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org) offers significant resources on legal and rights issues. Not necessarily legal aid, but its Action Center link has some useful educational info for students and concerned citizens looking for guidance.

[www.webcrawler.com](http://www.webcrawler.com) - by typing in “free legal help” many of the sites mentioned above and a great deal of other state, regional, and federal resources becomes available.

[www.soros.org](http://www.soros.org) - The Open Society Institute promotes economic, legal and social reform related to policing issues.

## **Children/Families/Parenting**

These are centralized resources, primarily national, to support exconvicts with families For Food Assistance, go to the U.S.D.A., [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) Food and Nutrition Service link for access to the Food Stamp Program. How to Apply For Benefits, Eligibility, and Hotline info are among the many resources and services available here.

38

Use the FNS search engine or browser to investigate Programs, Publications, Outreach Services, Emergency Assistance and more. As well as, supplemental links/materials on related topics. Check out the USDA home page for family services and programs addressing other areas of concern.

American Second Harvest at [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org) , operates a national Food Bank Network with a Food Bank Locator connecting you to a food rescue organization/bank by State and/or ZIP code. The included Site Map may direct you to information resources, and the Related Links offers extensive organizational resources.

In Michigan:

[www.FoodGathers.org](http://www.FoodGathers.org)

[www.gcfb.org](http://www.gcfb.org) - Gleaners Food Bank

[www.usdirectory.com](http://www.usdirectory.com) - Michigan Food Banks and Services

At [www.childcare.gov](http://www.childcare.gov) , a wealth of federal government info and resources on childcare is available. This site offers guidance on finding: Choosing and Paying for Childcare in your

area. Links to: Providers, Research, Agencies and relevant Topics are among the many resources provided here. Issues ranging from Abuse/Neglect and School, to Behaviors are covered in a comprehensive fashion.

The Administration for Children and Families at: [www.acf.hhs.gov/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/) , is another comprehensive federal site for info and resource material for the former prisoners who have children and/or families. Services links to: Child Care and Support, ACF Programs, Energy Assistance, Head Start and an ACF Program Office Locator are among the resources offered. Family Assistance and Child Welfare links are also provided.

For Information about parenting:

39

[www.parenting.com](http://www.parenting.com) provides advice on children, behavior, and pregnancy which may be useful to former prisoners.

At [www.parenting.org](http://www.parenting.org) , help, guidance and support for parents including school, behavioral and disciplinary issues can be accessed.

The Health and Parenting Center at: [www.webmd.com/parenting](http://www.webmd.com/parenting) , offers developmental information and guidance in a stage by stage format.

[www.OneToughJob.org](http://www.OneToughJob.org) , and [www.raisingchildren.net](http://www.raisingchildren.net) are similarly good resources for parenting information, advice and links to a wide range of services and support for parents.

[www.wowbrary.org](http://www.wowbrary.org) , provides free information, books and music for families through

local libraries, organized by ZIP code.

In Michigan: go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs) for resources on a broad spectrum of services, programs and support for children and families. Found here are the Family Independence Program (FIP), Michigan Assistance and Referral Service, Child Protective Services and several other support/assistance services and programs. Be sure to check out the Medical and Special Services links where Health Care, Applying for Assistance, Community Support, Pregnancy/Delivery and Newborn resources exist, with a Forms and Publications link to assist various application processes. Emergency Services will get you to programs and services to assist with immediate Health and Safety Issues. There is also a Family Resource Center link which coordinates the provision of family services through neighborhood schools.

### **Additional Resources**

40

[www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

[www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov)

[www.kids.gov](http://www.kids.gov)

[www.BoysAndSchools.com](http://www.BoysAndSchools.com)

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

[www.dadsanddaughters.org](http://www.dadsanddaughters.org)

[www.nccc.org/NationalNetwork](http://www.nccc.org/NationalNetwork) for Child Care - Info and resources

### **Housing/Homelessness**

Resources for former prisoners and their families in need of adequate housing.

at [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov) (or add /homeless), state by state resource information is available.

Assistance and counseling for the homeless is provided as well as programs and Grants to support the acquisition of suitable housing. Under Other/Help: Food Stamps and Food Bank Locators, Domestic Violence Programs, Veterans Assistance, Fair Housing

Protection and Government Benefits can be accessed. This site offers extensive resource information including links to: National Coalition for the Homeless, Family Promise, Health Care for the Homeless Resource Center, and National Clearinghouse for Drug and Alcohol Information sites among others. In the Working With HUD section, grants and programs can be accessed, and in Resources, published literature, forms and FAQ's provided.

Links to the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) for Loans and Mortgages In the U.S., with info on Loans/Credit, Down Payment Grants, Lending Limits and General Information, as well as additional home loan links are available.

For immediate shelter assistance go to: [www.artistshelpingchildren.org/shelters](http://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/shelters) , for a state by state reference on homeless shelters, both temporary and long term housing, and resources for homeless families.

41

At [www.homelessshelterdirectory.org](http://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org) , regional homeless shelter info is available, primarily for donations, but site info is also provided. A related link here is:

TheAngelForum.com , where requests for assistance can be posted and answered by appropriate service providers nationally.

In Michigan: [www.michigan.gov/mshcla](http://www.michigan.gov/mshcla) - the Michigan State Housing Development Authority has programs, services and assistance to secure suitable housing.

[www.goodwillnmi.org](http://www.goodwillnmi.org) - housing and homeless assistance in Northern Michigan.

[www.mhomeless.org](http://www.mhomeless.org) - Michigan homeless shelter directory.

[www.michiganhousinglocator.com](http://www.michiganhousinglocator.com) - MSHDA sponsored site. Housing, emergency housing and housing related resources.

### **Additional Resources**

[www.housingassistance.com](http://www.housingassistance.com) , down payment grants for homes through a national non-profit organization.

[www.LocateGovernmentGrant.com](http://www.LocateGovernmentGrant.com) - housing assistance grants.

[www.ehow.com/how\\_6151\\_apply-housingassistance.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_6151_apply-housingassistance.html) , help with applying for housing assistance.

### **Critical Records**

[www.dmv.org](http://www.dmv.org) - DMV.ORG is a national, private, non-governmental web site with information and assistance available in obtaining: Drivers License, State ID, Commercial Licensure, Insurance, Passports, Free Credit Reports, Driving Schools, Forms and Records, in any state. This site also provides guidance on buying and selling vehicles as well as information on Laws and Attorneys specializing in license/ID related issues.

42

In Michigan: go to [www.midmv.org](http://www.midmv.org) for information and forms related to obtaining or restoring Michigan drivers license or state ID.

### **SS Cards**

At: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) , the official site of the U.S. Social Security Administration can be accessed. The SSA offers resources, forms and publications not only on Social Security cards, but retirement/survivor benefits, office locator and business services.

Also, [www.ssa.gov/online](http://www.ssa.gov/online) offers the SS-5 application without having to search through links.

In Michigan: go to [www.ssa.gov/chicago/nichigan.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/chicago/nichigan.htm) to view social security offices throughout the state or region. Other SSA regions and additional resources can be

accessed.

### **For Birth records/certificates**

National: go to [www.birthdatabase.net](http://www.birthdatabase.net) , which provides a guide to locating birth records in any state. By following the link to Other Resources:, you are able to access the Public Records Guide in all states for assistance in locating other critical documents.

### **Additional Resources**

[www.usbirthcertificate.com](http://www.usbirthcertificate.com)

[www.onlinevitalrecordssearch.com](http://www.onlinevitalrecordssearch.com)

[www.vitalrec.com](http://www.vitalrec.com)

[www.worldvitalrecords.com](http://www.worldvitalrecords.com)

<http://securassa.gov/apps62/ISBA/main.html> - online application for disability benefits.

[www.drivingrecords.us.com](http://www.drivingrecords.us.com) - online driving records.

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

[www.state.gov/](http://www.state.gov/) - U.S. Dept. of State

### **Credit/Debt**

43

Many former prisoners face credit and debt issues upon release from prison. Here are some sites that may be useful.

[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com) - Experian provides free credit reports/scores/history.

At [www.freecreditreport.com](http://www.freecreditreport.com) , online credit reports are available with some conditions.

For credit repair (often for a fee) go to the Credit Repair and Debt Resource Center at: [www.nolo.com/resource.cfm](http://www.nolo.com/resource.cfm) . Some solid free advice via articles and publications are available. There is a great deal of usable information on: Debt Repayment, Cleaning-up Credit Reports, Dealing with Creditors, Student Loans, Credit and Debt Cards, along with a Tools and Resource Center. This includes: a Lawyer (finance) Directory, advice on FAQ's, a Glossary of Financial Terms, and Bankruptcy info.

Similarly for debt counseling, there is a wide array of mostly for profit services including: Credit Solutions.com, [www.debtsheild.com](http://www.debtsheild.com).

At [www.greenpath.com](http://www.greenpath.com), there is as overview of consumer credit counseling services for comparison.

The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) at [www.nfec.org](http://www.nfec.org) , offers guides and resources for: Debt Crisis, Consumer Debt Advice, Bankruptcy and a national locator for NFCC member agencies.

[www.Credit.com](http://www.Credit.com), provides valuable free advice on a variety of credit related issues: Debt

Issues, Credit Reports and Cards, Loans, Money Management, Credit Law, Small Business Finance, and Home Buying. This site also offers a Learning Center with additional Publications, Resources, a Glossary and FAQ responses.

44

In Michigan, use the Michigan Business Directory at: [www.michiganBusiness.us](http://www.michiganBusiness.us) , for Credit Scores, Credit Repair Services/Counseling and Bankruptcy advice. Links to an extensive list of businesses and organizations specializing in credit issues are available.

Additional Resources

[www.creditlawgroup.com](http://www.creditlawgroup.com) - credit repair law firm (online)

[www.taxresolution.com](http://www.taxresolution.com) - help with the I.R.S.

### **Recommended Reading**

Former prisoners, especially as students, should take advantage of the extensive literature written by, for, and about, convicts and ex-convicts. This selection is a starting point, and hopefully, concerned input will expand this site list considerably.

Go to: [www.convictcriminology.org](http://www.convictcriminology.org) , where links to Books and Relevant Articles and Chapters are available. Through them, you will find the published works of convict

criminologist authors such as: Steven Richards, John Irwin, Jeffery Ian Ross, R.S. Jones, Thomas Schmid, James Austin, Charles Terry, among others. Be sure to check out the link to ASC National Policy Committee Papers published via the American Society of Criminology. These books are also linked to Amazon.com with ordering info.

From the above site link access is provided to Gorilla Convict Publications at: [www.gorillaconvict.com](http://www.gorillaconvict.com). Here you are able to view titles written by convicts, fiction and non-fiction, from authors such as GCP founder Seth Ferranti and federal prisoner Robert Booker as well as interesting resources under the Blog, Media Kit, and Publications tabs. By clicking on the Authors tab you can learn about the numerous authors, artists and journalists publishing from prison via GCP and other venues. There

45

is also a tab to order books and magazines through GCP.

By going to: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and entering “exconvicts” into the browser (Books) a wide array of relevant literature becomes available including:

“Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives,” (2000) Maruna and Toch.

“The Ex-Offenders Job Hunting Guide: 10 Steps to a New Life in the Work World” (2005) Krannich.

“After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to **Offender** Reintegration” (2004) Maruna and Immaigeon.

“From Desperation to Dedication: An Ex-Con’s Lessons on Turning Failure Into Success,” (2006) Enelow.

“Going Straight: AN Ex-Convict Psychologist Tells Why and How.” (2001) Fauteck.

“Releasing Prisoners Redeeming Communities: Rentry, Race and Politics.” (2008) Thompson.

“Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America.” (2005) Travis and Visher.

“Prison Inc.: A Convict Exposes Life Inside a Private Prison.” (2005) Carceral and Bernard.

“When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry.” (2003) Petersilia.

“Breaking Crimes Vicious Cycle.” (1993) Dennis and Stephens.

“Overcoming Prison and Addiction.” (2002) Terry.

#### Additional Resources

[www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com) - Barnes and Noble

[www.biblio.com](http://www.biblio.com) - Biblio.com book search

[www.borders.com](http://www.borders.com) - Borders

[www.impactpublications.com](http://www.impactpublications.com)

[www.careerbookstore.com](http://www.careerbookstore.com)

[www.stopviolence.com](http://www.stopviolence.com)

<http://findarticles.com/p/articles> - Books, reports, articles.

46

<http://onlinesagepub.com> and [www.sagefulltext.com](http://www.sagefulltext.com) - Peer reviewed journals  
(fee/membership involved.)

[www.questia.com/library](http://www.questia.com/library) - Extensive online library with student writing, research and study tools available (fee/membership involved.)

The resource material necessary to making a dream into a reality is out there. Explore, dig, imagine and make it happen.