

Release planning checklists to support people leaving corrections custody to go back to the community successfully

To help make release and your transition back to the community successful, it is a good idea to do some planning before then. People who have experienced incarceration share that planning before release can help make it less overwhelming when you go back to the community.

In British Columbia (BC) Provincial Correctional Centres, you can ask for support with release planning from a corrections caseworker, the Community Transitions Team, or a reintegration worker.

You might also choose to get help with release planning and support after release by connecting with other services in the community, such as Unlocking the Gates (UTG) Services Society. Unlocking the Gates is run by people who have lived experience of being in prison (Peer Health Mentors), who can help you with lining up housing, dealing with warrants, or connecting to other services including harm reduction, addiction treatment, mental health care, or hepatitis C treatment.

Peer Health Mentors with UTG helped put together these checklists of things to think about when you are planning for release. These checklists could also be helpful for a family member or loved one of someone who is being released from custody, if you are trying to support them while they are in custody or at the time of release. Community support workers and others who are supporting people in custody or at the time of release may also find these checklists helpful!

You can use these checklists on your own, or you can connect with UTG to get extra help from them, like arranging transportation on the day you are released, or getting some extra clothes for when you are out.



How to contact Unlocking the Gates:
Monday to Friday 9AM-4PM, call: 1-604-518-3261
Afterhours Monday to Friday 4pm-10pm
Saturday and Sunday 9am-8pm, call: 1-778-938-2584

Before Release Checklist

- Put in a request to see the reintegration worker to help with release planning. Speak to your unit rep or a Corrections Officer if you need help putting in the request.
- Contact Unlocking The Gates (UTG) to find out how they can help with release planning & support after release.
- Have a folder or envelope where you can keep all your release paperwork and documents, such as records of when and where medical appointments are, contact information for your Peer Mentor or case worker, etc.
- If you do not have a government issued photo ID (e.g. BC ID), start the process of getting new ID.
 - Request any documents you will need to get a new ID ASAP (e.g. copy of your birth certificate).
- Notify relevant people about your release, such as:
 - A friend or family member
 - A service provider or outreach worker
 - A Peer Mentor from Unlocking The Gates
- Make sure you have clothing to wear when you are released. If you do not have any, UTG may be able to bring you some.
- Set up transportation for your release (e.g. friend or family member to pick you up, ride from UTG, etc.)
- Set up somewhere to stay when you return to the community. Options:
 - Stay with a family member or friend
 - Go to a Drug Treatment Centre or Recovery Home
 - Other private accommodation/motel/hotel/etc.
 - A shelter
- Get familiar with any parole, probation orders, or other conditions of release that you have.
- Make sure you have the contact info for your Parole Officer, Probation, or Bail Supervisor.
- Make sure medical care is set up for you in the community. Things to think about for this are:
 - Talk to healthcare about which pharmacy your prescriptions will be sent to.
 - Ask for blister packs of medication for your release. You can get up to a 14-day supply of meds at release.

- If you require a monthly injection, find out where you go to get it when you are released.
- Make sure any follow-up appointments you need are booked for you.
- Make sure you have some way to keep track of your appointments (e.g. notebook, appointment cards). Examples of appointments you may need booked:
 - Primary care provider (doctor or nurse practitioner)
 - Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) prescription renewal or maintenance (OAT or methadone clinic or doctor)
 - Hepatitis C treatment assessment or start
 - Psychiatrist for review of psychiatric meds
- If you have not already, consider getting vaccinated for COVID-19, or getting a booster shot if you are eligible.

In the First 72 Hours After Release

- Get a new government issued photo ID (if needed).
 - You will be issued a facesheet by Corrections at release. You will need the facesheet and a copy of your birth certificate to apply for a BCID. You need a BCID or other government issued ID to open a bank account, so this is very important.
- Cash your cheque that the correctional centre gave you.
- Go to a store or supermarket (Walmart, etc.) to get:
 - Some basic hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.).
 - A small suitcase, backpack, or gym bag.
 - If it is winter time, find a warm coat and possibly a warm hat and gloves.
 - Some basic groceries.
- If you don't have a cell phone, look into an inexpensive pre-paid phone. You can find these at stores like Walmart or BestBuy. Once you get one, add in any important contacts to the address book right away.
- If you're on probation or bail be sure to report to your Probation or Bail Supervisor within 24hrs upon release.
- If you're on parole, be sure to report to your Parole Officer within the first 48hrs after release.
- If you have any other release conditions or probation orders, be aware of those and follow them.
- Go to the pharmacy to pick up any medication refills you need.
- Make an appointment or go to your scheduled appointment with a health care provider to get new prescriptions for any important medications that you will need to take long term.

In the First 2 Weeks After Release

- Determine if there is any other ID you need and make a plan to get new copies of these. Some other documents you might need are:
 - Birth Certificate
 - BCID
 - BC services card
 - Proof of Citizenship or Passport
 - Status Card
 - Driver's Licence
- Open up a bank account if you don't have one.
- Find out if you are eligible for income assistance or disability support payments and apply for these. You can do this by going to a local income assistance office, by calling 1-866-866-0800, or online at myselfserve.gov.bc.ca. If you have a Community Outreach Worker or Peer Mentor, they may be able to assist with this.
- Create an email address if you don't have one. You can set up a free email account at outlook.com or gmail.com. Public libraries have free computers where you can access the internet and emails etc.
- Continue to check in with your Parole Officer, Probation or Bail Supervisor regularly. They will tell you how often you are required to report.
- If you are able to work, begin the process of searching for a job.
- Check if you have court costs, fines, or other fees that you have been charged and make a plan for going to the courthouse to address these.
- Check in with your Peer-Mentor, or other supports such as a Community Outreach Worker, to see if they can assist you with any of the above tasks.
- If you didn't get vaccinated for COVID-19 while you were incarcerated, consider getting vaccinated in the community. If it's been more than 6 months since your last shot, you may be eligible for a booster. See page __ for info about getting vaccinated in the community.